

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – JANUARY 2006

General Summary. January temperatures averaged 32.2° or 14.4° above normal while precipitation averaged 1.03 inches or 0.08 inches above normal. This ties with 1933 as the warmest January among 134 years of state records while precipitation ranked 58th wettest.

Temperatures. The mild weather pattern that began on December 22 continued through all of January. Among major reporting points only Waterloo recorded any days in the month with below normal temperatures (two degrees below normal on the 21st). Waterloo also was the only station to record a subzero temperature during the month (-1° on the 21st). Onawa reported the month's highest temperature with a 65° reading on the 15th. There were as many days in the state with high temperatures in the 60's (15th, 19th, 26th and 27th) as with low temperatures in the single digits (10th, 18th, 21st and 23rd). Glenwood and Shenandoah recorded maximum temperatures above freezing every day of the month while Burlington Airport managed 14 days with minimum temperatures remaining above freezing.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 29% less than last January and 31% less than normal. The reduction in heating requirements was about equal to the increase in the unit price of heating energy, thus keeping most heating bills close to normal. Heating requirements so far this winter season are running 5% less than last season at this time and 14% less than normal. The season-to-date heating degree day total is the lowest in five years.

Precipitation. Most of January was rather dry with three storm systems accounting for nearly all of the month's precipitation. Showers and thunderstorms on the 1st and 2nd brought as much as 1.22 inches of rain at Oelwein and a statewide average of 0.30 inches. The only snow event of consequence came on the 20th with snow falling across the southeast two-thirds of the state with Lowden reporting the most with 7 inches. Finally, rain fell statewide on the 28th-29th with more than an inch falling across all of the southeastern one-third of the state. Muscatine Airport reported the most rain with 2.54 inches while the state average was 0.57 inches. Overall, monthly precipitation totals were generally below normal across northern and western Iowa and above normal over the south and east. Monthly totals varied from 0.12 inches at Rock Valley to 3.47 inches at Wapello (their highest January total since 1907). Snowfall averaged only 2.0 inches or 6.2 inches below normal. This ties for the 8th lowest January snowfall total among 119 years of records and is the lowest January total since 1989. There was only a trace of snow (less than 0.1 inch) recorded at 12 stations scattered across western Iowa while Lowden reported the most snow with 7.4 inches. Very little frost was in the ground during the month, thus the unseasonably heavy precipitation in southeastern Iowa allowed a substantial improvement in the very dry soil conditions there.

Severe Weather. Interaction of a strong low pressure center over Lake Superior and high pressure over the High Plains generated very high winds during the day on the 24th. Wind gusts over 50 mph were common across Iowa with Ames Airport reporting a gust to 69 mph.

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