

The “True Monsoon:” A short history of, and the scientific rationale for, the Phoenix “Three-days-of 55” monsoon onset criterion

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Concocted in the 1960s, the often controversial “first of three consecutive days with an average dew point temperature of 55°F or higher” criterion remains in use by the Phoenix NWS office to officially determine the arrival of the monsoon in Phoenix. The criterion actually has a strong scientific foundation that will be examined in this presentation. Use of other observational tools, such as the Tenharkel Monsoon Index; GPS-IPW; and sounding wind and thermodynamic data, to describe the Arizona portion of the North American monsoon will also be mentioned.