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# State of the Climate National Overview January 2012

## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Climatic Data Center

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### National Overview:



### Climate Highlights — January

- The average contiguous U.S. temperature in January was **36.3 degrees F**, 5.5 degrees F above the 1901-2000 long-term average — the **fourth warmest January** on record, and the warmest since 2006. **Precipitation**, averaged across the nation, was 1.85 inches. This was 0.37 inch below the long-term average, with variability between regions. This monthly analysis is based on records dating back to 1895.
- Warmer-than-average temperatures were **widespread** across the contiguous United States during January. **Nine states** — **Arizona, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming** — had January temperatures ranking among their ten warmest. **Florida** and **Washington** were the only states with temperatures near average, and no state was cooler than average.
- Many locations across the Northern Plains exceeded **all-time warm January maximum temperature records** during the month, including Minot, North Dakota, which reached 61 degrees F on January 5<sup>th</sup>. This surpassed the previous record of 59 degrees F for the city, set on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 1906.
- In contrast to the contiguous United States being much warmer than average, several towns across Alaska had their coldest average January temperatures on record — Nome (-16.6 degrees F), Bethel (-17.3 degrees F) McGrath (-28.5 degrees F), and Bettles (-35.6 degrees F).
- **Precipitation totals** were mixed across the United States during January. The **Southern Plains** and the **Great Lakes** were wetter than average for the month, with

[Texas](#) having above-average precipitation for the second month in a row. Texas had not experienced two consecutive months with above-average precipitation since January-February 2010.

- [Below-average precipitation](#) was observed for the Central Plains, where [Kansas](#) had its third driest January, and [Nebraska](#) its eighth. The [Southeast](#) was also drier than average, where [Florida](#) had its eighth driest January on record. Many locations along [Florida's Atlantic coast](#), which usually average over 2.5 inches of precipitation during January, had little to no precipitation during the month.
- Cities across the Northern Plains, Midwest, and Northeast had below-average snow fall during the month a result of warmer and drier than average conditions. According to data from the [Rutgers Global Snow Lab](#), the average snow extent during January was 1.0 million square miles, which was [329,000 square miles](#) below the 1981-2010 average. This marks the [3<sup>rd</sup> smallest January snow cover extent](#) in the 46-year period of record.
- According to the [U.S. Drought Monitor](#), as of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012, about 3.3 percent of the contiguous U.S. was experiencing the worst category of drought, called D4 or exceptional drought, about the same as the beginning of the month. However, the percent area of the U.S. experiencing drought of any severity increased from 31.9 percent at the beginning of January to 37.9 percent at the end of the month. Most of the drought expansion occurred across the Upper Midwest and the western states.
- The United States [Climate Extremes Index \(USCEI\)](#) and [Regional Climate Extremes Index \(RCEI\)](#) are sensitive to extremes in temperature, rainfall, dry streaks, drought, and tropical cyclones on the national and regional scale, respectively. During January, the USCEI was above average, driven by a large extent in warm maximum temperatures. The percent area of the U.S. experiencing extremes in warm maximum temperatures was 56 percent, which is the second highest value on record. Regionally, the West North Central, South, and West regions ranked [3<sup>rd</sup>](#) or [4<sup>th</sup>](#) highest for the extent of warm maximum temperature extremes.
- [A list of select January temperature and precipitation records can be found here.](#)

### **Climate Highlights — Winter to Date (December 2011-January 2012)**

- The first two months of the winter season, December and January, have been much [warmer than average](#) for the contiguous United States. This two-month period was the [fourth warmest](#) on record with a season-to-date temperature 3.8 degrees F above average. Much of the warmth was anchored across the [northern and eastern United States](#). [Minnesota](#) was record warm for the period, with a temperature 10.1 degrees F above average. A total of [twenty-two states](#) from [Montana](#) to [Maine](#) had December 2011–January 2012 temperatures ranking among their ten warmest.
- Despite a large winter storm which impacted the western U.S. during January, much of the region was [drier than average](#). [California](#) had its fourth driest December-January period, and [Montana](#) had its sixth. Wetter-than-average conditions were observed in a [string of states](#) from [New Mexico](#) to [New York](#), with [Texas](#) having its eleventh wettest December-January period.

