

PRELIMINARY IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – JANUARY 2009

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 14.2° or 3.6° below normal while precipitation totaled 0.70 inches or 0.25 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 34th coldest and 42nd driest January among 137 years of records. This was the coldest January since 1994 and coldest month since December 2000.

Temperatures. There were numerous wide swings in temperature during January but the most memorable weather definitely will be the very low temperatures and wind chills at mid-month. Wind chill readings dipped to minus 40° or lower on the 13th, 15th and 17th with Cedar Rapids recording a -52° wind chill at 8 a.m. on the 15th. This was Iowa's lowest wind chill recorded since February 1, 1996. Actual temperatures bottomed out at -40° at Coggon on the morning of the 16th. This was only the ninth date in the past 120 years with an official low of -40° or lower in Iowa and was the lowest reading recorded since Elkader tied the all-time state record low of -47° on February 3, 1996. Maquoketa recorded a daytime 'high' temperature of only -15° on the 15th. All-time record lows were set or tied at several locations on January 16 including:

Temp.	Location	Old Record	Period of Record
-38°	Belle Plaine	-35° Feb. 3, 1996	116 years
-37°	Maquoketa	-34° Feb. 3, 1996	101 years
-34°	Waterloo	-34° Mar. 1, 1962	114 years
-32°	Washington	-29° Feb. 13, 1905	116 years

Although cold was the big story for the month temperatures occasionally rose well above normal over portions of southern and far western Iowa where snow cover was not as frequent or extensive. Leon recorded the state's highest temperatures with a high of 61° on the 22nd and 64° on the 31st.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree days, averaged 4% greater than last January and 7% greater than normal. Thus far this heating season, degree day totals are running 7% greater than last season at this time and 3% greater than normal.

Precipitation. Most of the month's precipitation came from a series of four storms from the 9th through the 14th and was concentrated over the northeastern three-fourths of the state. The largest of these events were on the 9th-10th when 3 to 7 inches of snow fell from northwest into east central Iowa and the 13th-14th with 2 to 8 inches over the same areas. However, there was also a period of freezing rain over the northeastern one-half of Iowa on the 3rd that brought a widespread glaze of about one-tenth of an inch of ice. Very little precipitation fell across far southern and southwest Iowa during January. Preliminary monthly snowfall totals vary from only 2.2 inches at Bedford up to 19.8 inches at Anamosa. There was a statewide average of 10.6 inches of snowfall. This is 2.4 inches more snow than usual and ranks this as the 22nd snowiest January among 122 years of records. Iowa's season-to-date snowfall average stood at 28.9 inches at the end of January, or 9.5 inches above normal. This is the fifth highest season-to-date total on

record. Only 1978-79 (35.7"), 2000-01 (35.0), 1909-10 (34.0) and 1897-98 (29.3) have seen more snow up to this point in the winter.

Outlook. Overall this winter has been quite similar to last winter but has averaged just a little colder and snowier than one year ago. However, this winter has featured much more changeable weather conditions, with colder cold outbreaks and warmer warm spells. La Niña conditions prevailed both winters. Every La Niña event is different but the typical scenario is for Iowa to see a colder and wetter than normal February, a drier than normal March and a wetter than normal April. However, cooler than normal weather conditions would be only slightly favored in March and April based on previous La Niña experience. In the short term the National Weather Service is forecasting a notable warmup beginning on February 5 and continuing for several days. However, a return to stormy conditions is expected about the 8th. Much colder conditions may return about mid-month, thus the changeable weather we have been seeing looks to continue into February.

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