

PRELIMINARY IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – AUGUST 2009

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 69.0 degrees or 2.3 degrees below normal while precipitation averaged 5.69 inches or 1.50 inches above normal. This ranks as the 19th coolest and 18th wettest August among 137 years of state records.

Temperatures. It was another cooler than normal month. Above normal temperatures were restricted to only nine days during August with only one day (8th) averaging more than five degrees above normal. Ankeny reported the highest temperature of the month with a temperature of 97 degrees on the 8th. Meanwhile temperatures averaged more than five degrees below normal on ten days with no ninety degree weather after the 14th. Sibley reported a low of 37 degrees on the 30th while Spencer Airport had 36 degrees on the 31st.

Cooling Degree Days. Home air conditioning requirements, as estimated by cooling degree day totals, averaged 29% less than normal and 7% less than last August. Thus far this heating season cooling degree day totals are running 34% less than normal and 16% less than one year ago.

Precipitation. As has been the case for much of this year, precipitation was above normal across the southeast and below normal over the northwest. Very heavy rain fell from the 25 to 27th over southeastern Iowa, resulting in widespread flooding. Widespread rain also fell on the 7th, 9th, 16th and 19th. Monthly precipitation totals varied from only 1.40 inches at Spencer to 14.44 inches at the Cedar Rapids Airport. The Cedar Rapids total broke their previous August record of 13.09 inches set in 1993. While southeastern Iowa is saturated parts of northwest and north central Iowa are on the verge of drought conditions. Streamflows are below normal over some parts of the northwest but this summer's cool weather has prevented significant crop impacts in that area.

Severe Weather. As has been the case all year, severe weather was less frequent than usual during August. However, a hail storm on the morning of the 9th caused major damage along the US Highway 20 corridor, especially near Eldora. Severe storms were also reported from 11 counties on the afternoon and evening of the 19th.

Summer Summary. Temperatures for the three summer months averaged 68.7 degrees or 2.9 degrees below normal while precipitation totaled 15.47 inches or 4.43 inches above normal. This ranks as the fourth coolest and 17th wettest summer among 137 years of records. The only cooler summers were 1915 (66.6), 1992 (67.6) and 2004 (68.1).

Outlook. A frequent question this summer is when to expect the first freeze of the fall. The bad news is that in years with unusually cool summers such as this one it has been common for the first fall freeze also to occur earlier than usual. However, the good news is that the first fall freeze date has been only a few days ahead of the usual dates in these types of years. The latest Iowa Agricultural Statistics summary of crop conditions indicate that the corn crop, as of August 30, is averaging about 7 days behind normal

development while soybeans are only 2 days behind normal. An El Niño event is well underway in the Pacific Ocean. Although every El Niño event is different the typical impact upon Iowa is for a wetter than usual September and October with near normal temperatures. November has frequently been cooler than usual and somewhat wetter than normal. The fall season as a whole favors cooler and wetter than normal weather over Iowa with El Niño. We have seen some very winter-like weather in El Niño falls in some years, such as the Halloween Blizzard and ice storm of 1991 and the southern Iowa snow storm of October 26, 1997. However, we often see a transition from a relatively cool/wet autumn weather pattern to a relatively warmer/drier winter pattern in early December during El Niño events.

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