



Central Illinois Lincoln Logs

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WCM Rod Palmer to Retire November 2nd



Leisurely Days Ahead for Rod Palmer

by Melissa Byrd,
Meteorologist

After 44 years and 4 months, Rod Palmer is calling it a day when he retires on November 2nd, 2002.

Rod started his career in June of 1958 with the Weather Bureau at Stampede Pass in Washington State at 4,000 feet elevation where the station was

snowbound 7 months of the year making it necessary to snowshoe or ski in and out every two and a half weeks. As soon as he left in 1960, the station received a snowmobile for going up and down the mountain! His next stop was Tatoosh Island, Washington, off the northwest tip of the state. Duty here was for five weeks on and then two off with transportation back and forth from the mainland provided by the Coast Guard, mostly in very small, slow boats. Many exciting adventures were experienced both in travel to and from the island and life on the island, itself. In the summer of 1963, Rod was selected for a forecaster/briefer position in Fairbanks, Alaska where he ended up spending seven years as a “sourdough!” Unique experiences up north were involvement in a year of ozone research, making flight packages for Europe to Asia flights, filling in as Fire Weather Forecaster, temporary duty at Barter Island on the northeast Arctic coast in January in the dead and dark of winter, experiencing a 5.5 magnitude earthquake, watching the building of the Prudhoe Bay oil field complex with a continuous flight line of airplanes day and night for over a year, studying math and physics at the University of Alaska, releasing a weather balloon at 50 below zero, making a morning temperature reading of 62 below, watching the spectacular aurora borealis near its origin, and experiencing Fairbank’s 100-year flooding of the Chena River.

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He left Alaska in the fall of 1970, headed for WSFO St Louis via an Alaska State Ferry through the inland waterway from Haines to Prince Rupert, then by road for the rest of the route. He bought a new car in Fairbanks that spring and was asked if he'd like air conditioning added. After asking the salesman, "are you crazy?", he found himself spending big dollars to have air conditioning installed the following summer in St. Louis! He spent only five months at St. Louis.

Rod was promoted to Principal Assistant at WSO Peoria, IL in the spring of 1971. Here he served for 18 years doing much of the spotter training and media relations for the office. He was involved with developing a radio system connecting the WSO with county EOCs for use in severe weather that still functions 31 years later. He also provided technical guidance to an ad hoc committee to procure doppler radar for central Illinois which resulted in the eventual establishment of the site at WFO Lincoln.

He transferred to WSO Springfield, IL in 1988 and after completing the cross-over program at San Jose State, he converted from Official in Charge in 1992 to Meteorologist in Charge (MIC) in 1993.

In 1995, both the SPI and PIA offices were closed and a new WFO opened at Lincoln where he became the first Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM.). His first duty was to go to Kansas City for a week and select the first panel of five forecasters for Lincoln and two for Paducah. From that original five, the office complement has grown to 23.

Rod's most satisfying accomplishments in his seven years at the new Lincoln office has been establishing a HAM radio base station including the recruitment of a dedicated group of volunteer HAMS to receive and disseminate severe weather reports. Promoting the expansion of the coverage

of NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) in the state of Illinois from its original seven to the current 28 transmitter sites. Being one of the original committee members who started the annual Severe Weather Seminar for weather spotters held each year in Bloomington. He was able to work with county and city ESDA coordinators to certify seven communities as StormReady. He joined with a small group of people from the Illinois Water Survey and our NWS office to see the rebirth of a local chapter of the American Meteorological Society of which he was elected the first President. The Central Illinois Chapter now has about 45 active members.

His last project (if and when completed), he considers the most important. This is the development and deployment of a Severe Weather Preparedness and Safety course to be taught in all of Illinois' schools. This will give each student and future adult, life-long learning skills to cope with all types of severe weather through the rest of their lives. He is working with Ed Holicky, one of our forecasters, the Illinois Education Association (IEA) and IEMA to develop the curriculum in the form of an educational CD to be used at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Rod says he will miss all his co-workers in the NWS, emergency managers, law enforcement folks, HAMS, fire fighters and EMTs, government officials at the local, county, and state levels, folks at the Illinois Water Survey and the Midwest Climate Center, all of the people in academia, especially at the university and college level, members of the Central Illinois Chapter of the AMS, and all the individuals with whom he has come in contact with over the years, especially the ones that stated, "I know you.....you're the voice on the weather radio!" He'll really miss being able to bring a smile and a laugh to all of the people mentioned, above, with a daily joke or two!

