

CLOUD FORMATIONS

Reference Guide

HIGH-LEVEL CLOUDS (ABOVE 20,000 FT)

Cirrus

Thin, wispy, feather-like strands made of ice crystals.

Fair Weather

Cirrocumulus

Small white patches or ripples, "mackerel sky" pattern.

Cold / Clear

Cirrostratus

Transparent whitish veil, often produces halos around the sun.

Moisture Incoming

MID-LEVEL CLOUDS (6,500 - 20,000 FT)

Alto cumulus

White or gray patches, rolls, or round masses.

Potential Storms

Altostratus

Gray or blue-gray sheet covering the sky. Sun visible but dim.

Continuous Rain

Nimbostratus

Thick, dark, formless layer blocking all direct sunlight.

Steady Rain/Snow

LOW-LEVEL CLOUDS (BELOW 6,500 FT)

Cumulus

Isolated, fluffy white cotton-balls with flat bases.

Fair/Standard

Stratus

Uniform gray layer resembling fog that doesn't touch ground.

Drizzle/Overcast

Stratocumulus

Low, lumpy layer with small gaps of sky visible.

Dry/Mild

VERTICAL GROWTH (ALL ALTITUDES)

Cumulonimbus

Towering dense clouds with an anvil-shaped top. Extends through all altitude layers. Associated with extreme weather.

Thunderstorms / Hail / Heavy Rain