

MAY 2020 WEATHER SUMMARY FOR THE CENTRAL CALIFORNIA INTERIOR

*By Brian Ochs, Climate Services Focal Point
Colin McKellar, Assistant Climate Services Focal Point
WFO San Joaquin Valley-Hanford*

Mainly seasonal temperatures were the rule for the first of the month. Due to upper-level disturbances, gusty winds developed in the evening below the passes and canyons in eastern Kern County, including the mountain and desert areas. Gusts around 60 miles per hour occurred during the evening hours of the 1st. Slightly above average temperatures continued on the following day. Gusty winds redeveloped in the Kern County mountain and desert areas in the evening, although much warmer than average temperatures in the Indian Wells Valley.

Gusty winds in the Kern County mountain and desert areas with near seasonal or slightly above average temperatures also prevailed during the 3rd through the 4th. However, high pressure began to strengthen to the southeast during these days so that temperatures in the Kern County desert region were much warmer than average; highs reached into the 90s at quite a few locations. On the 5th, a more noticeable warming trend continued on this day and the following several days, or until the 9th, but winds were generally light. The warmest temperatures occurred on the 9th, as daytime highs and morning lows reached near record high values. Highs in the San Joaquin Valley and the Kern County desert reached into the mid to upper 90s with isolated spots at around 100 degrees (such as Ridgecrest, Inyokern, and Lemoore).

On the 10th, temperatures were slightly lower but well above average, as highs were still in the lower to mid-90s at the warmest locations in the San Joaquin Valley and the Kern County desert areas. As marine air began to filter through the passes along the west side of the Central Valley by the evening, wind speeds increased with gusts that reached around 35 to 40 miles per hour. Daytime highs in the valley cooled noticeably on the 11th and 12th, or slightly below average. Gusty winds also developed in the prone areas in Kern County and along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley; for example, gusts reached around 50 to 60 miles per hour through the Kern County mountain passes and around 40 miles per hour along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley.

On the 13th through the 15th, near average temperatures with relatively cool mornings continued. Gusty winds remained a daily occurrence in the eastern Kern County mountain and desert areas. Wind gusts were a bit stronger than on previous days, or reached around 60 to 70 miles per hour in localized areas through and below the mountain passes. On the afternoon of the 13th, there was an isolated gust of 70 miles per hour with sustained south to southwest winds around 20 to 30 mph for much of the afternoon and evening in Squirrel Canyon just south of Lake Isabella,

which was below a north-facing canyon, rather than the usual east-facing ones. This wind direction is not typical, though not unusual, for this portion of Kern County, as it was likely due to terrain influences.

A brief warmup occurred on the 16th and 17th before a rather strong and cold low pressure system arrived that produced widespread precipitation arrived by the evening of the 17th. There were some sprinkles and light rainfall ahead of the system, so some isolated locations did receive precipitation as early as the afternoon of the 17th. More showers with isolated embedded thunderstorms developed on the night of the 17th and redeveloped during the afternoon of the 18th. Rainfall amounts from the evening of the 17th through the evening of the 18th were as much as two to three inches in some locations the Sierra Nevada from Tulare County and northward to Yosemite, and quite a few spots reported amounts around an inch. Snow amounts were generally light (around 2 inches) and above elevations of 6,500 feet during this period, although a few spots picked up between 6 to 9 inches above 8,000 feet. Even some San Joaquin Valley locations reported near an inch, especially in Visalia and Sanger, due to afternoon and evening thunderstorms on the 18th. Otherwise, cooler than average to near seasonal temperatures prevailed. Daytime highs at many locations north of Kern County remained in the lower 70s in the Central Valley, and highs were near 80 degrees in Kern County, including near the southern end of the valley. Quite a few locations in Kern County also received precipitation, although amounts were generally around 0.30 inch or less, except for a couple of stations that reported higher amounts above 0.50 inch in the Tehachapi Mountains. Cool temperatures with a few showers continued on the 19th, although some spots received around 0.10 to 0.25 inch in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Afterward, near seasonal temperatures returned for a couple of days, including on the 20th through the 23rd. In addition, gusty winds materialized in the hills along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley on the 21st as a low pressure system passed over Northern California and the Pacific Northwest. Local gusts reached around 40 mile per hour in these areas. As a result of these increased winds, slightly cooler air flowed into the San Joaquin Valley. On the following day, gusty winds developed in the Kern County mountains and desert with gusts around 45 to 60 miles per hour in a few locales. By the morning of the 23rd, the winds relaxed a bit.

