

Chicago's string of consecutive 100 percent sunshine days ends

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Chicago's October record 8-day streak of 100 percent sunshine came to an abrupt end early this morning. Veteran Chicago weather observer Frank Wachowski reported the sun was blocked out by clouds for a period after sunrise this morning. We kept looking back west for clouds associated with a series of low pressure systems to spread clouds this way, but the clouds associated with the low pressure and heavy rains in Florida actually did us in.

For several days a ridge of high pressure has been anchored over the east coast mid-Atlantic states - extending back to the northwest over Lake Superior into the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Manitoba. Low pressure developed over Florida giving copious rains to the southeast, especially the east coast of Florida the past few days. Originating in the Florida low pressure system, a mid-level altocumulus and high cirrus shield spread slowly northwest along the back side of the high pressure ridge across the Carolinas, West Virginia and Kentucky reaching Ohio-Indiana into Lower Michigan late Sunday. Overnight the cloud deck thickened with the western edge clipping the Chicago area this morning - shielding the sun and snapping our 100 percent sunshine streak.

Eight straight days of 100 percent sunshine in our area is simply extraordinary - the longest previous streak in October was 7 days back in 1934. Before this just-ended run, that was the longest streak for any month, except the one-time 10-day record established July 21-30, 1916 when a record 95 percent sunshine was received for that month.

So many things can happen to cut off sunlight for a few moments - fog developing and lifting into stratus early in the morning, cirrus associated with a jet stream - a minor disturbance aloft giving a brief period of mid-level cloudiness - fair weather cumulus developing and hovering over the area - just so many ways clouds can move in and out, providing a temporary break in the sunlight. That's what makes this latest consecutive 100 percent sunshine streak so extraordinary - we may not see it's like again for a long-long time.