

IOWA MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – JANUARY 2011

General Summary. Iowa temperatures averaged 14.5° or 4.9° below normal while precipitation totaled 0.93 inch or 0.01 inch above normal. This ranks as the 36th coldest and 69th wettest January among 139 years of state records.

Temperatures. Iowa temperatures were mostly above seasonal normals for the first and last week of the month but were generally below normal from the 8th through the 23rd. Elkader reported the lowest temperature of the month with a minimum of -30° on the morning of the 21st. Daytime maximum temperatures never rose very high during the month as 45° was the highest reading reported, coming at Shenandoah and Sidney on the 6th and again at Glenwood on the afternoon of the 28th. At some north central Iowa locations such as Mason City, Osage and Cresco the temperature never climbed above freezing during the month. The result is that very little snow melt occurred during January. Only three calendar months have seen a lower statewide maximum temperature extreme (February 2010 at 42° and December 1983 and January 1979 at 40°).

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 3% less than last January and 13% more than normal. Heating degree day totals so far this winter season (since July 1) are running 1% less than last season at this time and 5% more than normal.

Precipitation. January was characterized by frequent light precipitation events. The exception came on the 9th-11th when the only large storm of the month brought a statewide average of 6.1 inches of snow. This storm brought widespread snowfall of 6 to 10 inches over western Iowa and 2 to 3 inches over the far east. Sioux City reported the most snow during this storm with 14.1 inches. At Des Moines snow was recorded on all but five days during the month. Monthly snow totals varied from 4.4 inches at Belle Plaine to 23.1 inches at Spencer. The statewide average snowfall was 11.3 inches, 3.6 inches above normal and ranks as the 18th snowiest January among 124 years of records. Snow cover at month's end varied from 2 to 4 inches over the southern one-third of Iowa to 10 to 20 inches over the northern third.

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