

95-Degree Mark Hottest On Record

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The mercury climbed to 95 degrees Monday, the hottest June 15 on record, according to Santa Cruz Weatherman Ron MacDonald.

The previous high was 94 degrees in 1976, said MacDonald, who explained that weather statistics date back to the early 1890s.

The hot day was followed by an unusually-warm evening. MacDonald said he recorded a temperature of 72 degrees at 11 p.m. The overnight low was 55 degrees — seven degrees above normal for June — and by 8 o'clock this morning the thermometer already showed 70 degrees, according to MacDonald.

Whereas Monday's temperature was a record, the all-time high for June is in the 100-degree range. MacDonald said Santa Cruz recorded five straight days of 100-degree-plus temperatures in 1976.

Monday's hot weather was caused by a ridge of high pressure which blocked the normal offshore breeze, according to the National Weather Service in Redwood City.

That ridge of high pressure, the weather service said, is expected to gradually deteriorate and move eastward, bringing cooler weather to the coast on Wednesday.

High, stratus clouds which began moving in over the area this morning are expected to remain along the coast tonight and Wednesday morning.

The warm weather is of concern to fire officials, who ushered in the summer fire season the first week of June.

"The last three weeks of warm weather and wind have dried the county out substantially," said Frank Lewis of the state Department of Forestry.

"We've had no major runs yet, but the potential is there and is more so every day of this warm weather," he explained.

Lewis urged county residents to be careful with any type of activity likely to start a fire and noted that persons responsible for even accidental fires can be held liable.

Some 300 acres of grass rangeland burned Monday in Marina. Clear skies over the bay made the blaze visible from the Santa Cruz area.

The fire on the Armstrong Ranch one-half mile north of Marina on Del Monte Boulevard was controlled in three hours. Cause of the blaze is under investigation, according to a Marina Fire Department spokesman.