

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2004

General Summary. March temperatures averaged 40.4° or 4.4° above normal while precipitation totaled 3.88 inches or 1.67 inches above normal. This ranks as the 17th warmest and 8th wettest March among 132 years of Iowa records.

Temperatures. March began with above normal temperatures for the first 10 days of the month with readings peaking at 67° at Shenandoah on the 8th. Subnormal temperatures were confined to only 9 days of the month (11th-12th, 15th-17th, 21st-22nd and 30th-31st). The month's coldest day was the 11th when Northwood, Lake Park and Primghar recorded morning lows of 6° and daytime highs were only in the teens in parts of northern Iowa. The year's first 70° readings were recorded across far southwest Iowa on the 19th where Sidney reached 75°. The month's warmest weather, however, prevailed from the 24th through the 27th when temperatures averaged 20° above normal. Onawa reported the highest temperature of the month with an 82° reading on the 24th.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 16% less than normal and 19% less than last March. Heating degree day totals so far this heating season are running 5% less than normal as well as 5% less than last season through March 31.

Precipitation. There were four substantial precipitation events during the month which combined to make this the wettest March since 1991. The first storm system brought rain statewide on the 4th-5th with more than an inch recorded over most of the southeast two-thirds of Iowa. The next storm deposited snow over all but the extreme northeast portions of the state on the 15th-16th. The heaviest snow was centered over west central Iowa with 10 inches or more accumulating in an area bounded by Woodbury, Harrison and Louisa Counties with 19.0 inches at Sioux City and 17.8 inches at Carroll. Finally, a pair of rainstorms dampened all of Iowa on the 25th-26th and the 27th-28th. The first of these late month systems dropped an inch or more of rain across the northeast one-third of the state with Charles City picking up 2.42 inches. The last storm brought an inch or more of rain to the western one-half of Iowa with greatest amounts reported from Glenwood with 3.61 inches and Harlan with 3.12 inches. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 1.88 inches at Milford to 6.20 inches at Harlan and 5.80 inches at Glenwood. At Harlan and Charles City these were both record high totals for March (old record 4.78 inches in 1952 among 113 years of data at Harlan; old record 4.93 inches in 1961 among 129 years of data at Charles City). Just 3 reporting points (Lake Mills, Milford and Fort Madison) reported less than normal precipitation for the month. Snowfall amounts varied considerably across Iowa with monthly totals varying from only 0.5 inches at New Hampton up to 20.4 inches at Sioux City. Statewide snowfall averaged 6.7 inches or 1.9 inches above normal. This ranks 44th snowiest March among 117 years of records.

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