

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MAY 2010

General Summary. Temperatures averaged 60.0° or 0.2° below normal while precipitation totaled 4.29 inches or 0.06 inches above normal. This ranks as the 67th warmest and 56th wettest May among 138 years of records.

Temperatures. Below normal temperatures prevailed for 17 of the first 21 days of the month, in sharp contrast to the relatively warm weather that has dominated Iowa this spring. Most notable in this period was a widespread freeze on the morning of the 9th that brought temperatures at or below freezing to 65% of the state. This was the most widespread freeze for so late in the season in Iowa since May 13-16, 1997.

Temperatures bottomed out at 27° at Audubon, Belle Plaine, Grinnell, Mapleton, Sac City and Sheldon on the 9th. However, a quick transition to summer-like weather began on the 21st with temperatures remaining well above normal for the remainder of the month. The season's first 90° temperatures were recorded on the 22nd when Sioux City reached 92°. Sioux City went on to record five days with temperatures above 90 during May. However, Algona was the hot spot for the month with a 96° maximum on the 24th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 19% more than last May and 3% more than normal. Degree day totals for the entire 2009-2010 heating season (since July 1, 2009) are running the same as last season and 1% more than normal.

Precipitation. Rainfall totals were generally less than normal over the northwest one-half of Iowa and greater than normal over the southeast. Very wet conditions prevailed in the far southeast where Keosauqua recorded 11.49 inches of rain or about three times the normal May amount. By contrast some areas of the north and west were unusually dry such as Battle Creel where only 1.24 inches fell, or about one-third of normal. Very wet weather prevailed from the 6th to the 13th when a statewide average of 2.94 inches of rain fell, making this the wettest week in nearly two years with flooding common over the far southeast. Although subsoil moisture remains plentiful statewide parts of northwest Iowa could use rain to help replenish topsoil moisture which is needed for shallow-rooted young crops.

Severe Weather. May and June are typically Iowa's most active severe weather months. However, May was exceptionally quiet this year. Severe weather was reported on only six dates with the most widespread activity on the 12th affecting only 11 counties. There were no tornadoes during May for only the second time since 1978. Two tornadoes struck on June 1, making this the latest start to Iowa's tornado season since 1978 (June 7).

Spring Summary. Temperatures during the three spring months averaged 50.9° or 2.7° above normal while precipitation totaled 9.91 inches or 0.14 inches above normal. This ranks as the 19th warmest and 47th wettest spring among 138 years of record.

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