High pressure returned on the 24th, and a significant warming trend occurred on Memorial Day. Highs reached near 100 degrees in the warmest spots on Memorial Day and warmed even more for the next few days. Readings were in the triple digits on the 26th through the 28th throughout the lower elevations, including the Central Valley and the Kern County desert. Highs reached 105 degrees and above in quite a few locations on the 27th and 28th. Morning lows were also very warm and reached record high values at quite a few locations from the 26th through the 28th. During the 26th through the 29th, some record high minimum temperatures were set (including at Fresno; record high minimum temperatures were tied or broken for these four days).

A significant lowering trend in temperatures began on the 29th, but highs remained above average for the most part. However, cooling had begun along the west side of the San Joaquin Valley as winds increased at the passes, including Pacheco Pass. Breezy to locally gusty conditions spread into the Central Valley on the night of the 29th, and gusts reached as high as around 55 miles per hour over the west side hills and mountains. Cooling occurred on the 30th when daytime highs returned to around seasonal averages; breezy conditions continued at times. High temperatures were several degrees below average on this day and the last day of the month, as highs reached mainly into the 80s in the warmest locations. Isolated afternoon showers and thunderstorms developed at times over the highest elevations of the Sierra Nevada during the last few days of the month, although precipitation amounts were generally light.

Overall, the month was warmer than average (Fig 1) with variable amounts of precipitation that accumulated this month (Fig 2) due to scattered showers and thunderstorms over the Sierra Nevada and adjacent foothills on the 17th through the 19th.

Table 1 – May 2020 Summary Statistics for ASOS locations

Location	Monthly Average Temp (deg F)	Departure From Average (deg F)	Total Monthly Precipitation (inches)	Departure From Normal (inches)
Bakersfield	73.2	+2.7	0.16	-0.02
Fresno	73.4	+3.3	0.12	-0.31
Hanford	71.3	+2.6	0.11	-0.31
Madera	69.6	+2.3	0.22	-0.26
Merced	70.3	+3.4	0.20	-0.38

Table 2 – Seasonal Precipitation for ASOS locations (ending on May 31st)

Location	Since Jan 1st (inches)	Departure from Average (inches)	Since Jul 1st (inches)	Departure from Average (inches)	Since Oct 1st (inches)	Departure from Normal (inches)
Bakersfield	4.59	+0.28	7.20	+0.81	7.18	+0.91
Fresno	4.75	-2.88	7.63	-3.66	7.63	-3.47
Hanford	4.31	-2.30	6.62	-3.33	6.62	-3.12
Madera	3.76	-4.05	6.02	-5.81	6.02	-5.52
Merced	4.58	-3.97	9.54	-2.83	9.54	-2.52

Table 3 – Warmest High Temperatures and Coolest Low Temperatures of the Month for ASOS locations				
Location	High	Date(s)	Low	Date(s)
Bakersfield	105	28 th	53	4 th & 20 th
Fresno	106	28 th	51	19 th
Hanford	106	28 th	46	4 th
Madera	105	27 th & 28 th	42	4 th
Merced	105	28 th	44	4 th

Temperature/Precipitation Rankings for May 2020

Bakersfield – 20th warmest; 65th lowest precipitation on record for the month of May.

Fresno – 8th warmest; 65th lowest precipitation on record.

