

# Rainfall mainly from the plane?

## State starts cloud seeding pilot program

By J.L. MILLER  
Staff Writer

GEORGETOWN—While Delmarva farmers labor in their fields a small plane will be sowing seed 22,000 feet above their heads.

A three-month pilot program to determine if cloud seeding can squeeze rain from reluctant skies to water Delaware fields began Thursday at the Sussex County Industrial Airport near Georgetown.

Although Colorado International, the cloud-seeding firm, is ready to begin immediately, the weather has not been cooperative.

"There's a slight possibility we'll be seeding later today, but the first chance we'll get will probably be Monday," a spokesman said today.

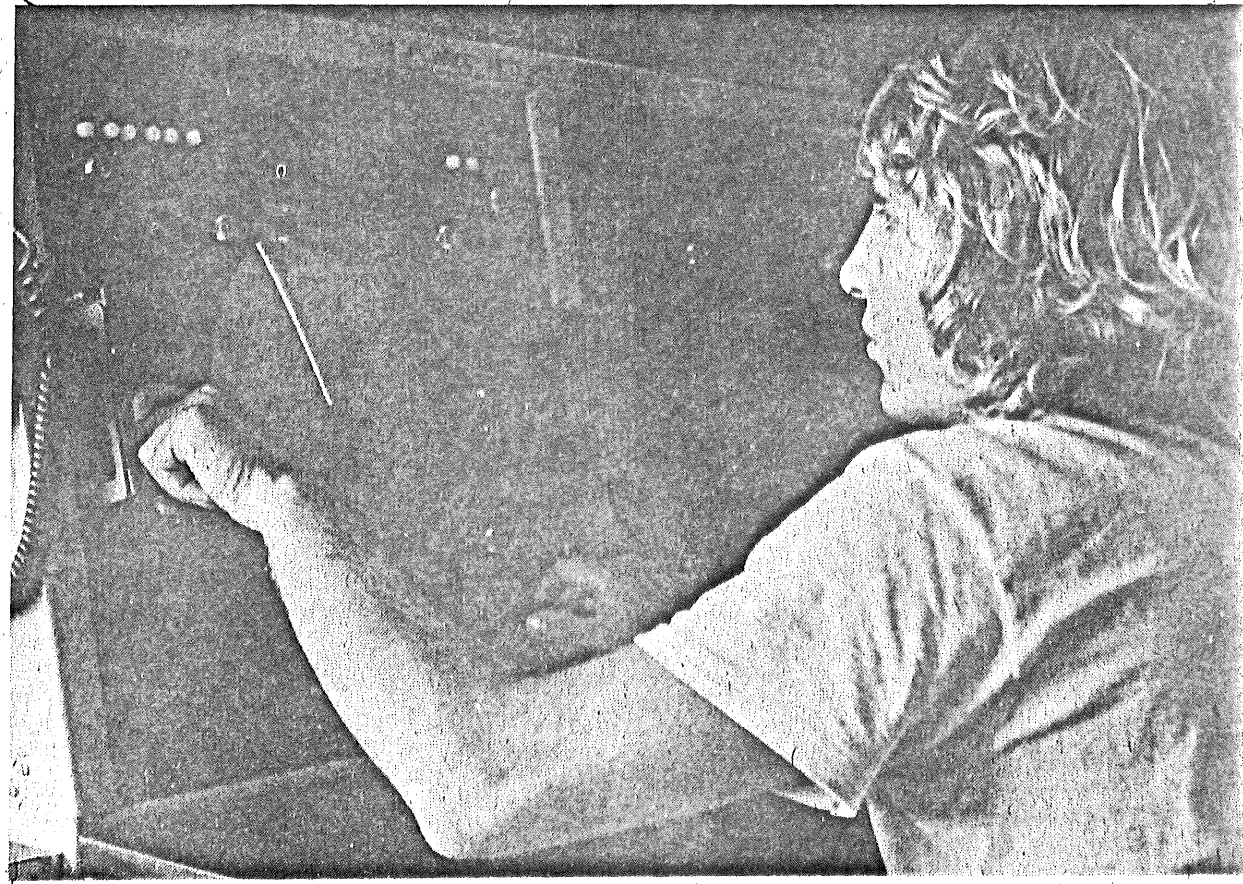
The plan is funded by \$171,000 from the state and is being evaluated by the University of Delaware.

If the program proves successful, a larger cloud-seeding program could be instituted by the state, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture William E. McDaniel said at the Thursday press conference.

The legislation that funded the program also created an advisory committee of farmers from each county to tell lawmakers when they have had enough, McDaniel said.

The cloud seeding will be done in a Cessna Navaho plane and involves discharging 80 to 120 grams of silver iodide into rain clouds, said Lawrence Davis, president of Colorado International.

The substance causes tiny water



Staff Photo by J.L. Miller

Richard A. Bernatz, a meteorologist with Colorado International, scans the radar screen for rain clouds to seed. The state-funded project, headquartered near Georgetown, will try to increase rainfall on Delaware farm fields.

droplets to freeze, then fall to earth and melt into rain, Davis said.

Because most storms enter Delaware from the west, the clouds will be seeded in a "buffer zone," much of it over Maryland's Caroline and Dorchester counties.

Delaware should not catch any flak from Maryland farmers about stolen rain, McDaniel said.

"They have a fairly good education on the Eastern Shore as to what we're doing, and I don't think we'll have any trouble," McDaniel said.

"If there are any objections, we'll just have to deal with them and talk to them," he said.

Nor will cloud seeding increase rain in Delaware resorts, Davis said.

The seeding will be done from noon to

10 p.m., the best time for the correct cloud structures to form, Davis said.

"No one would be able to hear the discharges from the ground and they probably wouldn't see anything either," said William Dawson, an electronic technician with the firm.

"Of course, if it started to rain on them they'd probably notice that," he said.