## Climate Highlights — Last 12 months (February 2011-January 2012)

- The 12-month period, ending in January, was the [sixth warmest](#) such period for the contiguous United States, with warmer-than-average temperatures dominating the [eastern two-thirds](#) of the nation. Seven states — [Delaware](#), [New Jersey](#), [North Carolina](#), [Maryland](#), [Rhode Island](#), [Texas](#), and [Virginia](#) — were record warm for the period, while an [additional 18 states](#) had 12-month temperatures ranking among their ten warmest. [Oregon](#) and [Washington](#) were the only states with below-average temperatures during the period.
- The [nationally-averaged precipitation total](#) for the 12-month period was near average, masking regional extremes. The [Ohio Valley](#) and [Northeast](#) were record wet for the period, with [seven states](#) within those regions also being record wet. Dry conditions were present along the [southern tier](#) of the nation from [New Mexico](#) to [South Carolina](#).

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### Alaska Temperature and Precipitation:

- [Alaska](#) had its coldest January on record, with a temperature 14.0°F (7.8°C) below the 1971–2000 average.
- [Alaska](#) had its 5<sup>th</sup> coldest November-January on record, with a temperature 5.8°F (3.2°C) below the 1971–2000 average.
- [Alaska](#) had its 41<sup>st</sup> driest January since records began in 1918, with an anomaly that was 9.3 percent below the 1971–2000 average.
- [Alaska](#) had its 10<sup>th</sup> wettest November-January on record, with an anomaly that was 29.1 percent above the 1971–2000 average.

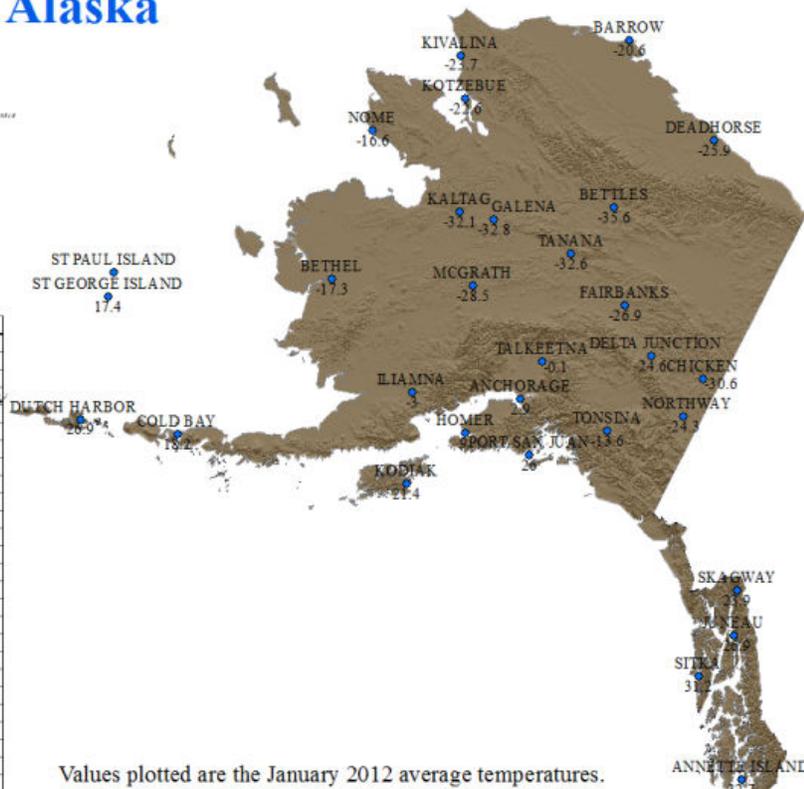
The map below provides January average temperatures, compared to the normal period (1981-2010), for locations across the state.

# Bitter Cold in Alaska

January, 2012



STATION	JANUARY	NORMAL	DEPARTURE
ANCHORAGE	2.9	19.1	-14.2
ANNETTE ISLAND	32.7	37	-4.3
BARROW	-20.6	-13.4	-7.2
BETHEL	-17.3	6.6	-23.9
BETTLES	-35.6	-10	-25.6
CHICKEN	-30.6	-20.9	-9.7
COLD BAY	18.2	28.2	-10
DEADHORSE	-25.9	-16.2	-9.7
DELTA JUNCTION	-24.6	-3.5	-21.1
DUTCH HARBOR	26.9	24.6	2.3
FAIRBANKS	-26.9	-7.9	-19
GALENA	-32.8	-9.2	-23.6
HOMER	9	24.8	-15.8
ILIAMNA	-3	17.5	-20.5
JUNEAU	26.9	28.3	-1.4
KALTAG	-32.1	-6.3	-25.8
KIVALINA	-23.7	-2.3	-21.4
KODIAK	21.4	30.5	-9.1
KOTZEBUE	-22.6	-2.8	-19.8
MCGRATH	-28.5	-6.5	-22
NOME	-16.6	5.2	-21.8
NORTHWAY	-24.3	-14.8	-9.5
PORT SAN JUAN	26	30.7	-4.7
SITKA	31.2	36.4	-5.2
SKAGWAY	23.9	25.6	-1.7
ST GEORGE ISLAND	17.4	26.8	-9.4
ST PAUL ISLAND	14.5	25.1	-10.6
TALKEETNA	-0.1	14.2	-14.3
TANANA	-32.6	-9	-23.6
TONSINA	-13.6	-3.2	-10.4



