

## IOWA ANNUAL WEATHER SUMMARY, 2006

General Summary. Temperatures averaged 50.4° or 2.6° above normal while precipitation averaged 33.00 inches or 1.08 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 12<sup>th</sup> warmest and 54<sup>th</sup> wettest year among 134 years of state records.

Temperatures. The year began and ended with unseasonably mild weather. The first 34 days of the year each averaged above normal with January temperatures tying for the highest since state records began in 1873 (equaling 1933). The last 23 days of the year were also all warmer than normal and helped bring the warmest December since 1965. A notable exception to the generally warm weather came in mid February when Elkader recorded a low of -26° on the 18<sup>th</sup>. This was Iowa's lowest official temperature since December 25, 2000. April was unusually warm, ranking 14<sup>th</sup> warmest for the month and warmer than any April since 1987. The summer continued the warm trend averaging 1.3° above normal mainly thanks to a hot July which brought a 106° reading to Washta on July 19<sup>th</sup>, Iowa's highest official temperature since Keosauqua reached 107° on July 29, 1999. However, cool weather was the rule for most of September and October which was the 9<sup>th</sup> coolest September-October period on record. Nevertheless, heat made a token appearance in October with temperatures reaching the 90's in some locations on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> including 95° readings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> at several southern Iowa locations. The season's first zero degree reading was recorded at Spencer Airport on the morning of November 11. This was Iowa's earliest 0° reading since 1991 but proved to be one of only three dates falling to or below zero through the end of the year. Overall, this was the warmest year since 1998 and 8<sup>th</sup> year of the past nine to average warmer than the long-term average (2003 was the exception).

Heating and Cooling Degree Days. Cooling degree days, a measure of home air conditioning requirements, averaged 9% more than normal in 2006 but 9% less than the previous year. Meanwhile, the year brought 13% fewer heating degree days (a measure of home heating requirements) and 6% less than in 2005. This was the lowest annual heating degree day total since 1998.

Precipitation. Annual precipitation totaled slightly above the long-term median (1873-2005), but a little below the more recent 30-year normal (1971-2000). Unusually wet weather prevailed in March and April with frequent precipitation providing excellent soil moisture reserves yet very little flooding. This early season moisture proved to be critical as very dry weather prevailed in May, June and July. Each of these months brought record low precipitation totals to various western Iowa locations with the three month May through July period easily the driest ever in northwest Iowa (district average of 4.93 inches, 6.96 inches below normal and 0.55 inches less than previous record set in 1894). Fortunately rain began to return more frequently in some areas in July and most of the state in August. As a result crops rebounded remarkably and yields were excellent in many areas. Precipitation during the fall months averaged near seasonal normals while the year ended with a much wetter than usual December. Annual precipitation totals varied from 25.47 inches at Emmetsburg to 46.80 inches at Maquoketa. Precipitation totals expressed versus normal varied from 10.35 inches below normal at Donnellson to 11.72 inches above normal at Maquoketa. At Maquoketa this was the 3<sup>rd</sup> wettest year among 94 years of record (1993 and 1981 were wetter) and was more than double their total in 2005. At Donnellson this was the driest year since 1989 and second consecutive year with more than a ten inch precipitation deficit. Finally, annual snowfall averaged only 13.0 inches or 19.4 inches below normal. This is the lowest annual total among 119 years of state snowfall records (previous record 13.8 inches in 1922). However, as noted in the December 2006 Iowa weather summary this record is slightly tainted by a quirk of accounting that puts 1.1 inches of the December 31, 2006 snowstorm into the books for January 1, 2007. Nevertheless, the year was relatively snowless thanks to a quiet end to the 2005-2006 winter season and a slow start to the 2006-2007 season.

Severe Weather. The 2006 severe weather season got off to a fast start with 4 tornadoes reported on March 30, 10 on April 2 and 12 more on April 13. The April 13 outbreak was by far the most destructive of the year with major damage at Iowa City and one fatality in Muscatine County. However, the

remainder of the season was exceptionally quiet with only 12 additional small tornadoes reported, the lowest total for the mid and late year period in over 30 years.

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