

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MARCH 2010

General Summary. Temperatures averaged 37.9° or 1.9° above normal while precipitation totaled 1.87 inches or 0.34 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 41st warmest and 63rd wettest March among 138 years of state records.

Temperatures. The cold weather pattern dominating most of Iowa's winter continued into the first five days of March. Morning lows dipped to -2° at Atlantic on the 2nd, -3° at Spencer on the 3rd and 0° at Dakota City and Fort Dodge on the 4th. However, much warmer weather characterized most of the remainder of the month with below normal temperatures restricted to only 4 of the last 26 days of March. The temperature reached 59° at Shenandoah on the 8th marking the first time readings climbed into the 50's anywhere in Iowa since December 17. At 80 consecutive days, this was the fourth longest streak of sub-50° weather on record. Other temperature milestones were reached on the 10th (first 60°); the 29th (first 70°) and the 30th (first 80°). Denison reported the highest temperature of the month with an 82° reading on the 30th which was equaled at Atlantic on the 31st. These were the first 80° readings anywhere in Iowa since September 27.

Heating Degree Days. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 8% less than normal and 4% less than last year. Thus far this heating season (since July 1, 2009) degree day totals are running 4% more than normal and 3% more than last year at this time.

Precipitation. Iowa enjoyed a welcome period of dry weather from February 21 through March 5. Unfortunately, temperatures remained too low to allow substantial melting of the considerable Iowa snowpack during this dry spell. Rain, mostly in the light to moderate category, was frequent and widespread from the 6th through the 13th. The rain was accompanied by much warmer temperatures and resulted in rapid snowmelt. Snow cover, which ranged from 1 to 7 inches along the Missouri border to as much as 30 inches in northwest Iowa at the beginning of the month, was gone by March 17 (with the exception of some drifts). The combination of snow melt and rainfall pushed nearly all Iowa rivers above flood stage with major flooding reported at some northern Iowa locations. Despite much drier weather during the second one-half of March, flooding continued at month's end along the Des Moines River, the Mississippi River below Muscatine and over parts of northwest Iowa. Rainfall amounts for the month were generally above normal over southern Iowa and well below normal over the northeast. Rain totals varied from 0.51 inches at Toledo to 3.99 inches at Beaconsfield. There was only one snow event of consequence during the month. Snow fell over all but far northern Iowa on the 19th-20th with greatest amounts in the south where eight inches was reported at Indianola. The statewide average snowfall was 2.1 inches for the month, or 2.7 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 23rd lowest March total among 123 years of record. However, the meager March snowfall was enough to push the statewide average seasonal snowfall total to 49.2 inches or tied for sixth highest of record (greatest total since 1978-1979 winter).

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