Values plotted are the January 2012 average temperatures.

Data are preliminary  
Updated February 6, 2012

January 2012 Alaska Temperatures

More information on Alaskan weather/climate can be found through our partners:

- [National Weather Service Alaska Region Headquarters](#)
- [Alaska State Climatologist](#)
- [Western Regional Climate Center](#)

For additional details about recent temperatures and precipitation across the U.S., see the [Regional Highlights](#) section below and visit the [Climate Summary](#) page. For information on local temperature and precipitation records during the month, please visit NCDC's [Records](#) page. For details and graphics on weather *events* across the U.S. and the globe please visit NCDC's [Global Hazards](#) page.

## Regional Highlights:

*These regional summaries were provided by the six [Regional Climate Centers](#) and reflect conditions in their respective regions. These six regions differ spatially from the [nine climatic regions of the National Climatic Data Center](#).*

[Northeast](#) | [Midwest](#) | [Southeast](#) | [High Plains](#) | [Southern](#) | [Western](#)

### **Northeast Region:** *(Information provided by the [Northeast Regional Climate Center](#))*

- The string of warmer than normal months continued in January. The Northeast average temperature was 28.3 degrees F (-2.1 degrees C). This was 4.7 degrees F (2.6 degrees C) above normal and 6.8 degrees F (3.8 degrees C) warmer than

January 2011. This was the warmest January since 2006, the 16th warmest January since 1895, and the tenth consecutive month that the Northeast averaged warmer than normal. It was the third month in a row that each of the twelve states in the region posted above normal temperature averages. Departures ranged from +4.1 degrees F (+2.3 degrees C) in Maryland and Pennsylvania to +6.2 degrees F (+3.4 degrees C) in Vermont. In addition, all of the states had averages that were within the top 23 warmest in 118 years. The Northeast's two-month (December-January) average of 31.2 degrees F (-0.4 degrees C) made this period the eight warmest in 117 years (1896-2012). Delaware and Vermont saw their 3rd warmest December-January and the rest of the states in the Northeast fell within the 4th to 11th warmest since recordkeeping began.

- January's weather pattern left much of the eastern half of the region on the dry side, while western New York, Pennsylvania and northern West Virginia saw above normal precipitation. Overall, the Northeast's precipitation total of 3.17 inches (80.5 mm) was 103 percent of normal. Maine (101 percent), New York (115 percent) and Pennsylvania (114 percent) were the wetter-than-normal states. Departures in the drier-than-normal states ranged from 70 percent in Connecticut to 99 percent in Vermont and New Hampshire.
- The atypical Northeast winter has impacted the region in many ways. With no major snow storms and warmer than normal temperatures, ski slopes have struggled financially. A minor snow storm just before the Martin Luther King holiday weekend left a coating of natural snow in time for the onrush of skiers and snowmobilers, to the delight of slope and trail operators. At the same time, the benign weather this winter has saved municipalities the cost of clearing snow-covered roads. Birdwatchers have noticed a lack of variety at their backyard feeders - with relatively open ground and water, migrating birds and fowl have not had to travel as far south this winter.

For more information, please go to the [Northeast Regional Climate Center Home Page](#).

