

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – OCTOBER 2004

General Summary. October temperatures averaged 52.0° or 1.1° above normal while precipitation averaged 2.10 inches or 0.42 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 62nd warmest and 65th driest October among 132 years of state records.

Temperatures. Iowa temperature patterns were reversed from usual October trends with the coldest weather generally in the early and mid month and warmest conditions coming late in the month. The first widespread freeze of the season came on the morning of the 2nd when temperatures in the mid to upper 20's were common across northwest Iowa while low 30's prevailed in the southeast. Onawa was the cold spot with 23°. Another hard freeze affected parts of northern and eastern Iowa on the morning of the 5th when temperatures fell as low as 24° at Elkader, Fayette and Manchester. The month's lowest temperatures were reported on the morning of the 17th when Charles City, Dubuque, Grinnell, Mason City, Oelwein and Waterloo had 22° lows. However, above normal temperatures were the rule over the last 12 days of October. Glenwood reported the month's highest temperature with an 84° reading on the 29th. Frequent cloudy conditions, along with a prevailing southerly air flow, kept most locations above freezing during the last two weeks of October.

Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 11% less than normal but 2% more than last October. Thus far this heating season (since July 1) degree day totals are running 15% less than normal and 6% less than last season at this time. Home air conditioning requirements for 2004, as estimated by cooling degree day totals, averaged 22% less than last year and 27% less than normal. This was the coolest air conditioning season since 1992 and 6th coolest among 132 years of records (1904, 1915, 1924 and 1967 were the other years).

Precipitation. There was considerable variability in precipitation amounts across Iowa as has been the case over the past several months. Monthly precipitation totals varied from only 0.50 inches at Bedford (0.26 inches just across the state line at Omaha Eppley Airport to 6.88 inches at Keokuk. Generally precipitation amounts were well above normal in southeastern Iowa and well below normal across the far west. Frequent episodes of light precipitation and high humidity during the last ten days of the month slowed the harvest which had been progressing rapidly earlier in October. The season's first snow flurries were reported from a few northern Iowa locations on the morning of the 16th.

Severe Weather. Thunderstorms brought high winds and/or large hail to 13 central and eastern Iowa counties on the 29th while a strong low pressure area to the north of Iowa brought high winds statewide on the 30th.

Harry J. Hillaker, State Climatologist
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Bldg., Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: (515) 281-8981
E-mail: Harry.Hillaker@idals.state.ia.us