



Heatwave of July 1936

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La Crosse, WI
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Overview

The "Dust Bowl" years of 1930-36 brought some of the hottest summers on record to the United States, especially across the Plains, Upper Midwest and Great Lake States. For the Upper Mississippi River Valley, the first few weeks of July 1936 provided the hottest temperatures of that period, including many all-time record highs (see tab below).

The string of hot, dry days was also deadly. Nationally, around 5000 deaths were associated with the heat wave.

In La Crosse, WI, there were 14 consecutive days (July 5th-18th) where the high temperature was 90 degrees or greater, and 9 days that were at or above 100°F. Six record July temperatures set during this time still stand, including the hottest day on record with 108°F on the 14th. The average high temperature for La Crosse during this stretch of extreme heat was 101°F, and the mean temperature for the month finished at 79.5°F - 2nd highest on record.

Several factors led to the deadly heat of July 1936:

- A series of droughts affected the U.S. during the early 1930s. The lack of rain parched the earth and killed vegetation, especially across the Plains states.
- Poor land management (farming techniques) across the Plains furthered the impact of the drought, with lush wheat fields becoming barren waste lands.
- Without the vegetation and soil moisture, the Plains acted as a furnace. The climate of that region took on desert qualities, accentuating its capacity to produce heat.
- A strong ridge of high pressure set up over the west coast and funneled the heat northward across the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes.

As a result of the "Dust Bowl", new farming methods and techniques were developed, along with a focus on soil conservation. This has helped to avert or minimize the impact of a prolonged drought.

[Graphics / Maps](#) **Temperatures (July 5-18, 1936)** [All-Time Records](#)

Temperatures July 5-11, 1936

Location	July 5	July 6	July 7	July 8	July 9	July 10	July 11
Decorah, IA	101°F	106°F	104°F	101°F	104°F	103°F	107°F
New Hampton, IA	106°F	104°F	102°F	100°F	100°F	104°F	104°F
Rochester, MN	92°F	105°F	102°F	99°F	101°F	105°F	104°F
Grand Meadow, MN	93°F	104°F	100°F	97°F	98°F	103°F	102°F
Mondovi, WI	90°F	M	100°F	101°F	95°F	92°F	106°F
Richland Center, WI	93°F	100°F	102°F	100°F	101°F	103°F	105°F
Hatfield, WI	87°F	95°F	103°F	100°F	102°F	100°F	104°F
La Crosse, WI	94°F	100°F	104°F	102°F	102°F	100°F	104°F
Lancaster, WI	98°F	101°F	103°F	100°F	101°F	102°F	105°F
Viroqua, WI	95°F	100°F	102°F	102°F	99°F	98°F	104°F
Mather, WI	88°F	90°F	97°F	101°F	100°F	102°F	101°F
Medford, WI	84°F	89°F	100°F	97°F	98°F	94°F	100°F

Temperatures July 12-18, 1936

Location	July 12	July 13	July 14	July 15	July 16	July 17	July 18
Decorah, IA	101°F	109°F	111°F	102°F	103°F	106°F	100°F
New Hampton, IA	108°F	110°F	110°F	106°F	106°F	104°F	100°F
Rochester, MN	107°F	107°F	108°F	100°F	101°F	102°F	96°F
Grand Meadow, MN	105°F	105°F	106°F	97°F	100°F	101°F	96°F
Mondovi, WI	109°F	109°F	110°F	M	M	100°F	100°F
Richland Center, WI	108°F	109°F	110°F	102°F	97°F	101°F	94°F
Hatfield, WI	105°F	107°F	108°F	106°F	97°F	96°F	98°F
La Crosse, WI	105°F	106°F	108°F	95°F	97°F	101°F	96°F
Lancaster, WI	106°F	107°F	108°F	99°F	98°F	100°F	84°F

Viroqua, WI	106°F	108°F	108°F	105°F	96°F	100°F	M
Mather, WI	100°F	105°F	106°F	106°F	98°F	97°F	98°F
Medford, WI	103°F	104°F	104°F	92°F	96°F	90°F	92°F



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