

## IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – DECEMBER 2005

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 19.5° or 3.1 degrees less than normal while precipitation totaled 1.21 inches or 0.02 inches below normal. This ranks as the 27<sup>th</sup> coldest and 55<sup>th</sup> wettest December among 133 years of state records.

Temperatures. December began very cold with subzero temperatures recorded somewhere in the state for each of the first nine days of the month. The coldest weather was reported from Sheldon on the 6<sup>th</sup> and Cedar Rapids on the 7<sup>th</sup> with lows of -19°. This followed daytime temperatures that failed to reach zero in a few areas on the 6<sup>th</sup> with Sanborn reporting a 'high' of -2°. Temperatures rapidly moderated on the 10<sup>th</sup> with above normal readings prevailing from the 10<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup>. Temperatures rose no higher than 28° anywhere in the state during the first nine days of the month while readings climbed above the freezing mark everywhere on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Cold weather returned from the 16<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup> with Elkader reporting a low of -17° on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup>. However, mild weather returned on the 22<sup>nd</sup> with much above normal temperatures prevailing in most areas through the remainder of the month. There were no subzero readings reported after the 22<sup>nd</sup> while Glenwood reported the month's highest temperature with a 57° reading on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Temperatures averaged 20° below normal for the first nine days of the month and 13° above normal for the final ten days of December.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 18% greater than last December and 7% greater than normal. Heating degree day totals so far this heating season (since July 1) are running 9% more than last year at this time and 6% less than normal. However, much higher prices for heating fuels will result in very large increases in heating bills.

Precipitation. Snowfall occurred very frequently during the first one-half of December. Storms dropped snow on the Nov. 30-Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup>. None of these events were especially large with greatest single-storm snow amounts of only 7 inches at Rock Valley and Sioux Center with the first storm and 8.7 inches at Ionia with the next to last one. Nevertheless, this was Iowa's snowiest period since late January and early February of 2004 with an average of 12.6 inches falling during this 16 day period. Monthly snowfall totals varied from 3.7 inches at Sioux City to 23.0 inches at Toledo. This was Toledo's third largest monthly snow total in the past half century (behind 27.0 in Dec. 2000 and 25.5 in Jan. 1979). Only a few locations recorded measurable snow during the last half of December and by month's end the southwest two-thirds of Iowa was snow-free while 1 to 5 inches remained in the north and east central sections. Overall, snowfall averaged 12.7 inches for the month, the highest total for any month since December 2000 and the 11<sup>th</sup> highest December total among 118 years of state records. Rain fell across southern Iowa on the 23<sup>rd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> with 0.74 inches recorded at Lamoni. Monthly precipitation totals were generally above normal across northern and western Iowa and below normal over the south and east. Totals varied from 0.59 inches at Rathbun Dam to 2.00 inches at Hawarden. The early

month snow cover prevented the ground from freezing in most areas thus much of the month's precipitation was able to soak into the ground.