**Midwest Region:** *(Information provided by the [Midwest Regional Climate Center](#))*

- January temperatures were above normal across the Midwest. Departures from normal ranged from 5 to 10 degrees F (3 to 6 degrees C) above normal with the largest departures in Iowa and Minnesota. The Minnesota statewide temperature for January ranks among the ten warmest in the 118-year record. All nine Midwest states rank in the top 25%. Daily temperature records showed only three record lows (two ties and one new record) but more than 1250 record highs, including three dates (6th, 11th, and 31st) each with more than 200. Among the record highs were seven new records for the warmest January day at that station and eight more that matched the existing January record.
- January precipitation was generally below normal in the western half of the Midwest and above normal in the eastern half. Precipitation totals ranged from less than 25% of normal along the western border of Missouri to more than 150% of normal in pockets in north central Minnesota, Upper Michigan, and near Cincinnati and Cleveland in Ohio. Snowfall totals were above normal from the Iowa-Minnesota border to northern Ohio and in some areas further north but snowfall was below normal for the entire southern half of the region.
- Rainfall in the eastern half of the region led to minor flooding in Ohio, Indiana, and

southern Illinois from the middle to end of the month. The Wabash Valley in southern Indiana was the area most affected.

- Severe weather moved across the southern Midwest on the 17th. Hail reports topping 1" (2.5 cm) stretched from central Missouri through southern Illinois. Wind damage was more prevalent to the east in southern Indiana, Kentucky, and northeast Ohio. Nine tornadoes were confirmed in southern Indiana and western Kentucky. Twisters ranged from EF-0 to EF-2 on the Enhanced Fujita Scale. Damage to trees and buildings was significant as several of the storms remained on the ground for more than a mile (1.6 km). One injury was reported in Jefferson County, Kentucky.
- Another bout of severe weather hit the southern Midwest on the 22nd. Storm reports were concentrated in extreme southeast Missouri, southern Illinois, southern Indiana, and western Kentucky. Calloway County, Kentucky was struck with the lone Midwest tornado and also reported the largest hail of the storm, 2" (5.1 cm) in diameter. The tornado uprooted hundreds of trees along its 5.6 mile (9 km) path. A handful of other reports of 1" (2.5 cm) or greater hail were scattered among dozens of wind damage reports. Several barns were destroyed by high winds, along with damage to many other buildings, trees, and power poles.

For details on the weather and climate events of the Midwest, see the weekly summaries in the [MRCC Midwest Climate Watch page](#).

**Southeast Region:** *(Information provided by the [Southeast Regional Climate Center](#))*

- Mean temperatures in January were above normal across the contiguous Southeast U.S. The greatest departures occurred across parts of Alabama, northern Florida, and eastern Virginia, where monthly temperatures were at least 6 degrees F (3.3 degrees C) above average. Most other locations were between 3 and 5 degrees F (1.6 to 2.8 degrees C) above average, except across the Florida Peninsula where mean temperatures were as much as 2 degrees F (1.1 degrees C) above average. In contrast, temperatures were generally below average across Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with some locations, including Aibonito and St. Thomas, as much as 3 degrees F (1.6 degrees C) below average for the month. The month of January actually began with a surge of Arctic air that drove temperatures below freezing as far south as Naples, FL between the 3rd and 4th of the month. This was followed by a period of unusually warm weather between the 7th and 10th of the month, where daily maximum temperatures reached 70 degrees F (21.1 degrees C) as far north as central Virginia. Another period of unusually warm weather occurred towards the end of the month as daily maximum temperatures reached 80 degrees F (26.7 degrees C) across parts of southern Georgia between the 25th and 27th. Minimum temperatures were also warm during these periods, as more than 150 daily high minimum temperature records were tied or broken.
- Precipitation in January was below average for much of the Southeast region, including Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands. The driest locations were found across eastern and southern Florida, where monthly precipitation totals were less than 10 percent of normal. Vero Beach, FL and Melbourne, FL did not record any precipitation in January. Daytona Beach, FL recorded just 0.07 inches (1.8 mm) of precipitation, making it the driest January in a record extending back to 1923. Both Naples, FL and Orlando, FL recorded their third driest January with 0.17 and 0.13 inches (4.3 and 3.3

mm) of precipitation, respectively. In contrast, precipitation was above average across much of Alabama as well as portions of western North Carolina and Virginia, with some locations recording as much as 200 percent of normal. Most of this precipitation was connected with low pressure systems tracking along the lower Mississippi River and Ohio River Valleys. Three separate storm systems contributed most of the precipitation, each dumping between 1 and 3 inches (25.4 and 76.2 mm) along interior portions of the Southeast. The cold spell that occurred at the beginning of the month resulted in up to an inch of snow across western North Carolina and Virginia. Measurable snow was reported in northern Alabama and across the Southern Appalachians, including 8 inches (203.2 mm) at Mount Mitchell, between the 12th and 15th of the month, while up to an inch of snow was reported in the Washington D.C. area from the 20th to the 21st of the month.

