

IOWA FINAL MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY DECEMBER 2001

General Summary. December temperatures averaged 30.6° or 7.7° above normal while precipitation totaled 0.84 inch or 0.43 inch less than normal. This ranks as the 14th warmest and 42nd driest December among 129 years of state records.

Temperatures. The very mild weather pattern that prevailed throughout November continued until the 22nd of December when much colder weather finally arrived. Temperatures averaged 13 degrees above normal over the first 22 days of the month; however, below normal readings prevailed for all but one of the last nine days of the month. Temperatures soared to 69° on the 4th at Shenandoah and at Red Oak and Keosauqua on the 5th. Iowa's first subzero temperatures of the season finally arrived on the morning of the 25th at a few northwest Iowa locations. This was the latest arrival of subzero temperatures in the winter in Iowa since 1939 (Dec. 29). The month's coldest weather was recorded on the morning of the 31st when Primghar and Sheldon reported lows of -7°. Overall this was Iowa's warmest December since 1965.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 38% less than last December and 19% less than normal. Thus far this season heating requirements have been running 31% less than last year at this time and 19% less than normal. The much milder weather this season versus last winter, plus much lower energy prices, will result in considerable savings for Iowa energy consumers.

Precipitation. Rainfall events on the 5th, 12th and 22nd accounted for most of the month's precipitation. The only snowfall event of consequence was on the 22nd - 23rd when one to three inch accumulations were common across the northwest one-third of the state. Lake Park and Ocheyedon reported the most snowfall for the month with only four inches while much of southeastern Iowa has yet to record a measurable snowfall this season. December snowfall averaged only 0.9 inch across Iowa which ties for the second lowest December total among 115 years of statewide snowfall records (the record low is 0.4 inch in 1979). Monthly precipitation totals varied from only 0.08 inch at Alton up to 1.98 inches at Columbus Junction.

What a difference a year makes. The November-December period of 2001 averaged 39.3° or 9.1° above normal while snowfall totaled 1.2 inches or 8.8 inches less than normal. This is the warmest November-December period ever in Iowa (previous record 38.8° in 1931) and falls just shy of 1912 as the least snowy start to the winter season (1.1 inches through Dec. 31). A year ago November-December temperatures averaged only 21.1° while snowfall totaled 28.0 inches. The last two months of 2000 were the third coldest November-December period on record and was by far the snowiest such period ever (old record 20.9 inches in Nov-Dec 1909).

Annual Summary. Temperatures during 2001 averaged 49.0° or 0.7° above normal while precipitation totaled 35.34 inches or 2.23 inches above normal. This ranks as the 35th warmest and 33rd wettest year among 129 years of state records. Precipitation

varied from 25.04 inches at Le Mars up to 49.47 inches at Keokuk. The year began very cold with lows of -22° at Chariton and Leon on January 2 and ended unusually mild with the second warmest last quarter on record. Sioux City on May 15 and Knoxville on July 22 recorded the year's highest temperatures with 101° readings.

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