After retirement, Rod intends, to take however long, to find that section of the country that is “paradise”! He’s trying to escape summer heat and humidity and winter wind and snow. When he first came to the Midwest from Alaska, someone warned him, “Never live in an area where they grow corn and soy beans. It’s unfit for human habitation”! After nearly 32 years, Rod has managed to adjust to his surroundings!

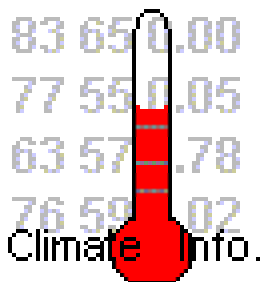
After playing tennis since high school, he’s recently taken up golf. Gardening and stream fishing are other interests. Some volunteer work such as tutoring adult reading and, possibly, working in some area of disaster recovery work with the Red Cross will occupy his time. He also has to cheer on his beloved Cubs, even though they are in their 42nd year of rebuilding the team!

So far, 2002 has been an interesting year with one extreme followed by another. We started out with the 2nd warmest winter (December-February) on record since 1895 at 6.1F above normal. The warmest winter on record was 1931-1932 at 8.2F. Snowfall was down, only 50-75% of normal. In fact, most of our significant snow fell in late February and early March when 5-10 inches fell over in the northern half of the ILX region.

Following the very mild winter was a period of heavy and widespread rain. For the entire state, this was the 6th wettest spring (March - May) since 1895 with 15.65 inches, some 4.5 inches above average. The central third of the state received some of the largest amounts. Several individual coop stations reported more than 20 inches of rain in central Illinois this spring.

The rainfall stopped suddenly in mid-June and really did not return until mid-August for most of the state. For that time period, this was the 8th driest since 1900 (4.23 inches or 56% of average). It was close to being as dry as 1988. The only difference is that in 1988 the extremely dry spring had already depleted soil moisture by mid-June. While soil moisture was in great shape going into the dry spell this summer, the demand on soil moisture was such that the upper layers dried out in a matter of weeks. The above-average temperatures this summer added to the stress on crops. This was the 14th warmest summer since 1895 (2F above average). Fortunately, rains returned to the northern two-thirds of the state after mid-August. Despite the dry summer, the first 8 months of this year are the 15th warmest and 16th wettest since 1895.

The outlook for fall and winter will be determined in part by the strength and timing of the current El Niño event in the Pacific Ocean. El Niño occurs when sea surface temperatures along the equator in the Pacific are much above average. The impacts on weather in the fall are not great but we typically have milder



**From the Desk of
the State
Climatologist**

by Jim Angel, State
Climatologist

I recently attended a NOAA-sponsored forum on modernizing the NWS cooperative network in Washington, D.C. on September 18. While details on the instrumentation and methods are still incomplete, the modernization has gained support from senior NOAA officials. This puts it one step closer to becoming a reality. The general plan is to provide coop observers with new instrumentation that will record hourly temperature and precipitation data that will be relayed automatically to the NWS in real time. Observers will still be collecting daily observations of snow fall and snow depth and making additional comments. In addition, many sites will be equipped with soil moisture sensors. This is a critical measurement that is lacking in most parts of the country.

winters. This is reflected in the NWS Climate Prediction Center outlook, which is calling for an increased chance of warmer temperatures during winter. In addition, an increased chance of below-average precipitation is possible in the eastern half of the corn-belt with Illinois on the western edge. The increased chance for dryness persists in Illinois and the eastern corn-belt through next spring. All the statistics discussed in this article and the relationships between El Niño and Illinois weather were developed from coop data over the last century. Keep up the good work.

New Voices Debut on NOAA Weather Radio



by Chris Geelhart, NOAA
Weather Radio Focal Point

A new voicing system was implemented on our NOAA Weather Radio stations this spring. Debut of the new voices, one male and one female, began at the end of May. Most messages are now using the new voices. However, the old system will be retained for backup purposes.

The voicing system was selected last summer, with comments from 19,000 visitors to NWS Headquarters' NWR homepage a significant part of the process. Several NWS offices nationwide began testing the new system in January. After evaluations from the test sites, it was decided to deploy the system nationally. The original rollout period of late March was pushed back, to allow upgraded software to be part of the deployment.

