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National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office
Chicago, IL
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Information on the Record Setting Rainfall at Chicago-O'Hare Today 6.86 INCHES OF RAINFALL HAVE BEEN RECORDED THROUGH 100 PM AT CHICAGO-OHARE...WHICH ALREADY SHATTERED THE PREVIOUS ALL TIME CALENDAR DAY RECORD RAINFALL TOTAL FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO. OHARE AIRPORT IS THE OFFICIAL CLIMATE SITE FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO. THE PERIOD OF RECORD BEGAN IN 1871. THE PREVIOUS CALENDAR DAY RAINFALL RECORD WAS 6.64 INCHES ON SEPTEMBER 13TH 2008. INTERESTINGLY...THE PREVIOUS CALENDAR DAY RECORD FOR JULY 23RD WAS SET ON JULY 23 2010 WITH 2.79 INCHES...ONLY TO BE BROKEN TODAY. THE RECORD EVENT REPORT ISSUED AT 1100 AM WILL BE UPDATED AFTER 100 AM CDT TONIGHT SHOULD ADDITIONAL RAINFALL OCCUR PRIOR TO THAT TIME.

8.20 INCHES OF RAINFALL OCCURRED BETWEEN 700 AM YESTERDAY AND 700 AM TODAY...WHICH FELL SHY OF THE ALL TIME 24 HOUR RAINFALL RECORD...SET FROM AUGUST 13TH TO AUGUST 14TH 1987 WITH 9.35 INCHES. THE POTENTIAL DOES EXIST FOR ADDITIONAL HEAVY RAINFALL LATER TONIGHT...SO THE 24 HOUR RAINFALL RECORD SET IN 1987 IS NOT YET SAFE.

YET ANOTHER NOTABLE ASPECT OF THE TORRENTIAL RAINS OF THE LAST 2 DAYS IN NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS HAS BEEN THE DRAMATIC SHIFT FROM THE VERY DRY PATTERN THAT HAD EXISTED FOR MUCH OF JULY. ONLY 0.45 INCHES OF RAINFALL HAD BEEN RECORDED THROUGH JULY 21ST...WHICH WAS 1.85 INCHES BELOW THE NORMAL VALUE FOR THE MONTH. WITH 8.86 INCHES OF RAIN FOR THE MONTH THROUGH 100 PM TODAY...JULY 2011 HAS SURPASSED JULY 2010 TO MOVE INTO THIRD PLACE AMONGST ALL TIME WETTEST JULYS. 8.84 INCHES FELL IN JULY 2010. NUMBER 2 ON THE LIST IS JULY 1957 WITH 8.98 INCHES. THE ALL TIME RAINIEST JULY OCCURRED ALL THE WAY BACK IN 1889 WITH 9.56 INCHES OF RAINFALL. WITH A WEEK STILL LEFT IN JULY...IT IS REASONABLE TO STATE THAT JULY 2011 COULD POTENTIALLY END UP AS THE WETTEST JULY ON RECORD IN CHICAGO...PERHAPS AS SOON AS TONIGHT OR TOMORROW. STAY TUNED.

Additional Information

Lightning was nothing short of spectacular Friday night/Saturday morning with 4,400 cloud to ground strokes within 225 mi radius of Chicago in 10 minutes! (Tom Skilling) Two house fires, in Glencoe and Deerfield, early Saturday morning appeared to be caused by lightning strikes from the heavy thunderstorms that passed through the Chicago area this morning, and a third blaze at a Mt. Prospect apartment complex could also be lightning-related. (Chicago Tribune)

The total rainfall at O'Hare of 6.86 inches is the largest single-day rainfall since records began in 1871. Of that total 5.53 inches fell in just 2 hours between 12:51am and 2:51am!!! The 24-hour rainfall for O'Hare was 8.20 inches. Thunderstorm wind gust of 47mph at O'Hare.

Here's what travel was like early this morning: Two truckers had to be rescued by boat after abandoning ship on a South Side expressway.

Chicago Fire Department spokesman Larry Langford said that the water was so deep where the Bishop Ford Expressway meets I-57 that the Chicago Fire Department had to use a boat to rescue two truck drivers whose trucks were nearly submerged.

Three trucks, two tankers and a box semi were in water up to their mirrors, forcing their drivers to find higher ground. One swam out, but two climbed on top of their trucks, where they were picked up by the fire department boat.

(Chicago Tribune)

According to Chicago Police, after receiving nearly 7 inches of rain overnight, roads leading to O'Hare were under water and no one could get to or leave the airport. This was reminiscent of the major flood back on August 13-14, 1987 when O'Hare became an island for nearly 24 hours due to severe flooding after a 9.35 inch deluge. (Tom Skilling) I also heard that snow plows were being used at O'Hare to clear the large amount of water from runways! (CNN)

We had about 4.8 inches of rain in Oak Park from the overnight storms and the lightning flashes were like have two strobe lights going off at the same time. This is what happens when you get on the edge of a ridiculously hot record-breaking air mass!