

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MAY 2011

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 59.1° or 1.0° below normal while precipitation totaled 5.00 inches or 0.44 inches above normal. This ranks as the 52nd coolest and 36th wettest May among 139 years of state records. There have now been six consecutive cooler than normal months, although none have been very far below normal.

Temperatures. As has been the case in recent months, Iowa saw many large variations in temperature. The first six days of the month were much cooler than usual with temperatures falling to 20° at Sibley and Spencer on the 3rd. A lower May minimum temperature has been recorded only four times in the past 100 years (most recently in 2005). The second six days of the month were unusually warm with the temperature soaring to 100° at Jefferson on the 10th. This was Iowa's earliest triple digit temperature since April 22, 1980 and the first time that 100 had been reached during the month since May 15, 2001. The heat was followed by another seven days of below normal temperatures (13th-19th) with scattered freezes reported on the mornings of the 16th and 17th. Another five day period of unusual warmth followed on the 20th through the 24th. Another cool period brought below normal temperatures from the 25th through the 29th with Elkader reporting a low of 35° on the 27th. Finally, the last two days of the month brought very warm weather with Spencer, Sioux Rapids and Sheldon reaching 91° on the 30th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 19% greater than normal and 5% more than last May. Degree day totals for the entire heating season (beginning July 1, 2010) have averaged 3% more than normal and 1% less than last season.

Precipitation. The month began with a very welcome period of mostly dry weather with a statewide average of only 0.23 inches of rain for the first ten days of the month. Spring planting, which was far behind the normal pace in April, managed to surge ahead of the typical progress in early May with 84% of the corn and 47% of the soybeans planted during the first two weeks of the month according to Iowa Agricultural Statistics. Rain became increasingly frequent for the remainder of the month, particularly on the 24th-25th when an average of 1.64 inches fell over Iowa. Rainfall was especially heavy over south central Iowa where Osceola reported 10.79 inches for the month. Only May 1996 with 11.65 inches saw more rain at Osceola among 80 years of records. Meanwhile, scattered areas of the state saw less than normal rainfall with Guttenberg reporting only 1.92 inches for their driest May since 1992.

Severe Weather. Severe storms were somewhat less widespread than usual in May in Iowa, unlike many other parts of the nation. Nevertheless, severe weather was reported from 10 to 18 counties each on the 11th, 22nd, 24th and 29th. Lenox in Taylor County of southwest Iowa had the misfortune of being struck by two tornadoes on May 11 while very large hail pounded portions of Woodbury and Monona counties on the 12th. High winds raked parts of the southeast one-third of the state on the 29th during the middle of

the Memorial Day weekend with one fatality occurring at Lake McBride State Park when a tree fell onto a tent.

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