As we implement the voices, you may hear occasional mispronunciations. Updates to the software's pronunciation dictionary will be ongoing, as we evaluate how words are pronounced in different contexts. However, if you hear something

consistently being mispronounced, let us know. You may have heard a message that we missed, or we may have incorrectly entered the pronunciation of a town.

Open Radar Product Generator Improves Radar Operations

by Ed Martin, Electronic Systems Analyst

In September of 2001 the Radar Product Generator (RPG) at Lincoln was upgraded to a SUN based Open Radar Product Generator (ORPG). The main processor is an UltraSPARC 440 MHZ Processor with a minimum of 256MB of RAM. It replaced a Concurrent MicroFive and Versalia Motorola Eurobus communications equipment. The Fortran applications software was replaced with software written in C/C ++.

One of the biggest improvements was the ability to utilize the TCP/IP communications package. This enabled a direct LAN connection to the AWIPS (Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System). This connection was made very recently. The increase in the speed of this connection will enable forecasters to receive almost twice as many radar products than they were able to receive under the old architecture.



Another improvement was the addition of a Base Data Distribution Server. This server utilizes Virtual LANS to send data to officially approved users. Currently ILX sends data to MIT, Lincoln Labs for the FAA. This connection also enabled us to begin sending near real time archive data to NCDC and stop recording to 8MM tapes.

The ORPG is the first step in upgrading the entire radar system to take advantage of commercial advancements in hardware and software.



A Hot Summer for Central Illinois

by Kirk Huettl,
Meteorologist

The summer of 2002 was fairly hot across Central Illinois. June, July and August are considered the three meteorological summer months. Looking at Peoria, Springfield, Champaign and Lincoln, the average high was 86 degrees, or between 1 and 3 degrees above normal. There were between 30 and 36 days with highs in the 90s, with Champaign having the most of these 4 locations. Typically Springfield has 26 days and Peoria has 18 days with high temperatures in the 90s. The hottest day was on Sunday July 21st when afternoon temperatures sizzled between 95 and 100 degrees. Peoria and Champaign reached 98 degrees, Lincoln was 97, and Springfield was 95. Peoria had it's 10th hottest July on record with a monthly mean temperature of 79.1 degrees. It was even hotter across Southeast Illinois where Lawrenceville near the Wabash River had 60 days in the 90s this season. Lawrenceville came close to the century mark on 3 days, reaching 98 degrees on July 5th, July 9th and September 9th.

Rainfall was unevenly distributed during these summer months. Dry and hot conditions occurred for 5 weeks from Flag Day in mid June until the last 10 days of July. It dry and hot again during the last week of August which lasted through the first two weeks of September. Areas along and southeast of I-70 experienced drier drought like conditions. Lincoln had the most rainfall with 18.76 inches or 6.44 inches above normal. The 4.22 inches of rain the fell in Lincoln on August 16 set a 24 hour record for August, and was the 6th highest single day total.

The highest was an inch more with 5.22 inches on May 12, 1914. August ended up with 8.58 inches making it the wettest August on record in Lincoln. In fact, 16.37 inches of rain fell in Lincoln during July and August, most of that accumulated between July 22 and August 23. Springfield received 13.32 inches of rain which was 2.61 inches above normal. Peoria and Champaign had close to normal rainfall. Peoria received 11 inches which was 0.02 inches below normal, and Champaign has 12.78 inches which was 0.47 inches below normal.

With an El Niño in place, the outlook for this fall from the Climate Prediction Center is calling for close to normal rainfall and temperatures across Central Illinois. The outlook for this winter calls for above normal temperatures. Below normal precipitation is expected across Southeast Illinois with the rest of the state near normal.

Winter Weather Preparedness Week

November 17th through 23rd, 2002

It may be fall...but winter will be around the corner before you know it...so be prepared for all that can happen. The state of Illinois will hold it's annual Winter Weather Preparedness Week November 17th through the 23rd.

There was a change made dealing with the criteria the Weather Service uses for a Snow Advisory. If 4 to 6 inches of snow is forecast to fall...it will now be an advisory...rather than a Heavy Snow Warning. When snowfall is forecast to exceed 6 inches...a Heavy Snow Warning will be issued.

Another change made was the addition of a Freezing Fog Advisory. A freezing fog advisory is defined as a "very light ice accumulation from predominately freezing fog".

