

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – APRIL 2009

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 46.7° or 1.8° below normal while precipitation totaled 3.69 inches or 0.36 inches above normal. This ranks as the 37th coolest and 35th wettest April among 137 years of state records.

Temperatures. April began consistently on the cool side with below normal temperatures on each of the first 15 days of the month. Overnight temperatures fell into the teens in a few northwestern areas on the 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th and 11th. Sibley reported the month's lowest temperature with a 15° reading on the morning of the 7th. There were no widespread freezes after the morning of the 15th. The month's first 70° readings were recorded in a few areas on the afternoon of the 15th. However, the warmest weather by far came on the 23rd and 24th. Sioux City reached a daily record high of 92° on the 23rd while Glenwood, Harlan, Jefferson, Mason City, Oakland and Pocahontas all reached 90° on the 24th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 10% greater than normal but 5% less than last April. Thus far this heating season degree day totals have averaged 2% greater than normal and 2% less than last season.

Precipitation. A late winter storm on the 4th-5th dropped heavy snow over far northwest Iowa, as well as along a 25 mile wide band from west central Iowa to the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area. Eldora reported 10.0 inches of snow with this storm while Little Sioux had 9.1 inches. The snow was drifted by wind gusts of 40 to 45 mph. However, after this snow storm Iowa enjoyed an extended period of relatively dry weather. A statewide average of only 0.45 inches of rain fell between the 6th and the 24th (normal = 2.02). This allowed a large amount of fieldwork to take place, particularly during the week of the 20th when warm and windy weather prevailed. According to Iowa Agricultural Statistics 47% of the corn crop and 93% of the oats were planted by the 25th. This represents the most rapid planting pace since 2006. By comparison practically no corn was planted by this date last year. However, rain fell statewide on the 25th and 26th with very heavy rainfall across southwest, central and northeast Iowa. A statewide average of 2.42 inches fell during this 48 hour period and brought fieldwork to a halt. Additional light rain fell later in the month with an area of one to two inches of rain in the far southeast on the night of the 29th. Monthly rain totals were below normal over western Iowa, generally west of a Mason City-Fort Dodge-Glenwood line. Heaviest rains were centered over central, northeast and the far southeast portions of Iowa. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 1.22 inches at Castana to 8.98 inches at Guthrie Center. Guthrie Center reported a new state record 24-hour precipitation total for the month of April with 6.79 inches for the period ending 8 a.m. April 27. Snowfall for the month averaged 1.5 inches or 0.4 inches less than normal. This pushes the seasonal snowfall total to 36.3 inches or 3.9 inches above normal. The first three months of the snowfall season (November through January) tied for the 4th snowiest on record while the last three (February through April) tied for the 12th least snowy for that time period.

Severe Weather. April was a fairly quiet month for severe weather. A total of 26 counties reported severe weather during the month, with all but one of the reports coming on the 24th, 25th or 26th. The most significant event was an F1 tornado that caused damage along a 21 mile path from northern Linn into southern Delaware County on the evening of the 26th.

Harry J. Hillaker, State Climatologist
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Bldg.
Des Moines, IA 50319
Telephone: (515) 281-8981
E-mail: Harry.Hillaker@IowaAgriculture.gov