

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – FEBRUARY 2003

General Summary. February temperatures averaged 19.9° or 4.3° below normal while precipitation averaged 0.85 inches or 0.13 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 46th coldest and 56th driest February among 131 years of records.

Temperatures. February began with above normal temperatures for the first 3 days of the month with Guthrie Center reaching 58° on the 1st. Below normal temperatures prevailed from the 4th through the 12th. The coldest day in this period was the 7th when actual temperatures fell to -17° at Algona while wind chill indices fell to -34° at Mason City. Milder temperatures briefly returned on the 13th-14th with Glenwood, Knoxville, Lamoni and Shenandoah reaching 52° on the 13th. There was a brief period of below normal temperatures from the 15th to the 17th with Guthrie Center recording a low of -14° on the 17th. Temperatures reached into the 50's in parts of Iowa on the 18th, 20th and 21st with Clarinda recording a high of 57° on the 20th as did Knoxville on the 21st. The final week of the month brought unseasonably cold weather including a temperature of -14° at Grundy Center on the 25th.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 25% greater than last February and 10% greater than normal. Thus far this heating season (since July 1), degree day totals are running 25% greater than last season at this time but 1% less than normal. Although this heating season has been fairly normal, each of the past five months have been significantly colder than the same months were one year ago.

Precipitation. A mid-month storm system (14th-15th) accounted for about three-fourths of February's precipitation total and was the state's largest precipitation event since early October. This storm system began with rain, including significant freezing rain in far northwest Iowa on the 14th. Precipitation gradually changed over to snow with all of the state recording at least some accumulation. Heaviest snow fell in a wide band from west central into southeast Iowa where 6 to 9 inch accumulations were common. Locally greater amounts fell in central Iowa where 13 inches was reported at Ankeny. The next largest event came on the 3rd when 1 to 2 inches of snow fell across the southeastern two-thirds of Iowa. Monthly precipitation totals were generally above normal across the southwest one-half of Iowa and were below normal elsewhere. Monthly totals varied from 0.23 inches at Le Claire up to 1.98 inches at Denison. Snowfall totals varied from 2.7 inches at Le Claire up to 16.4 inches at Des Moines. The statewide average snowfall of 7.8 inches was 1.4 inches above normal and is the greatest monthly total since December 2000.

Winter Summary. The three mid-winter months averaged 22.5° or 1.0° warmer than normal while precipitation totaled 1.51 inches or 1.66 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 65th warmest and 6th driest winter among 130 years of state records. The lowest temperatures reported this winter were -18° readings from Primghar and Sibley on January 23.

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