



# Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin

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## National Weather Summary December 19 - 25, 2010

**Highlights:** A week-long Pacific storm barrage caused flooding and mudslides from southern California into the southern Great Basin but maintained overall favorable Western water-supply prospects. Storm-total rainfall reached at least 1 to 2 feet at numerous locations in southern California. More tranquil weather arrived in the West during the second half of the week, although rain and snow returned to the Pacific Coast States on Christmas Day. Farther east, the last in a series of Pacific storms produced much-needed precipitation on the central and southern Plains. However, the most significant rain fell east of the primary hard red winter wheat belt, where a portion of the crop remained stressed by developing drought and winter weather extremes. In fact, temperatures topped 80 degrees Fahrenheit in much of the south-central United States on December 20-21, aggravating the effects of drought on pastures and winter wheat. Meanwhile, a substantial snow cover remained in place across the northern Plains and upper Midwest, where additional snow fell during the week. Snow depths of 1 to 2 feet in the upper Mississippi Valley hampered rural travel. Across the remainder of the Midwest, a brief mild spell began to erode the existing snow cover. However, snow returned to parts of the western and southern Corn Belt toward week's end. Elsewhere, frigid conditions eased across the South and East, where precipitation was mostly light and spotty. Developing drought remained a concern with respect to pastures and winter grains across much of the South, particularly from central and eastern Texas into the southern Atlantic States.

During the first half of the week, heavy precipitation continued to batter central and southern California and parts of the Southwest. In the Sierra Nevada, where mid- to late-month snowfall totaled 100 to 200 inches or more, the average water equivalency of the snow pack climbed from 9 to 18 inches (from 122 to 207 percent of normal) between December 16 and 22. Southern California's Mt. Palomar received 18.23 inches of rain from December 16-22. During the same period, snowfall totaled 5 to 7 feet at several locations in the mountains of Utah and Colorado. For example, Brighton Crest, Utah, noted 84 inches, while Gothic, Colorado, tallied 82 inches. Winds in excess of 150 miles per hour were noted on the Sierra Nevada crest, with a gust to 164 miles per hour clocked on December 19 on Mammoth Mountain, California. December 19 was also the wettest December day on record in California locations such as Bishop (3.32 inches) and Bakersfield (1.53 inches). Previous records had been 2.67 inches (on December 22, 1982) in Bishop and 1.37 inches (on December 18, 2010) in Bakersfield. In addition, Bakersfield experienced its third-wettest 24-hour period on record, with 2.31 inches falling on December 18-19. Bakersfield's wetter 24-hour periods were February 9-10, 1978 (3.02 inches), and January 24-25, 1999 (2.32 inches). Daily-record amounts in California for December 19 included 2.96 inches in San Gabriel, 2.80 inches in downtown Los Angeles, and 2.79 inches in Santa Barbara. The following day, Long Beach, California (2.03 inches), netted a daily-record amount for December 20. Other California daily records in excess of 2 inches were 2.01 inches (on December 21) in San Diego, 2.24 inches (on December 22) in Palm Springs, and 3.40 inches (on December 22) in Ramona. In fact, Ramona's December 20-22 sum of 7.20 inches exceeded its December 1984 standard of 5.31 inches. Farther inland, Ely, Nevada, noted its 11<sup>th</sup>-snowiest, 13<sup>th</sup>-wettest day on record on December 20, with 11.4 and 1.29 inches, respectively. By week's end, records for December wetness were established in southern California locations such as Santa Barbara (9.64 inches; previously, 6.78 inches in 1945) and Long Beach (9.42 inches; previously, 5.29 inches in 1971). With a December 1-25 total of 5.37 inches, Bakersfield registered its wettest month on record (previously, 5.36 inches in February 1998). Similarly, Mt. Charleston (Kyle Canyon), Nevada, received precipitation totaling 17.31 inches during the first 25 days of December, demolishing the monthly mark of 6.65 inches in December 1992 and the all-time record of 15.55 inches in July 1984. Elsewhere in Nevada, Las Vegas' December 1-25 rainfall of 1.76 inches exceeded its precipitation total of 1.59 inches during all of 2009. Meanwhile, significant snow continued to blanket the north-central United States. Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP), Minnesota, received 4.6 inches on December 20 and 4.6 inches on December 23-24. As a result, MSP set a December snowfall record of

