

WESTERN KANSAS WEATHER MODIFICATION PROGRAM

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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

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For the period September 8 – September 15, 2012

Note: This is the last newsletter for the 2012 seeding season as our final day was September 15th. The next newsletter will be posted in late April of 2013.

General Interest: This year was simply remarkable in recent history! Numerous records were smashed covering many meteorological aspects as well as about every possible facet of this cloud seeding program. After the drought of 2011, many of us felt that was probably the worst of it for awhile anyway regarding drought intensity and exceedingly high heat. I'm not sure anyone would have predicted at the start of this year that the United States would explode into drought of such coverage and intensity that it is today. Although the heat and dryness became extreme in 2011 and this year, fact is the drought has been with us for awhile now and dealt a serious blow to our area for ten out of the last eleven years with the exception being 2004. It is tough to imagine that the current drought is going to become horrifically worse than today and plunge the area into Dust Bowl conditions. Experts say we still have a long way to go before a Dust Bowl repeat would occur and agricultural tools and methods have changed significantly from those times. With that being said, the frustration and pain brought on by this drought is still tremendous and compounded even further by a struggling world economy. Through the years, the optimists among us seemed to always hold out hope that the next year would be better with a return to a normal precipitation pattern or at least something close to it. It's hard to accurately describe what normal is here in western Kansas as the precipitation record abounds with episodes of feast or famine. Some would argue, including myself, that normal in western Kansas is high variability in precipitation from one year to the next and the odds of having several years in a row of precipitation close to the average of those high and low extremes is in and of itself fairly low. The last two decades clearly represent a feast and famine with the 1990's generally wet and the 2000's dry for most of western Kansas.

The number of seeding days this year totaled 18. The average number of seeding days per year going back to 1975 is 54. The previous record for least number of seeding days was last year with 31. Because the past decade or so has been droughty, the average number of seeding days per year going back to 2000 is only 36. Due to the record low number of seeding days, we also set record lows in terms of flights, flight-time, seeding agent usage, and fuel consumed.

This year could very well turn out to be the warmest year on record. According to NOAA, this summer was the 3rd warmest summer since records began in 1895 behind the summers of 2011 and 1936. Even though 2012 came in third, the differences are somewhat small as the average temperature this summer was 74.4 °F compared to 74.5 °F in 2011 and 74.6 °F in 1936. The January-August period was the warmest first eight months of any year on record for the contiguous United States. The national temperature of 58.7 °F was 4.0 °F above the national 20th century average, and 1.0 °F above the previous record warm period of January-August in 2006. Based on historical outcomes of the 5 warmest years on record, 2012 would end up being the warmest year on record even if temperatures return to the 20th century average for the remaining months of the year. Locally, information from the Dodge City NWS indicates the average summer temperature for Dodge was the 11th warmest on record while the January through August average temperature for Dodge was the warmest on record.

I would like to thank everyone who provided words of encouragement to the program during this season as it has been yet another year of troubling times for our program. Much appreciation goes out to so many folks who appreciate what this program can do and understand what this program can not do. We look forward to serving our target area counties to the best of our ability in 2013. See you next year!

Weather: Tranquil conditions prevailed the first half of the week. By Wednesday night, a cold front pushed through providing for cooler temperatures along with sporadic light rain lasting roughly 10 hours. Precipitation accumulation was rather low with most locations receiving only around 0.25 inches. Pleasant temperatures along with mostly sunny skies and cool nights rounded out the week.

Operations: No operations occurred this week.

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Walter Geiger, Meteorologist
Western Kansas Weather Modification Program