Daily Records Set During May 2020

Bakersfield

28th - Record high minimum temperature of 75 degrees, which broke the old record of 72 degrees that was last set for the date in 2009.

Fresno

26th – Record high minimum temperature of 72 degrees, which broke the old record of 68 degrees that was last set for the date in 2014.

27th – Record high maximum temperature of 105 degrees, which broke the old record of 104 degrees that was last set for the date in 1974. Record high minimum temperature of 74 degrees, which broke the old record of 69 degrees for the date in 1896.

28th - Record high minimum temperature of 73 degrees, which broke the old record of 69 degrees for the date in 2009.

29th - Record high minimum temperature of 72 degrees tied (previously on date in 1939).

Number of Days with Maximum Temperature of 100 Degrees or Higher in May 2020

Bakersfield – 3 (average is 1 for May)

Fresno – 3 (average is 1 for May)

Fig 1 – Departure from Average Temperature for May 2020

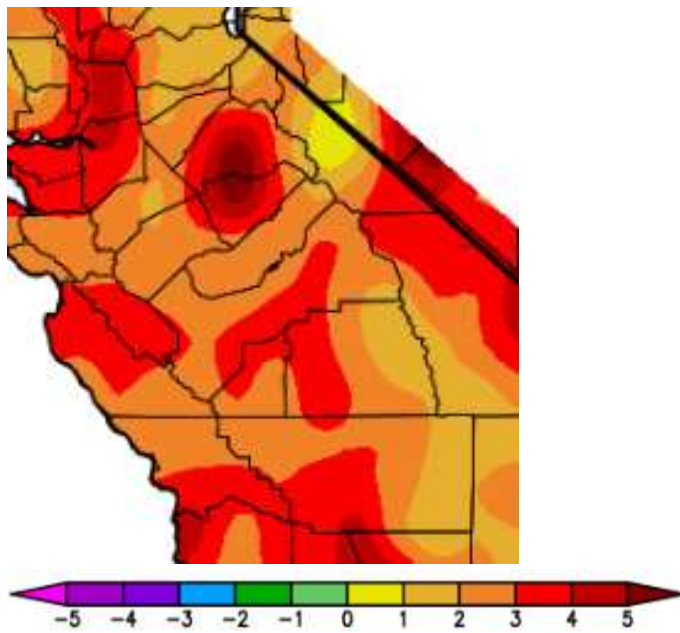
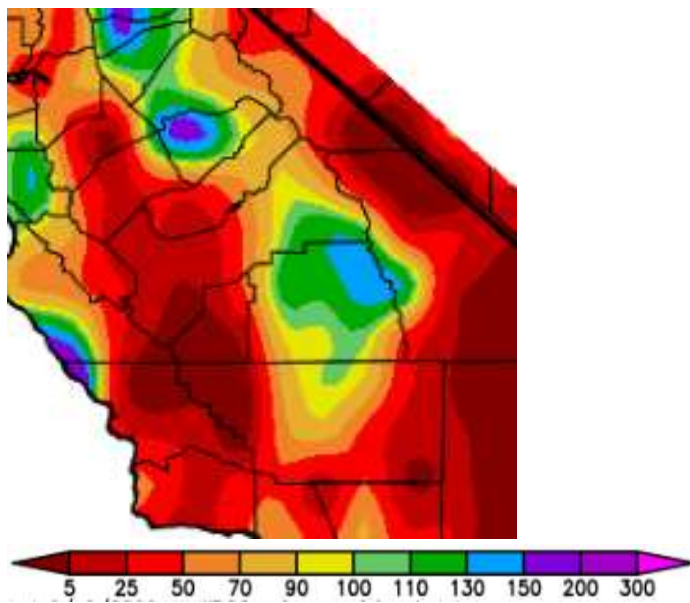


Fig 2 – Percent of Average Precipitation for May 2020



*Images above (i.e., Figures 1-2) courtesy of Western Region Climate Center