

WORKING IN IRAQ - CLIMATE

People often forget to think about potential dangers associated with working in extreme weather conditions. Everyone required to work in predominantly poor climatic conditions should be armed with information that will ensure their safety and survival.

The information below is essential.

Remember: to survive and be safe, careful planning is essential.

The purpose of this information is to describe practices that will reduce the incidence of disease and sickness, and general guidelines and to keep you fit for your task in the environment that you will be working in.

More detailed information can be found in Centurion's **Hostile Environments and Emergency First Aid Aide-mémoire and Guide to Biological and Chemical Warfare**.

Average temperatures in Iraq range from higher than 48°C (120°F) in July and August to below freezing in January. Most of the rainfall occurs from December to April and is more abundant in the mountainous region where it may reach 100cm a year in some places.

The summer months are marked by two kinds of wind phenomenon:

The southern and southeasterly **sharqi** – a dry and dusty wind with occasional gusts to 80 km/h which occurs from April to early June and again from late September to November, may last for a day at the beginning and end of season but for several days at other times. This wind is often accompanied by violent dust storms that may rise to heights of several thousand metres and close airports for brief periods.

The **shamal** – a steady wind from the north and northwest, prevails from mid June to mid September. Very dry air which accompanies the shamal permits intensive sun heating of the land surface but also provides a breeze which offers some cooling effect.

Dust storms accompany these winds and may rise to height of several thousand metres, causing hazardous flying conditions and closing airports for brief periods of time.

Extremes of temperatures and humidity, coupled with the scarcity of water, affects both people and equipment. During the dry season, clouds of dust caused by vehicle movement increases detection in desert regions. Flash flooding in wadis and across roads hinder traffic and resupply efforts during the rainy season.

The Iraqi climate has hot, dry summers and cold winters and a pleasant spring and autumn. Roughly 90% of the annual rainfall occurs between November and April and most of it is in the winter months from December to March.

The remaining six months, particularly the hottest ones of June, July and August, at approximately 32°C (90°F), are dry. The influence of the Persian Gulf on the climate of Iraq is very limited. Near the Gulf the relative humidity is higher than in other parts of the country.

In the western and southern desert region, the climate is characterised by hot summers and cool winters. This region also receives brief violent rainstorms in the winter that usually total about 10cm. Most nights are clear in the summer, and about one third of the nights are cloudy in the winter.

In the rolling upland region there is basically no precipitation in the summer and some showers in the winter. The winter rainfall normally averages about 38cm. The nights are generally clear in the summer and in the winter dense clouds are common about half of the nights.

The alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Delta in the southeast receives most of its precipitation accompanied by the thunderstorms in the winter and early spring. The average annual rainfall for this area is only about 10-17cm. Half of the days in winter are cloudy and in the summer the weather is clear most of the time.

In the mountains of the north and northeast the climate is characterised by warm summers and cold winters. Rain occurs mainly in winter and spring, with minimal rainfall in summer.

Above 1,500m heavy snowfalls occur in the winter, and there is some thunderstorm activity in the summer. Annual rainfall for the whole region ranges from 40–100cm. Few nights are cloudy in summer and about half of the days are cloudy in winter.

ANNUAL TEMPERATURES

REGION	WINTER		SUMMER		EXTREMES	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
Western/SouthernDesert	9°	16°	20°	40°	-14°	49°
RollingUpland	3°	13°	25°	40°	-12°	49°
Tigres/EuphratesDelta	4°	18°	25°	40°	-7°	51°
Mountains	-4°	5°	15°	25°	-30°	42°