

## March Shatters Oklahoma Temperature Records

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March might have entered like a lamb, but it exited like July, smashing temperature records in the process. The March statewide average temperature, as measured by the 120-station Oklahoma Mesonet, was more than 9 degrees above normal at 59.4 degrees. That eclipses the previous top mark of 58.3 degrees set in March 2007. Oklahoma statewide average climate statistics date back to 1895. Not satisfied with being the warmest March on record, the month's temperature also topped well over half of the previous 117 Aprils in the record books. Beginning with March 2010, 19 of the past 24 months have finished warmer than normal. In addition to July and August of 2011, the March monthly heat record is the third in the last nine months. Oklahoma's July statewide average of 89.3 degrees is the highest for any calendar month for any state since 1895, helping propel Oklahoma's 2011 summer to a similar record. June 2011 finished just a degree away from its top spot to land in second place. The state's January-March statewide average of 48.6 degrees is also tops in the record books at 5.9 degrees above normal.

Many individual locations broke records for the month. Oklahoma City and Tulsa both finished with their hottest Marches on record at 60.8 degrees and 61.5 degrees, respectively. The month's hottest day was also its last. The 90 degrees at Beaver on the 31<sup>st</sup> is the highest temperature recorded in the state since October 25, 2011, when Altus and Hollis reached 92 degrees. Cold weather still managed to make an appearance, albeit a brief one. The lowest temperature recorded by the Mesonet was 17 degrees at Boise City on the third. Nine Mesonet stations failed to see a low temperature touch the freezing mark, with many others only spending a few hours at 32 degrees or below.

Heavy rains during March built off steady moisture that began last October to deal a final blow to drought impacts that had plagued the state over the last 18 months. According to the latest U.S. Drought Monitor report released on March 29, the area of the state completely free of drought rose from 34 percent to 76 percent during the month. The statewide average precipitation total finished at 4.5 inches to rank as the sixth wettest March on record, 1.4 inches above normal. Eastern Oklahoma received 6-9 inches while radar estimates indicate as much as 10-12 inches may have fallen in localized areas. The National Weather Service cooperative observer at Spavinaw reported 9.97 inches of rain for the month. The western half of the state saw 2-6 inches in general. The Panhandle, still the area hit hardest by drought, received less than a half of an inch of rainfall in western Cimarron County to over 2 inches in Beaver County.

The latest temperature outlook from the Climate Prediction Center indicates an increased chance of above normal temperatures through April for the eastern two-thirds of the United States, including Oklahoma. The precipitation outlook for April calls greater odds of below normal precipitation in far western Oklahoma and the Panhandle. The summer temperature outlook shows increased odds for above normal temperatures across Oklahoma. Summer precipitation outlooks are a bit more undecided.