- There were 95 reports of severe weather across the Southeast in January, including 20 confirmed tornadoes. Seven of these tornadoes were rated EF-2 and higher, which is the greatest number of strong tornadoes confirmed in January in Southeast since 1975. On the 11th of the month, three tornadoes, including two EF-2s, were confirmed in Rutherford, Burke, and Caldwell Counties in the western Piedmont of North Carolina. This small outbreak destroyed several mobile homes, overturned docks and boats at the Lake Hickory Marina, and contributed to at least 18 injuries. On the 21st of the month, an upper-level disturbance and associated cold front helped spawn three tornadoes across Georgia, including an EF-1 that uprooted several trees and destroyed two large chicken houses in Macon County. The largest outbreak of the month occurred from the 22nd to the 23rd of the month, as 11 tornadoes, including three EF-3s, were confirmed across central Alabama. One of these tornadoes intersected with the path of the infamous EF-5 tornado that tore through Jefferson County just north of downtown Birmingham back in April. Several hundred injuries were reported and two deaths have been confirmed from this latest outbreak. Three weak tornadoes touched down across parts of central Alabama and north Florida on the 26th and 27th of the month, including an EF-1 that tore part of the roof off of an apartment complex in Charlotte County, FL.
- The lack of precipitation across the Southeast in January contributed to an expansion and intensification of drought conditions. Most notably, an area of exceptional drought (D4) re-emerged across southern Georgia and extreme southeastern Alabama. Along the Florida Peninsula, which was largely drought-free at the end of December, moderate drought (D1) conditions emerged by the end of January, while the areas of severe (D2) and extreme (D3) drought expanded into the Florida Panhandle. Drought conditions also intensified across eastern sections of the Carolinas, while abnormally dry (D0) conditions returned to the Tidewater region of eastern Virginia. The cold weather at the beginning of the month caused damage to fruit and vegetable crops across Florida and hindered the shipping of earlier harvests, while the ensuing warmth caused some plants and trees to begin blooming, making them susceptible to a late winter/early spring freeze.

For more information, please go to the [Southeast Regional Climate Center Home Page](#).

**High Plains Region:** *(Information provided by the [High Plains Regional Climate Center](#))*

- January 2012 was warm and dry across the High Plains Region. Cold arctic air stayed well to the north, with some parts of Alaska having their coldest January on record.

Locations here in the High Plains however, enjoyed unseasonably warm temperatures. Most areas of the Region had temperature departures which were just above normal up to 9.0 degrees (5.0 degrees C) above normal. The largest temperature departures in the Region occurred in the Dakotas where some locations had average temperatures which were 12.0-15.0 degrees F (6.7-8.3 degrees C) above normal. Due to the unseasonably warm temperatures, many locations ranked in the top 15 warmest Januaries on record. For example, Grand Forks, North Dakota had its 4th warmest January on record with an average temperature of 16.4 degrees F (-8.7 degrees C), which was 11.1 degrees F (-11.6 degrees C) above normal (period of record 1893-2012). The warmest January in Grand Forks occurred just a few years ago in 2006, with an average temperature of 21.3 degrees F (-5.9 degrees C). In addition to breaking into the top 15 warmest Januaries, numerous locations set new records for the warmest temperatures ever recorded in January. For instance, Omaha, Nebraska set a new record high of 69 degrees F (20.6 degrees C) on January 30th. Not only was this a new record for that day, this tied as the warmest temperature ever recorded in January in Omaha (period of record 1871-2012). Another example is Aberdeen, South Dakota which had a new record high of 63 degrees F (17.2 degrees C) on January 5th. This beat out the previous all-time high temperature record for January by 3 degrees F (1.7 degrees C)! The previous record of 60 degrees F (15.6 degrees C) was set January 24, 1981. All this warm weather has left many people wondering why the High Plains has been experiencing the spring-like weather this winter. One reason is the Arctic Oscillation (AO). The AO moves between a positive phase and a negative phase and when the AO is in a positive mode, the High Plains Region tends to have warmer than normal temperatures. For much of this winter the AO has been in a positive phase. In addition, the effects of the AO are strong enough to override the effects of ENSO (El Niño and La Niña). So, although this has been a La Niña winter (with colder than normal temperatures expected in the northern Plains), the effects of the positive AO dominated and warmer than normal conditions prevailed. Another reason for the warmer than normal temperatures is the lack of snow cover in not only the High Plains, but also in much of Canada. When there is snow on the ground much of the sun's energy is used to melt the snow or is reflected back to space. This energy cannot be used to heat the ground. Without snow cover however, the energy can be used to heat the ground and air instead. Since many areas to the north have been snow-free, the northerly winds that usually bring cold air, have brought milder air instead.