One of the purposes of this week is to raise the public awareness with regards to what constitutes winter weather and what to do to prepare for it.

IEMA, Red Cross, and National Weather Service have internet homepages which have more in-depth information concerning winter weather preparedness. The internet addresses are:

IEMA

<http://www.state.il.us/iema/>

Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org>

National Weather Service

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter/index.shtml>

Operation Ice Pack

<http://www.icepack.org/>

Latest Winter Watches and Warnings

<http://iwin.nws.noaa.gov/iwin/il/winterstorm.html>

IDOT Road Conditions Website

http://dot.state.il.us/operations/mo_state.html

or you can call 1-800-452-4368

More information on winter weather will be in the Winter Edition of Central Illinois Lincoln Logs.

Climatology Outlooks for the Next 30 to 90 Days

by Chris Geelhart, HMT

The NWS's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) is responsible for issuing long-range weather outlooks for the nation. These vary from several days to up to a year in advance. Although not as specific as the short range (i.e. 1 to 7 day) forecasts, these forecasts help in the mitigation of weather related natural disasters and uses for social

and economic good in agriculture, energy, transportation, water resources, and health. Continual product improvements are supported through diagnostic research, increasing use of models, and interactions with user groups (e.g. government, private and public industry, and international).

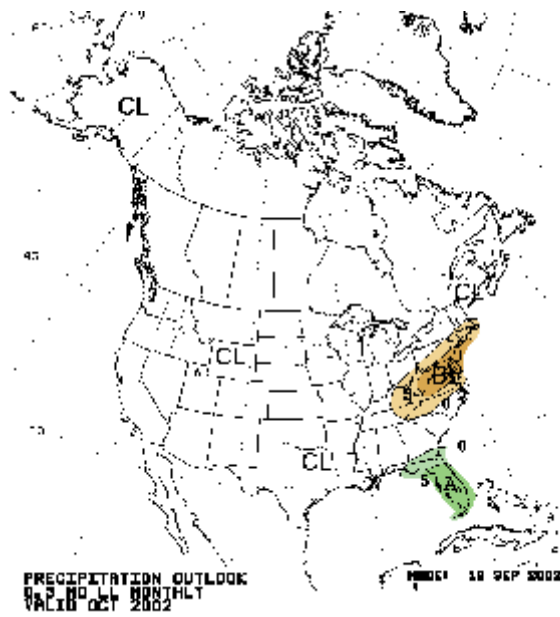
Around the middle of each month, generally on the Thursday closest to mid-month, the long range outlooks are issued. These outlooks are for the upcoming month, and also in 90-day blocks from the new month to a year from now. An example of the 90-day outlook for the October through December 2002 period (i.e. meteorological winter) is shown below.

Trends for temperature and precipitation are given on each outlook. They are broken down into Above Normal (A), Below Normal (B), and Near Normal (N). In areas where there are equal chances of above, below or near normal weather, CL (use climatological normals) is noted.

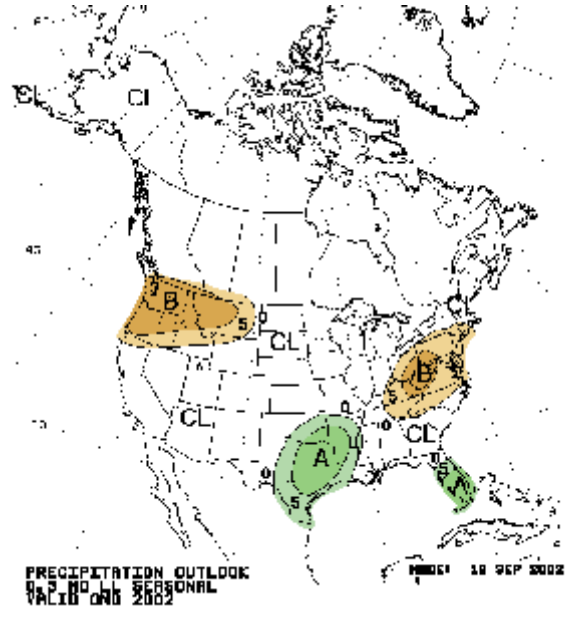
The CPC's home page (www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov) has many types of outlooks and assessments. These include climate outlooks, El Niño outlooks, drought outlooks, hurricane outlooks, and technical discussions behind the outlooks. The climate outlooks can specifically be found on these pages:

