

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY MAY 2002

General Summary. May temperatures averaged 56.9° or 4.0° below normal while precipitation totaled 4.22 inches or 0.24 inch above normal. This ranks as the 26th coldest and 55th wettest May among 130 years of state records.

Temperatures. Unseasonably cold weather prevailed through most of May until a sudden turn to summer-like conditions came late in the month. The month's lowest temperature was reported at Cresco and Decorah on the morning of the 3rd with 25° readings. Above normal temperatures prevailed from the 5th through the 8th with Bellevue reaching 87° on the 6th. There were no 90° temperatures until the 29th when Rock Rapids reached 91°. Below normal temperatures were the rule from the 9th through the 26th with the lone exception of the 15th when Rock Rapids and Sioux Center reached 82°. Very cold weather prevailed from the 18th through the 21st. A hard freeze was reported from some part of Iowa on each of these dates with 27° minimums reported from Spencer and Elkader on the morning of the 19th and again at Elkader on the morning of the 21st. These were the lowest temperatures recorded in Iowa so late in the spring since Saratoga reported a low of 27° on May 29, 1965. The cold weather slowed the emergence and growth of this year's crops; however freeze-damaged corn was expected to recover. Hot weather finally returned late in the month with Onawa and Sioux Center reaching 96° on the 30th while Glenwood reached 95° on the 31st.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals averaged 64% greater than last May and 43% more than normal. Heating requirements for the 2001-2002 season have averaged 18% less than last season and 11% less than normal.

Precipitation. Rainfall was fairly evenly distributed through the month. This minimized flooding but also made for more difficulty with spring planting as the frequent rain kept topsoils too wet in many areas for an extended period of time. The month's heaviest rains came on the 11th that accounted for about a third of May's rainfall. Generally rainfall was greater than normal across much of the southern two-thirds of Iowa with amounts over six inches in far southeastern sections of the state. Relatively dry weather dominated in the north with a few counties in north central Iowa receiving less than one-half of normal rainfall. Monthly rain totals varied from only 1.44 inches at Northwood up to 8.77 inches at Fort Madison.

Severe Weather. The mostly cold weather pattern kept severe weather activity to a minimum. The largest severe weather events came on the 5th when large hail and/or high winds were reported from 14 counties across the northwest one-third of Iowa and on the 8th with reports from 17 counties in southeast Iowa.

Spring Summary. Temperatures during the three spring months averaged 45.4° or 3.3° below normal while precipitation totaled 9.07 inches or 0.26 inch less than normal. Although precipitation averaged only a quarter inch shy of the long-term average there have been only 9 springs among the past 30 with less precipitation. This ranks as the 28th coldest and 59th wettest spring among 130 years of state records.