- January 2012 was fairly dry across the High Plains Region. Liquid equivalent precipitation was less than 25 percent of normal in many areas of Kansas, Nebraska, eastern Colorado, and North Dakota. Many locations in Colorado, Kansas, and Nebraska received no measurable precipitation this month. Although January liquid equivalent precipitation is usually light, the ongoing lack of rain and snow caused drought conditions to develop or worsen in these dry areas. In addition, many locations ranked in the top 10 driest Januaries on record. Much of eastern Kansas received less than 5 percent of normal precipitation. For instance Topeka, Kansas which received only 0.02 inches (0.5 mm) of precipitation, or 2 percent of normal precipitation, had its 2nd driest January on record (period of record 1887-2012). The driest January occurred in 1986 when no measurable precipitation was received. Another location that had a notably dry January was Laramie, Wyoming. Laramie only recorded a trace amount of precipitation, which made this January the driest on record (period of record 1948-2012). The previous record was set in both 1986 and 2006, when only 0.03 inches (0.8 mm) of liquid equivalent precipitation fell. Although

most of the Region was dry, a few light snow events did pass through. A few areas received at least 150 percent of normal including southern South Dakota and isolated pockets of western North Dakota and western Wyoming, and north-central Colorado.

- The U.S. Drought Monitor had many changes this month. Abnormally dry (D0) conditions spread to western areas of the Dakotas and also through north and central Nebraska. Moderate drought conditions (D1) in eastern North Dakota spread to include all areas near the Minnesota border. Western Colorado and southwestern Wyoming also had degradations this month as D0 developed and spread during the middle of the month. By the end of the month, D1 had developed in central and northwestern Colorado and south-central Wyoming. Low water-year-to-date (the water year starts October 1) precipitation led to this degradation. Except for a small expansion of D0 in western Kansas, drought conditions there remained largely the same. According to the U.S. Seasonal Drought Outlook, released January 19th, drought conditions in portions of the Dakotas, Nebraska, eastern Colorado, and western Kansas were expected to persist, while drought conditions in eastern Kansas were expected to improve. Drought conditions in western Colorado were expected to develop.

For more information, please go to the [High Plains Regional Climate Center Home Page](#).

**Southern Region:** *(Information provided by the [Southern Regional Climate Center](#))*

- The month of January proved to be a warm month for the entire Southern Region with all state temperature averages ranking in at least the top twenty on record (18-95-2012). A strong majority of the station in the Southern Region averaged between 2 to 8 degrees F (1.11 to 4.44 degrees C) above normal. Louisiana was the warmest state, reporting a state average temperature for the month of 55.40 degrees F (13.00 degrees C). For Louisiana, it was the eleventh warmest January on record (1895-2012). Mississippi reported a state average temperature of 50.70 (10.39 degrees C), while Texas was a close third with 50.30 (10.17 degrees C). For Mississippi, it was the fifteenth warmest January on record (1895-2012), while for Texas it was the seventeenth warmest. With a state average temperature of 44.30 degrees F (6.83 degrees C), Arkansas posted its eighteenth warmest January on record (1895-2012), while Oklahoma posted its tenth warmest January on record (1895-2012) with a state average temperature of 42.70 degrees F (5.94 degrees C). For Tennessee, it was the twentieth warmest January on record (1895-2012) as it reported a state average temperature of 42.50 degrees F (5.83 degrees C).
- Precipitation varied spatially during the month of January with parts of the Southern Region having a wetter than normal month, while for other areas, it was much drier than normal. Wetter than normal conditions occurred over much of eastern Oklahoma and in central and northern Texas. Stations in that part of the Southern Region averaged between 150 and 300 percent of normal. These values equate to 2 to 7 inches (50.80 to 177.80 mm) of precipitation. Similar totals were also observed in south central Louisiana, which received approximately 130 to 150 percent of its expected precipitation for the month. Elsewhere, conditions were quite dry. Most stations in southern Texas and in western Oklahoma only received between 5 and 50 percent of normal precipitation, with several stations reporting zero precipitation for the month. State average precipitation values were as follows: 2.87 inches (72.90

mm) in Arkansas, 4.66 inches (118.36 mm) in Louisiana, 4.39 inches (111.51 mm) in Mississippi, 1.95 inches (49.53 mm) in Oklahoma, 4.78 inches (121.41 mm) in Tennessee, and 2.24 inches (56.90 mm) in Texas. For Texas, it was the twenty-eighth wettest January on record (1895-2012), and the second consecutive month with precipitation greater than two inches.

