

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – OCTOBER 2008

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 50.8° or 0.1° below normal while precipitation totaled 3.35 inches or 0.83 inches above normal. This ranks as the 53rd coolest and 27th wettest October among 136 years of state records.

Temperatures. Wet weather last spring and early summer forced late planting or replanting of many crops across Iowa as was the case in 1993. However, unlike the persistently cool growing season of 1993, temperatures have averaged very close to normal from June through October in 2008. These seasonal temperatures came without the typical extremes. There have been an average of only five days with temperatures reaching 90° or higher this year, the third lowest total in the past 113 years (only 1915 and 1992 averaged fewer 90° days). More importantly the first killing frost of the fall came much later than usual over much of the state. Thus much of Iowa enjoyed a much-needed extended growing season. A few locations in northeast Iowa dipped into the upper 20's on the morning of October 4. However, a widespread hard freeze did not arrive over most of northern and western Iowa until the morning of October 16 while parts of southeastern Iowa were spared until October 28. Iowa's temperature extremes ranged from a high of 84° at Bellevue on the 12th to morning lows of 17° at Sibley and Spencer on the 28th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 43% more than last October but 1% less than normal. Thus far this heating season degree day totals are running 31% more than last year and 12% less than normal.

Precipitation. It was a very wet month across much of the western one-third of Iowa where rain amounts were generally more than double October normals. Heaviest rains fell from the 21st to the 24th when 3.92 inches fell at Clarinda and 3.67 inches at Orange City. Meanwhile, rain totals were much less than usual over much of the eastern one-third of the state. Monthly rain totals varied from 1.12 inches at Williamsburg to 6.28 inches at Hawarden. Hawarden (old record 6.18 in 1968 among 83 years of records) and Sanborn (5.92 in 2008, old record 5.48 in 1984 among 97 years of records). Harvest was delayed not only by excessive rainfall but also by unseasonably high crop moisture content, owing to delayed planting and therefore delayed crop maturity. According to Iowa Agricultural Statistics the 2008 corn harvest is at its slowest pace at this time of year since 1992 while the soybean harvest has not been slower since 1986 (2008 harvest equal to 2001 pace). Finally, the season's first snow flurries were recorded over much of northeastern Iowa on the 26th. High winds dropped visibility down to one-quarter mile in some areas but snow accumulations were limited with temperature barely dropping to freezing. The storm of the 26th raked the entire state with wind gusts of at least 50 mph with Mason City recording a maximum gust of 62 mph.

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