

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MAY 2009

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 59.8° or 0.4° below normal while precipitation totaled 3.65 inches or 0.58 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 69th warmest and 59th driest May among 137 years of records.

Temperatures. As has been the case for most of the period since November 2008, Iowa saw wide swings in temperature during May with no prolonged periods of unusually warm or cool weather. Sibley reported the month's lowest temperature with a 28° minimum on the morning of the 2nd while Sioux City was the hot spot for the month with a 97° maximum on the afternoon of the 19th. Overall Sioux City reported four days with maximums in the 90's, however, ninety degree weather was not widespread across Iowa except over the northwest on the 19th and 20th. Isolated frost was reported on the mornings of the 2nd, 3rd and 11th with the most widespread frost centered upon northeast Iowa on the morning of the 17th. Cresco and Decorah recorded lows of 29° on the morning of the 17th. Diurnal swings in temperature of more than 30 degrees were quite common with Sioux City recording 11 days with more than a 30 degree warm up from morning low to afternoon high. Spencer Airport saw a 46 degree change from a morning low of 43° to an afternoon high of 89° on the 31st. These rapid daily changes were indicative of relatively dry conditions in place over western Iowa.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 23% less than last May and 13% less than normal. Degree day totals so far this season (since July 1, 2008) are running 3% less than last season and 1% more than normal.

Precipitation. Rainfall was fairly evenly distributed throughout the month but totaled much less than usual over northwestern and west central sections. Greatest rainfall came on the 26th and was centered upon central and north central Iowa. Ames reported 5.06 inches of rain between the evening of the 25th and morning of the 27th. However, relatively dry weather prior to this rain event prevented widespread flooding from this late month storm. Monthly precipitation totals varied from only 0.77 inches at Hawarden to 9.14 inches at Hampton. The Hampton total is more than double their monthly normal of 4.37 inches and the second highest May total among 116 years of records while Hawarden recorded their driest May since 1966.

Spring Summary. Spring temperatures averaged 47.7° or 0.5° below normal while precipitation totaled 10.45 inches or 0.68 inches above normal. This ranks as the 65th coolest and 40th wettest spring among 137 years of record. Fieldwork progressed at a typical pace with corn 99% planted as of May 31 while 91% of soybeans were in the ground.

Severe Weather. May typically ranks just behind June as the most active month for severe weather in Iowa. However May 2009 was unusually quiet. Severe storms were reported on only six days (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 15th and 31st). The most active days were the 6th and 8th when severe weather was reported from 9 counties and 8 counties,

respectively. The only tornado of the month made a very brief touchdown in Clay County on the afternoon of the 8th. The typical May brings 13 tornadoes to the state. In recent years only 2006 (0), 1990 (1) and 1984 (1) have seen as few tornadoes in May. 2006 continued to be a very quiet season but 1984 and 1990 both turned extremely active in June.

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