- Drought conditions in the Southern Region improved slightly from the previous month, with drought being removed in north central Texas and in eastern Oklahoma. Much of eastern Texas has also seen a one-category improvement in drought conditions. As of January, 31, 2012, 61.19 percent of the Southern Region remains in drought, which is approximately an 8 percent improvement from the end of last month. Drought conditions in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi did not change much over the course of the month, and Tennessee remains the only state in the region to be completely drought free.
- On January 9, 2012, a series of twisters were reported in Fort Bend and Brazoria Counties. No injuries or fatalities were reported, although damage to trees and power lines occurred. Damage to vehicles and farm properties was also reported.
- On January 17, 2012, a tornado injured two people in Marion County, Mississippi. A mobile home there was destroyed and a wood frame home was heavily damaged.
- On January 22, 2012, dozens of tornadoes were reported in central and eastern Arkansas and in east central Mississippi. There were also dozens of hail and wind reports. One person was injured in Bolivar County, Mississippi. This tornado was reported to be in the EF-2 Category, with estimated winds at 120 miles per hour (193 kilometers per hour). Seven homes were reported to be damaged by a tornado in Quitman County, Mississippi.
- On January 25, 2012, dozens of tornadoes were reported in eastern Texas and in western and central Louisiana. One person was injured by a tornado in Rusk, County, Texas. Fortunately, most of the damage was restricted to just trees and power lines.

For more information, please go to the [Southern Regional Climate Center Home Page](#).

**Western Region:** *(Information provided by the [Western Regional Climate Center](#))*

- January 2012 was a month of extremes in the West. Alaska experienced bitter cold and heavy coastal snows, while record-breaking highs and extended warm periods dominated the Southwest and Inland Northwest. Heavy rain and snowfall throughout the second half of the month helped much of the Northwest recover some of their moisture deficit, while the Southwest remained nearly dry.
- Strong and persistent ridging took hold over the West for most of January 2012, resulting in positive temperature departures from normal for most of the region. The greatest positive departures were observed in the Rocky Mountains and especially the plains of Montana, with slightly negative departures seen in coastal areas of the Northwest. During the first week of January, record highs occurred throughout the West. At inland non-mountainous areas, temperatures in the high 50s F (13-15 C) into the low 60s F (16-17 C) were enough to meet or break records; in the Southwest, 81 F (27 C) in Phoenix on New Year's day met the previous record high. Phoenix experienced its 4th warmest January on record (1895+). On January 2nd the

high of 85 F (29.4 C) at the University of California, Los Angeles shattered the previous daily record of 80 F (26.6 C) set in 1969. Another less extreme but still quite widespread warm outbreak occurred mid-month (13-15th) with record temperatures tied or set in California, Nevada, southern Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming. The last few days of the month saw Santa Ana conditions and record temperatures in the neighborhood of 80 F (26.6 C) for Southern California and the Central Valley, as well as record daily highs in Wyoming, Nevada, and eastern Montana. Bakersfield, CA experienced its 10th warmest January on record since 1893 and Great Falls and Billings, Montana recorded their 15th and 16th warmest Januarys, respectively.

