

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY APRIL 2002

General Summary. April temperatures averaged 48.7° or 0.8° below normal while precipitation totaled 3.60 inches or 0.44 inch more than normal. This ranks as the 35th wettest and 62nd coolest April among 130 years of state records.

Temperatures. It is said that facts don't lie; however, April's essentially "normal" temperature average certainly is not an apt summarization of the month's dramatic variations in temperature. The month began with snow in northeast Iowa on the 1st with Waukon reporting a high temperature of 30° while Shenandoah and Sidney basked in 77° warmth on the same afternoon. Temperatures plunged to 9° at Atlantic, Guthrie Center and Sheldon on the morning of the 4th. However, temperatures were above normal in most areas of the state from the 7th through the 19th. Glenwood reported Iowa's first 80° reading of the year on the 10th while temperatures of 80° or better were recorded somewhere in the state for 5 consecutive days from the 14th through the 18th when numerous daily maximum temperature records were set. Sioux City was the state's hot spot with a 96° high on the 15th while Clarinda reached 93° on the 18th. Only once has a 96° reading been recorded earlier in the year in Iowa (96° at Clarinda on April 10, 1930). Below normal temperatures prevailed for 10 of the last 11 days of the month with daily record lows set at Estherville (22°) and Mason City (23°) on the morning of the 26th. The overall 87° range between the month's highest and lowest temperatures was the largest April temperature spread since 1982 (-9° to 84°).

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 8% more than normal and 31% more than last April. Heating requirements this season (since July 1, 2001) are running 12% less than normal and 20% less than last season at this time. This heating season has been just slightly cooler than the very mild season of 1999-2000.

Precipitation. April began with snow falling across the northeast one-half of Iowa on the 1st with 2 to 4 inch accumulations from Mason City to the Quad Cities. Rain fell over the southeast two-thirds of the state on the 8th with amounts in excess of an inch in parts of east central and southeast Iowa. Another storm system on the 11th dropped rain on all of the state with greatest amounts in the northeast. Rain fell statewide again on the 20th-21st with the rain changing to snow in far northwest Iowa where 3 inches of snow accumulated early on the 21st. Finally, the month's largest precipitation event came on the 27th when an average of 1.22 inches of moisture fell over the state. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 1.97 inches at Le Mars up to 5.46 inches at New Hampton. Overall this was Iowa's wettest month since September. Finally, an average of 0.9 inch of snow fell during the month or 0.7 inch less than normal. This brings Iowa's seasonal snowfall total to 17.9 inches or 13.3 inches below normal. This was the least snowy winter in 21 years and ranks 7th lowest among 115 years of state records.

Severe Weather. Iowa's severe thunderstorm season typically begins in April and this year the season started in a big way at mid month. Severe hail and/or high winds were

reported from 15 northwest Iowa counties on the evening of the 16th with another 19 counties reporting severe weather from west central into northeast Iowa on the night of the 17th. However, the month's greatest activity was on the afternoon and evening of the 18th when severe weather reports were received from 40 counties across the southeast one-half of Iowa.