

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2008

General Summary. Temperatures during March averaged 32.0° or 4.0° colder than normal while precipitation totaled 1.25 inches or 0.96 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 47th coldest and 35th driest March among 136 years of state records.

Temperatures. The month began with very welcome mild weather as temperatures reached 74° at Keokuk and Keosauqua on the 2nd. However, the temperature was not to reach 70° again anywhere in the state until the last day of the month when Keosauqua was again the hot spot at 71°. Temperatures averaged below normal each day from the 3rd through the 10th with subzero temperatures recorded somewhere in Iowa on the 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th and 10th. The lowest temperatures of the month were -13° readings from Milford on the 7th and Cresco and Clarinda on the morning of the 8th. The remainder of March brought near seasonal temperatures with no extended periods of either unusually warm or cold weather. Temperatures for the first one-quarter of the year averaged 21.6° or 4.4° below normal making this the coldest start to the year since 1982.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals averaged 13% greater than normal and 39% greater than last March. Thus far this heating season (since July 1, 2007) degree day totals are running 4% greater than normal and 9% greater than last season at this time.

Precipitation. Iowa entered the month with an extensive and very moisture-rich snowpack over northern areas. However, we were fortunate to avoid any prolonged warm-ups during the month that would have caused a rapid snow melt. Additionally, precipitation was well below normal over most of the state. The result was that snow melt flooding, though widespread, did not reach severe proportions in most areas. Nevertheless, frequent light precipitation events, and cooler than usual weather, kept soils very soggy and made for poor driving conditions on many unpaved roadways. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 0.38 inches at Postville to 2.78 inches at Ames 8 WSW. Snowfall was frequent during the month, but amounts were mostly on the light side. Monthly snow totals varied from just a trace at Keokuk and Muscatine to 13.8 inches at Rock Rapids. The statewide average snowfall was 4.3 inches or 0.5 inches less than normal to rank as the 51st lowest March snow total among 121 years of records. The seasonal snowfall total stands at 44.5 inches or 14.0 inches above normal to rank as the 13th snowiest season among 121 years of record. The month's largest precipitation event by far arrived on the 31st with up to 5.5 inches of snow in far northwest Iowa and localized rain totals of two inches in central Iowa. However, much of this precipitation fell after the final precipitation measurements of the month (made at 7 a.m. at most locations), thus will not fully go into the record books until April.

Severe Weather. The severe weather season often gets started in March. However, the only severe weather reported this month were a few isolated small hail events on the 27th and 31st.

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