33.4 inches, previously set with a 33.2-inch total in 1969. In North Dakota, daily-record snowfall amounts for December 20 reached 10.2 inches in Williston and 5.5 inches in Fargo. The following day, snowfall records for December 21 included 7.3 inches in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, and 5.8 inches in Duluth, Minnesota. On December 21, Rochester, Minnesota, tied its all-time snow depth record of 29 inches (previously set on January 25, 1982). Rochester also set a record for its snowiest month (previously, 35.3 inches in December 2000), with 41.3 inches recorded by December 25. Toward week's end, snow spread across the remainder of the Midwest and into parts of the Southeast. Daily-record snowfall totals for Christmas Eve, December 24, reached 9.5 inches in Waterloo, Iowa; 6.6 inches in Peoria, Illinois; and 3.2 inches in Paducah, Kentucky. December 25 featured the first Christmas Day accumulation on record in locations such as Anniston, Alabama (1.0 inch); Tupelo, Mississippi (1.4 inches); and Macon, Georgia (0.1 inch). It was the snowiest Christmas Day on record in several other cities, including Asheville, North Carolina (6.5 inches); Huntsville, Alabama (4.5 inches); and Greensboro, North Carolina (4.2 inches). More details on the snowfall, which overspread other parts of the South and East on December 26, will appear next week.

In advance of the Western storminess, unusual warmth overspread the southern Plains and parts of the Southwest. On December 20-21, consecutive daily-record highs were established in Texas locations such as San Angelo (85 and 86 degrees Fahrenheit), Abilene (84 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit), and College Station (81 and 84 degrees Fahrenheit). Waco, Texas (86 degrees Fahrenheit on December 21), experienced its third-warmest December day on record, behind 91 degrees Fahrenheit on December 24, 1955, and 87 degrees Fahrenheit on December 3, 2005. Other daily-record highs for December 21 included 82 degrees Fahrenheit in Shreveport, Louisiana, and 78 degrees Fahrenheit in Monticello, Arkansas. Despite some late-week showers, unfavorable dryness persisted in much of the south-central and southeastern United States. For example, Alexandria, Louisiana, remained on a pace for its driest December on record. Alexandria's driest December occurred in 1984, when 1.69 inch fell, but only 0.47 inch occurred from December 1-25. In Kansas, Wichita finally received precipitation (totaling a mere 0.06 inch) on December 23-24, ending a 35-day spell (November 17 – December 22) without a measurable amount. Meanwhile, enough cold air lingered in the Southeast to result in five freezes during the week in Jacksonville, Florida. From December 1-25, Jacksonville's 15 calendar-day freezes shattered its December record of 12 days set in 2000.

Bitterly cold air remained entrenched across interior Alaska, where weekly temperatures locally averaged more than 20 degrees Fahrenheit below normal. In Fairbanks, where the temperature last exceeded 0 degrees Fahrenheit on December 4, readings ranged from 0 to -40 degrees Fahrenheit. Meanwhile, some heavy snow fell across western Alaska, where Nome received 6.3 inches on December 19 and 5.7 inches from December 22-24. Farther south, heavy rain pounded the western and central Hawaiian islands, especially early in the week. General showers expanded to cover all of Hawaii's windward locations by week's end. In Honolulu, Oahu, where 60 percent (8.50 of 14.19 inches) of the year-to-date precipitation fell from December 1-25, a daily-record rainfall total of 5.41 inches occurred on December 19.

*National Weather Summary provided by USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board.  
For more information, call (202) 720-2397.*

## **Agricultural Summary**

### **December 20 – December 26, 2010**

**Highlights:** With the exception of portions of the northern Rocky Mountains, much of the country west of the Mississippi River experienced warmer than normal temperatures during the week. Conversely, temperatures as many as 10 degrees below normal blanketed much of the Atlantic Coast States. Precipitation was abundant throughout much of California, the Great Basin, and the northern Great Plains, where accumulations totaled 800 percent or more above normal.

Cold, dry weather dominated Florida during the week, with average temperatures falling to as many as 9 degrees below normal. Freeze damage to the newly planted sugarcane crop was being assessed, while producers worried that the cold snap could limit sugar production in the mature crop. Growth of many winter vegetables was slowed by the cold temperatures, as producers continued to utilize preventative measures to protect their crops. Widespread damage was reported in vegetable fields in southern portions of the State. Nursery producers maintained protective measures in both open fields and greenhouses.

Above average temperatures and widespread precipitation were the norms in Arizona during the week. As cotton harvest was winding down, alfalfa hay producers were still actively harvesting in areas of the State. Fruit and vegetable growers shipped a variety of crops including broccoli, cabbage, celery, lettuce, and a selection of citrus.

A low pressure system off of the California coast inundated the State with excessive rainfall early in the week, with the heaviest rains situated over southern locales, but by week's end, dry, seasonably mild conditions had returned. Cotton plowdown was nearly complete, and producers continued fieldwork operations as fields allowed. Orchard growers across the State continued maintenance activities such as pruning and tree removal. Winter vegetables were planted as conditions allowed.

## Information Contacts

Listed below are the commodity statisticians in the Crops Branch of the National Agricultural Statistics Service to contact for additional information. E-mail inquiries may be sent to [nass@nass.usda.gov](mailto:nass@nass.usda.gov)

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