

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – DECEMBER 2003

General Summary. December temperatures averaged 28.2° or 5.6° above normal while precipitation totaled 1.38 inches or 0.15 inches above normal. This ranks as the 31st warmest and 44th wettest December among 131 years of records.

Temperatures. Cold weather made only a brief appearance during the month. Below normal temperatures were confined to only 4 days (10th through the 13th). The coldest weather came on the 11th and 12th when the only subzero temperatures of the month were recorded. Afternoon high temperatures climbed only into the single digits in northwest and north central Iowa on the 11th while Cresco reported the month's lowest temperature with a morning low of -8° on the 12th. Daytime temperatures reached into the 50's in some part of the state on the 1st, 8th, 21st, 26th, 27th, 28th and 30th. A few 60's were even reported on the 27th with Shenandoah reaching 62°.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 2% greater than last December but 14% less than normal. Thus far this heating season (since July 1), heating degree day totals are running 5% less than last season at this time and 9% less than normal.

Precipitation. Storm systems brought frequent snow to Iowa during the first one-half of December while an average of only 0.16 inches of precipitation fell during the second half of the month. Three storm systems accounted for most of Iowa's precipitation. The first storm on the 2nd-3rd deposited snow over the western two-thirds of Iowa with 8 to 10 inches accumulating from Spencer to Fort Dodge. Just two days later another storm dropped snow across all of Iowa with 2 to 3 inch amounts common over the northeast two-thirds of the state. Finally, unseasonably heavy rain fell across east central and southeast Iowa on the 9th-10th with Keokuk recording 4.08 inches of precipitation. This last storm system also brought snow and high winds to all of the state with up to 6 inches of snow falling in southwest Iowa. Preliminary monthly precipitation totals varied from 0.44 inches at Sioux City up to 5.22 inches at Keokuk. Keokuk's precipitation total was their second highest ever for December (5.71 inches fell in 1982). A statewide average of 8.4 inches of snow fell during the month. This is 1.1 inches more than the normal December snowfall and is Iowa's highest monthly total since a record 25.5 inches fell in December 2000. Snowfall totals varied from 3.2 inches at Blockton up to 18.2 inches at Sioux Rapids.

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