

PRELIMINARY IOWA WEATHER SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 2008

General Summary. November temperatures averaged 37.0 degrees or 1.4° above normal while precipitation totaled 1.74 inches or 0.40 inches below normal. This ranks as the 64th warmest and 52nd wettest November among 136 years of statewide records.

Temperatures. Iowa basked in exceptionally mild weather for the first six days of the month. Temperatures soared into the 70's in many areas from the 2nd through the 5th with Sioux City reaching 80° on 3rd. A few daily high temperature records were recorded on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th. According to an analysis by the Iowa Environmental Mesonet this warm spell snapped a record streak of 277 consecutive days (Jan 29 to Nov. 1) without setting any daily record high temperatures within Iowa. This easily broke the old record of 247 consecutive days without a record high set in another very wet year, 1993. The remainder of the month averaged 2.0 degrees below normal, but that was not cold enough to cancel out the warm start to November. On the other extreme, temperatures averaged more than ten degrees below normal on the 9th, 10th and 21st. The coldest weather of the month came on the 21st when Spencer Airport recorded the state's only subzero temperature of the month with a -1° reading.

Heating Degree Days. Heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged the same as last November and 5% less than normal. Degree day totals so far this heating season are running 9% greater than last year at this time and 9% less than normal.

Precipitation. Most of November's precipitation fell during the first two weeks of the month. The wettest period came on the 5th-7th with a statewide average of 0.67 inches with north central Iowa seeing the most rain where 2.37 inches fell at Mason City. Light to moderate rain also fell statewide on the 10th-11th and 13th-14th. The rain changed to snow with each of these systems in far northern Iowa with an inch or two of snow accumulating on the 6th-7th and 11th. The first widespread accumulating snowfall of the season brought about an inch of snow to most of the northwest one-half of the state on the 22nd. However, a small area of west central Iowa from near Atlantic to Boone saw 3 to 5 inches of snow with this Saturday event. Finally, snow fell over all but extreme northwestern Iowa on the 29th-30th with 3 to 6 inches falling from south central up to north central Iowa. Monthly precipitation totals varied from 0.65 inches at Sanborn (39% of normal) to 3.55 inches at Mason City (181% of normal). Generally precipitation amounts were above normal in west central, central and north central Iowa and furthest below normal in the northwest and southeast corners of the state.

Autumn Summary. Temperatures over the three fall months averaged 50.6° or 0.8° above normal while precipitation totaled 9.12 inches or 1.05 inches above normal. This ranks as the 64th coolest and 37th wettest fall among 136 years of state records. The harvest of corn and soybeans was the latest in many years. Rain and snow caused some delays in the harvest, however, the major factor was the delayed maturity of the crops (due to late planting from very wet spring and early summer weather). This late maturity increases the odds of having undesirably high crop moisture contents at harvest.

Meanwhile, natural field drying of the corn becomes much less efficient as temperatures decline through the fall season. High costs of artificial drying of the harvested corn will significantly cut into farmer profits. The University of Illinois Extension Service estimates commercial drying costs for high moisture corn to be in the range of 15 to 50 cents per bushel. Six percent of the corn crop remained unharvested at month's end. According to data from NASS-Iowa Agricultural Statistics this is the largest percentage of unharvested corn since 1992 when Iowa recorded its coolest growing season in 75 years. Snow cover was widespread at the close of November with below normal temperatures and frequent additional snowfall forecast. This will further delay the completion of the harvest.

Year-To-Date Summary. Preliminary statistics for the first 11 months of the year yield a statewide average precipitation total of 41.47 inches or 8.62 inches above normal while temperatures have averaged 48.5° or 1.6° below normal. This ranks 4th wettest and 15th coldest year-to-date. The last cooler January to November was in 1996 while the 11 month precipitation total has been higher in only 1993, 1881 and 1902.

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