

IOWA WEATHER SUMMARY – DECEMBER 2004

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 26.5° or 3.6° above normal while precipitation totaled 0.58 inches or 0.65 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 51st warmest and 25th driest December among 132 years of state records.

Temperatures. The relatively warm weather pattern of this past autumn continued through most of December. Above normal temperatures were the rule for the first 12 days of the month with temperatures reaching 56° at Glenwood, Keokuk, Leon, Mount Pleasant, Red Oak, Shenandoah and Sidney on the 4th. The state's first subzero temperatures of the season did not arrive until the morning of the 19th when Sibley reported a low of -10°. The month's coldest weather, however, came just before Christmas. Northwood and Osage recorded afternoon highs of only -1° on the 23rd with temperatures falling to -18° at Northwood on the morning of the 24th. However, the month's warmest weather was saved for last as readings soared into the 60's across the southwest one-half of Iowa on the afternoon of the 30th. Glenwood and Shenandoah reported the highest temperatures with 67°.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 4% more than last December but 10% less than normal. Thus far this heating season (since July 1), heating requirements are running 5% less than last season and 13% less than normal.

Precipitation. Dry weather prevailed for most of December. Over 60% of the month's precipitation fell on the 5th when rainfall amounts of one-half to two-thirds of an inch were common across the southeast half of Iowa. Monthly precipitation totals were below normal at all reporting stations, except Guttenberg, with amounts varying from 0.08 inches at Rock Valley to 1.68 inches at Keokuk. The only snowfall of consequence began on the morning of the 20th and continued into the morning of the 21st. Snowfall amounts of 1 to 2 inches were common across central and northern Iowa with greatest amounts reported at Northwood (4.4 inches) and Lake Mills (4.0 inches). Statewide snowfall averaged only 1.1 inches for the month or 6.2 inches less than usual. This ties for the 7th lowest December snow total among 118 years of state records. Snowfall was also less than normal in October and November with a season-to-date total of only 2.0 inches or 9.2 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 5th slowest start to Iowa's snowfall season (through Dec. 31).

Annual Summary. The statewide temperature averaged 48.5° or 0.7° above normal while precipitation totaled 35.87 inches or 1.79 inches above normal. This ranks as the 55th warmest and 28th wettest year among 132 years of state records. This was the wettest year since 1998. Annual precipitation totals varied from 25.72 inches at Sioux City to 48.82 inches at New Hampton. Precipitation versus normal varied from 6.96 inches below normal at Toledo to 13.24 inches above normal at Le Mars. A total of 120 tornadoes were recorded by the National Weather Service during 2004. This eclipses the previous annual record of 105 set in 2001 and is well above the normal total of 47.

Harry Hillaker, State Climatologist
Iowa Dept. of Agriculture & Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Bldg.
Des Moines, IA 50319
Phone: (515) 281-8981
E-mail: Harry.Hillaker@idals.state.ia.us