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- Volumes
- Library Search
- Title and Author Search

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Review

Production

Subscription



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Mediterranean cloud system variability inferred from satellite observations

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Abstract. The variability of Mediterranean cloud systems is investigated using 8.5 years (from January 1987 to June 1995) of TIROS-N Operational Vertical Sounder (TOVS) observations acquired aboard the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) series of operational polar satellites. Cloud systems and troughs are detected using retrievals of cloud top pressure (CTP) and temperature of the lower stratosphere (TLS). Cloud systems have a typical size of a few hundred kilometres with a larger occurrence between March and October. The largest cloud systems occur preferentially in May and October and downstream of a midlatitude upper level trough. Finally, severe precipitation events over the Alpine region are associated to a warm TLS anomaly upstream the cloud system, showing once more the impact of the upper levels on the weather over the area.

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