

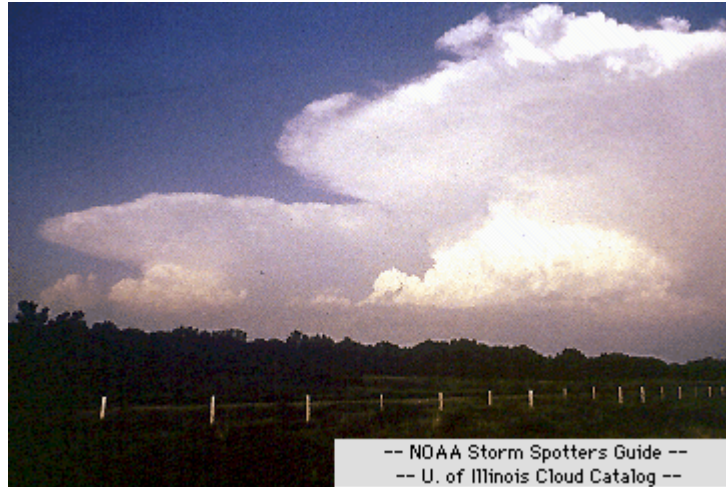
## Helper Menu

[exit helper](#)  
[helper page](#)  
[more detail](#)

## Cumulonimbus Clouds

reaching high into the atmosphere

Cumulonimbus clouds (Cb) are much larger and more vertically developed than [fair weather cumulus](#). They can exist as [individual towers](#) or form a line of towers called a [squall line](#). Fueled by vigorous convective updrafts (sometimes in excess 50 knots), the tops of cumulonimbus clouds can easily reach 39,000 feet (12,000 meters) or higher.



Photograph by: [NOAA](#)

Lower levels of cumulonimbus clouds consist mostly of water droplets while at higher elevations, where temperatures are well below 0 degrees Celsius, ice crystals dominate. Under favorable atmospheric conditions, harmless [fair weather cumulus](#) clouds can quickly develop into large cumulonimbus clouds associated with powerful thunderstorms known as [supercells](#).

---

[Terms](#) for using data resources. [CD-ROM](#) available.

[Credits and Acknowledgments](#) for WW2010.  
[Department of Atmospheric Sciences \(DAS\)](#) at  
the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.