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/30day/> 30-day outlook

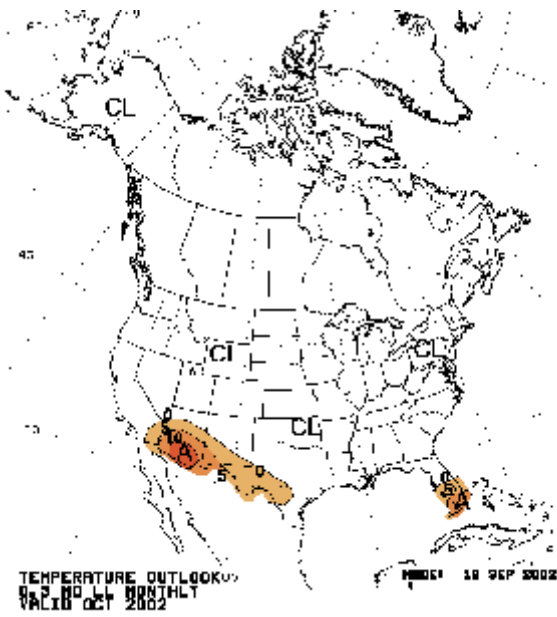
<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/90day/> 90-day outlooks



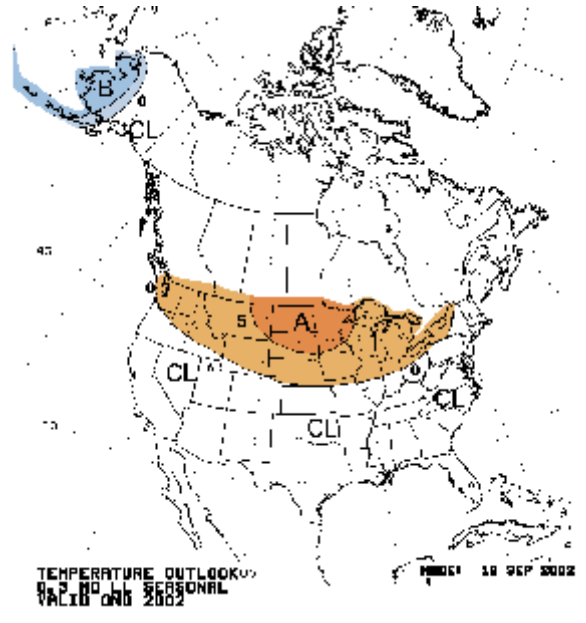
Precipitation Outlook for October 2002



90 Day Precipitation Outlook



Temperature Outlook for October 2002



90 Day Temperature Outlook

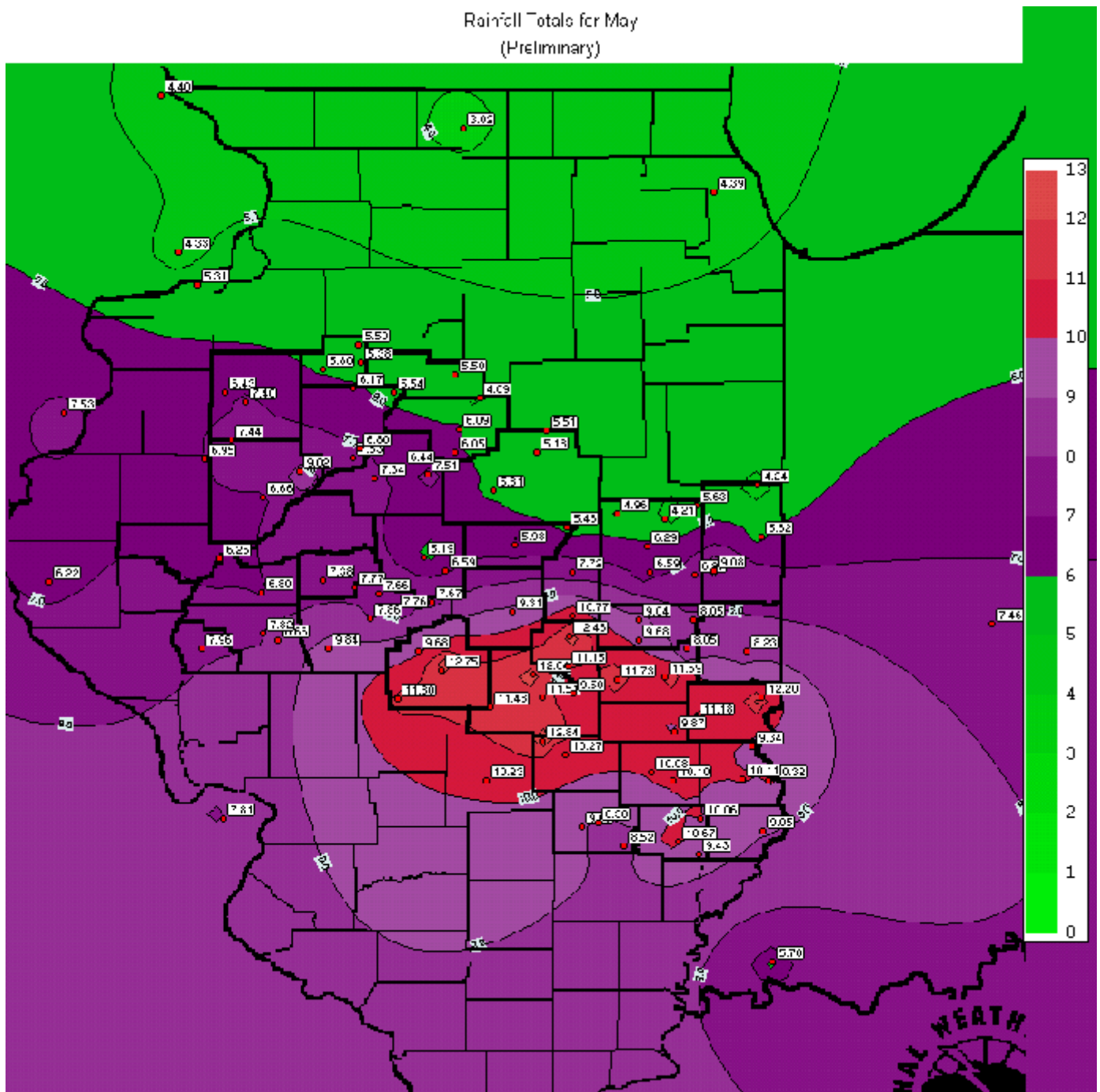
A Wet Severe Weather Season!

By Melissa Byrd, Meteorologist

The spring severe weather season started off slow...but picked up steam towards the end of April...especially when it comes to flash flooding.

The first significant round of heavy precipitation fell between April 19th and 21st over the southern half of Central Illinois's County Warning Area (CWA). Also, more rainfall occurred on April 27th and May 6th- 7th in the same areas. This caused the lower Illinois River Basin, Sangamon River and Wabash River, as well as their tributaries to begin rising.

Rainfall Totals for May
(Preliminary)



So by the time Mother's Day weekend rolled around, a large section of Central Illinois was saturated from the previous rains when the next significant round of heavy precipitation approached the area.

This time the first round of heavy rain fell on the upper sections of the Illinois River Basin on May 11th ...generally affecting areas north of a Rushville to Bloomington line. With just a few hours of little or no precipitation, another round of heavy rains moved into the CWA, affecting areas south of a Rushville to Bloomington line, an area that did not need anymore rain!

The rain persisted for over 12 hours with rainfall amounts over 4 inches in some locations. Numerous flash flood warnings (44) were issued for Central Illinois over the 2 day period. The flash flooding eventually turned to significant river flooding with a couple of locations reaching record or near record river flood levels. The Embarras River at Lawrenceville reached a record stage of 24.27 feet on May 16th, over 14 feet above flood stage!

River flooding finally subsided by the end of May, when the weather conditions for Central Illinois went the opposite direction...hot and dry!

For more information on the flooding that Central Illinois experienced go to the following section on our website... www.crh.noaa.gov/ilx/stormd.htm . Here you can click on each monthly storm report for the area for the past two years.

As for tornado activity, Central Illinois has only seen 9 tornadoes...3 F1s and 6 F0s. Additional tornado information can be found at www.crh.noaa.gov/ilx/2002tornadoes.htm .

The Central Illinois Lincoln Logs is a quarterly review of NWS activities in Central Illinois and is available on our internet page at <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/ilx>

Your comments are welcomed and can be addressed to either editor at our office. Winter Central Illinois Lincoln Logs Issue to be issued by the middle of November 2002.

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