

REAL-WORLD METEOROLOGY

A series of profiles celebrating a half-century of Certified Consulting Meteorologists



Who: Gale F. Hoffnagle

What: Air quality meteorologist

When: CCM since 1976

Where: Air Quality Consulting Practice
Leader, TRC Environmental Corporation,
Windsor, Connecticut

Why: Needed credentials for expert testimony in air quality meteorology and modeling



How: Gale Hoffnagle became a CCM at the insistence of Loren Crow, CCM. After four years in the air force environmental health laboratory, he joined INTERA Environmental Consultants and became the modeler for many power plant and smelter clients in the Rocky Mountain West. This meant that he climbed through lots of valleys with Crow, who taught him mountain meteorology and encouraged him to both become a CCM and join the National Council of Industrial Meteorology (NCIM). His first expert testimony about air quality modeling was in federal district court in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he convinced a judge that the model offered by the Sierra Club assumed that the smelter plume went “through” the mountain. The certification proved useful in convincing the court of his ability to testify about those issues. It has continued to prove invaluable as he has testified in court against such notable attorneys as Johnnie Cochran, Erin Brockovich, and Jan Schlichtmann.

The CCM has also helped Hoffnagle show the qualifications to become president of the Air and Waste Management Association, president of the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering, and president-elect of the National Council of Industrial Meteorology.

In His Own Words: “The ability to say that I passed the test and made it to CCM seemed like such a great win at the time. I don’t know if the questions were harder or the oral was harder, but the passage of time seems to grow the legend of a tough test. What I do know is that in court, where the need of a doctorate and license and specialty board certifications is important, the CCM has set me on at least a level playing field to talk to the court. The most useful times are when the expert on the other side is an engineer (chemical engineers can do anything, just ask them). They generally do not understand the meteorology more than cryptically and it is easy to find a weakness in their analysis. There is nothing quite so rewarding as seeing the opposing attorney fumble over trying to assault my qualifications as a meteorologist. I love the chess game.

“The true work is making the atmosphere come alive to the judge and the jury, after, of course, making it come alive to the attorney you’re working for. This takes a lot of meteorological horse sense and often collaboration with other meteorologists and CCMs both within my organization and from the outside. Being a CCM—and encouraging others to become CCMs—has been a rewarding experience.”

For more information on the Certified Consulting Meteorologist (CCM) Program, please visit the AMS Web site at www.ametsoc.org/amscert/index.html.