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ALERT

FEATURED

Metro benefits from summer rains

By Joy Hampton | Senior Staff Writer 9 hrs ago



June rainfall kept Norman rain barrels full most of the month, but folks in Western Oklahoma aren't as fortunate.

Joy Hampton / The Transcript



Recent rains in Central Oklahoma have been welcome, but according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, half the state's population is affected by drought.

"Abnormal dryness or drought are currently affecting approximately 1,873,000 people in Oklahoma, which is about 50 percent of the state's population," according to a recent report released by John M. Harrington, Division Director, Water Resources Division for the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG).

Parts of Western Oklahoma remain in a severe drought, and while Harrington's report, issued Friday, clearly shows Central Oklahoma has had a wetter than normal June, the total rainfall accumulation for the calendar year-to-date is still down by two inches from normal prior to the weekend rains.

"We've had 0.34 of an inch on the south side of Norman," said National Weather Service meteorologist John Pike. "On the North side of town, Cleveland County Mesonet had 0.26 of an inch."

Recent rains have varied between slow accumulation and Saturday's heavier rain that moved through quickly.

Pike said the metro area has fared well for rain this year.

"Out in Western Oklahoma, they haven't been getting as much rain," Pike said. "For Oklahoma City, for the full month of June, they had six inches and the normal for June is 4.93 inches. As a result it was about 1.07 inches above normal."

Meanwhile Lake Thunderbird, Canton and Arcadia are at capacity. With Thunderbird at capacity, Norman has been able to use water from the flood control pool without it counting against the city's annual allotment.

Canton supplies water for Oklahoma City while Arcadia supplies water for Edmond. Edmond, like Norman, also taps the Garber-Wellington Aquifer with city wells and purchases water from Oklahoma City.

Norman buys a relatively small amount of treated water from Oklahoma City each month. That water is used first and allows the city equipment a break during high-use times, though June rains have kept water usage in the 12- to 17-million-gallons-per-day (MGD) range as compared to using 20 to 22 MGD during some previous high-heat, high-drought years.

Heat has been the biggest concern this summer despite that temperatures have been within normal ranges. The higher humidity has created a high heat index though that hasn't been out of the ordinary for summer, Pike said.

"The heat index has been pretty high over the last few days. We have had a lot more heat advisories," Pike said. "For the month of June, the average temperature was 79.6 degrees [which is higher than] the normal temperature of 78 degrees in Oklahoma City."

Heat brings concerns for vulnerable and elderly populations who may not have air conditioning. While fans are distributed through groups like the Salvation Army, it's important for residents to check on each other, especially vulnerable populations.

Places to get out of the heat in Norman include Norman Public Library, 225 N. Webster Ave; Sooner Mall, 3301 W. Main St.; Rose Rock Community Center, 700 Berry Road and Little Axe Community Center, 1000 168th Ave. S.E.

The city recommends drinking plenty of fluids, eating smaller, more frequent meals and limiting time outdoors during the hottest hours of the day. Children and pets should never be left unattended in a vehicle which can be several degrees warmer than outside temperatures.

The city also suggests keeping pets indoors and refilling water bowls frequently. Pets that cannot be kept indoors should have plenty of water and shade.

AAA reports that heat kills more batteries than cold because the fluid in a battery can evaporate and drain the power. The auto group recommends parking indoors or in the shade, switching off accessories before turning off your vehicle and checking your battery case for corrosion.

Travelers should also be aware of high fines assessed for throwing lit cigarettes out the window. In counties experiencing drought and under burn bans, those fines can be doubled due to the fire hazard.

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Joy Hampton

My passions include yoga, running, swimming, cycling, hiking, nature photography and a love of animals and the natural environment.

