

## IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2007

General Summary. March temperatures averaged 41.4° or 5.4° above normal while precipitation averaged 3.05 inches or 0.84 inches above normal. This ranks as the 12<sup>th</sup> warmest and 20<sup>th</sup> wettest March among 135 years of state records.

Temperatures. The month began with cold weather as temperatures averaged below normal for 6 of the first 7 days of March. Daytime highs were only in the teens in northwest Iowa on the 3<sup>rd</sup> while morning lows dipped to -6° at Cresco on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Daily high temperatures climbed above freezing at Spencer on only 6 days from January 12 to March 7; however, highs were then above freezing on every day from March 8 through April 5. Statewide temperatures edged above normal on the 8<sup>th</sup> and fell back below normal only twice for the remainder of the month (16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>). The first 80° temperature of the year was recorded at Keosauqua on the 13<sup>th</sup>, Iowa's earliest 80° reading since March 7, 2000. The final 11 days of the month all averaged at least ten degrees above normal with Sioux City recording the highest temperature with 84° on the 26<sup>th</sup>. This was Iowa's highest March temperature since Des Moines reached 87° on March 26, 1991. Overall this was the warmest March since 2000.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 19% less than normal and 18% less than last March. So far this heating season (since July 1, 2006) heating requirements are running 5% less than normal but 6% more than last season at this time.

Precipitation. The month definitely came in like a lion with a major blizzard striking western and northwestern Iowa on the 1<sup>st</sup>. Snowfall amounts of 12 inches or more were common over much of west central and northwest Iowa. Greatest amounts were reported from Harlan (18.0 inches), Carroll (17.9 inches) and Washta (17.9 inches). Thunderstorms produced amazing snow fall rates of 2 to 3 inches per hour during the morning of the 1<sup>st</sup>, especially in west central Iowa. Wind gusts of 40 to 50 mph persisted from the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 3<sup>rd</sup>, along with continued snow showers, to produce considerable blowing and drifting of snow. This resulted in the closure of Interstate 80 between West Des Moines and Council Bluffs for about 48 hours. Snowfall amounts decreased rapidly to the east of Interstate 35 with amounts of only an inch or less in far southeastern Iowa. The March 1 blizzard, combined with very heavy snow from another storm on February 23-25, to produce a snow cover of 20 to 27 inches depth over much of northern Iowa. The last remnant of this snow cover, centered over Mitchell County, melted on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The weather pattern became much quieter after the blizzard with no widespread precipitation again until the 20<sup>th</sup>. The final 12 days of the month, however, saw frequent shower and thunderstorm activity. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 1.34 inches at Oelwein to 6.09 inches at Davenport.

Severe Weather. The year's first severe thunderstorms developed during the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> and into the early morning hours of the 22<sup>nd</sup> with large hail or high winds reported from 25 counties, including one tornado at Sewal in Wayne County. Finally, the last evening of the month brought large hail or high winds to 34 counties, including at least one tornado in Delaware County.

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