

June Ends on a Scorching Note  
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A blistering final week and a return to drought transformed June from a mildly hot month into a scorcher, rekindling memories of the brutal 2011 summer. Temperatures routinely reached triple-digits across Oklahoma during the month's final week. According to data from the Oklahoma Mesonet, the statewide average temperature finished at 79.2 degrees to rank as the 19<sup>th</sup> warmest June on record, 2.7 degrees above normal. Statewide average records date back to 1895. June's warmth follows a pattern that began over two years ago with 22 out of the last 27 months being warmer than normal. The January-June statewide average entered the record books at 60.1 degrees, 4.9 degrees above normal. That obliterates the previous record mark of 58.9 degrees from the same period in 2006 as the state continues on a possible path towards its warmest year on record. Oklahoma's warmest year on record came in 1954 with a statewide average of 62.8 degrees. The January-June statewide average that year was 57.4 degrees.

The highest temperature recorded during the month was 112 degrees at Buffalo and Freedom on the 26<sup>th</sup> and again at Buffalo on the 27<sup>th</sup>. High temperatures across parts of the state were in the 70s as late as June 21. The lowest temperature recorded during the month was 44 degrees at Oilton and Cookson on the first.

The month was also the 29<sup>th</sup> driest June on record with a statewide average precipitation total of 2.54 inches, nearly 2 inches below normal. A few localized areas received significant moisture during the first two weeks of the month before the state adopted the much more summer-like pattern. The Mesonet site at Skiatook led June's rain totals with 6.86 inches while the small town of Cloudy brought up the rear with 0.45 inches. The state saw significant drought relief from October 2011 through March of this year, but the rains have since dwindled. The southeast and east central sections of the state were below 50 percent of normal since April 1, a slowdown that encompassed the entirety of Oklahoma's primary rainy season. Statewide, the average total of 8.2 inches is 4.5 inches below normal, the 14<sup>th</sup> driest such period on record.

Fueled by oppressive heat, intense sunshine, dwindling soil moisture and the recent lack of rainfall, drought continued to develop rapidly across the state. Over 48 percent of the state is now considered to be in drought according to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor report. For the first time since November 15, 2011, the entire state is now considered at least "abnormally dry." That designation is a drought pre-cursor that identifies an area that is dry, but not yet in drought. The dryness that has continued to intensify across Oklahoma is hardly confined to our state, with 72 percent of the country now labeled in the abnormally dry category or worse. That is the largest such extent covering the United States since the Drought Monitor effort began in 1999. More than 51 percent of the country is considered to be in drought, the largest such extent since September 2003.

Summer is normally a time of moisture depletion with losses from evaporation, plants and human consumption far outpacing rainfall. By late July and early August, the state's vegetation often develops a distinct yellow hue as it begins to wither and go dormant, the perfect fuel for wildfires. With the two warmest and driest months of the summer still to come, the intensifying drought is a reason for concern. Odds favor more drought development as summer trudges ahead and a dry Oklahoma looks with anticipation towards the fall rainy season.