- In stark contrast to mild January temperatures in the lower 48, frigid conditions dominated Alaska. Record lows were broken or nearly missed throughout the state in the first and last weeks of the month. On January 29 and 30, Bettles, Alaska reached -60 F (-51.1 C) breaking previous records of -56 F (-48.8 C) and -58 F (-50 C), respectively. By January 13, Nome had broken or tied 5 low temperature records with temperatures in the -30 F (-34.4 C) range. The low temperatures have allowed for Bering Sea ice to advance rapidly southward during the last week of the month at a rate of 10 miles/day (16 km/day), much faster than the usually observed rate of 2-3 miles/day (3-5 km/day). The advancing ice is expected to heavily impact the crabbing industry. Many locations throughout the state also set daily snowfall and precipitation records in the first part of the month, described in detail below.
- Mid-January, a procession of moisture-laden systems tracked through the Pacific Northwest, bringing rainfall totals to over 100% of a normal January in much of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and portions of Montana. Another strong precipitation event associated with a deep subtropical moisture tap occurred in the Northwest on January 24 and 25 and produced additional precipitation records, though in this case slightly further south, targeting southern Washington, Oregon, far northern Nevada, and Southern Idaho.
- While the Northwest was being inundated, moderate drought developed or maintained through the month in Central and Southern California, the Great Basin, Arizona, New Mexico, and Hawaii. Phoenix, Arizona tied its driest January on record receiving only trace precipitation; normal at that location is 0.91 in (23 mm). Elsewhere in the Southwest, San Diego, California airport recorded 0.4 in (3.9 cm), tying for the 21st driest year in a record that began in 1914. In the Great Basin, Reno, Nevada completed its 56th consecutive day with no measurable precipitation on January 15th. The previous record stretch (in winter; the summer record is 129) had been 54 days from December 2, 1960 through January 24, 1961. Reno received late month precipitation to finish with a total of 1.54 in (39 mm), 0.48 in (12 mm) above the 1971-2000 normal, the first month since June 2011 with above normal precipitation. Reno ended a 7-month stretch (mid-June to mid-January) with a total of only 0.33" (8.4 mm).
- January 5-8: Heavy Snows in Prince William Sound, Alaska: Excessive snowfall occurred in Prince William Sound, Alaska over the past 6 weeks, causing avalanche hazards and dangerous snow loading on structures. Valdez, Alaska received record daily snowfall of 19.2 in (48.8 cm), 19.3 in (49 cm), and 15.2 in (38.6 cm) on January 5th, 6th, and 8th respectively. Season-to-date snowfall at Valdez reached 290.1 in (736.9 cm) by January 8, breaking the previous seasonal snowfall record (to that date); normal season-to-date snowfall is 143.3 in (364 cm). Cordova, Alaska also

received heavy, above-average snowfall and declared a state of emergency due to many building collapses and extreme avalanche hazard.

- **January 16-21: Major Winter Storm in Northwest:** A series of Pacific storms with ample subtropical moisture began passing through western Washington and Oregon on Monday, January 16th and continued through Saturday, January 21, moving into northern California, Idaho and Western Montana. Heavy precipitation occurred throughout the region, with many precipitation records set. The Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area received 2-10 inches (5-25 cm) of snow, leaving many without power and causing closure of the Seattle airport. The airport received record snowfall of 6.8 in (17.3 cm) breaking the previous daily record of 2.9 in (7.4 cm) set in 1954. Seattle airport also set low temperature records on both Jan 17 and 18. Olympia, Washington airport received 11 in (28 cm) of snowfall on January 18, breaking the previous record of 4.5 in (11.4 cm) set in 1954. In southeastern Washington, La Crosse received 12 in (30.5 cm) of snowfall in 24 hours, the most snowfall in a 24-hr period at this location since records began in 1931. Storm snowfall totals in mountains of the Northwest ranged from 30-50 inches (76.2-127 cm) Several daily precipitation records were broken throughout the storm period throughout Washington northern Idaho, and western Montana.
- **January 19-20: Washoe Drive Fire near Reno, Nevada:** High winds gusting to 70-85 mph (31-38 m/s) combined with extremely dry conditions allowed a wildfire to grow extremely rapidly south of Reno, Nevada on the afternoon on January 19th. The area had been without significant precipitation for over 6 months, creating dangerous fire conditions. The fire covered roughly 6 square miles (15.5 square km) and destroyed 29 homes in just a few hours The arrival of very heavy precipitation (about 1" / 25 mm) and slackening winds on January 20th allowed firefighters to gain control of the fire by late evening.

For more information, please go to the [Western Regional Climate Center Home Page](#).

See [NCDC's Monthly Records web-page](#) for weather and climate records for the most recent month. For additional national, regional, and statewide data and graphics from 1895-present, for any period, please visit the [Climate at a Glance](#) page.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** All of the temperature and precipitation [ranks](#) and values are based on preliminary data. The ranks will change when the final data are processed, but will not be replaced on these pages. Graphics based on final data are provided on the [Temperature and Precipitation Maps](#) page and the [Climate at a Glance](#) page as they become available.

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## Citing This Report

NOAA National Climatic Data Center, *State of the Climate: National Overview for January 2012*, published online February 2012, retrieved on January 5, 2013 from <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/national/2012/01>.

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*Last Updated Monday, 17-Dec-2012 13:02:42 EST by [Jake.Crouch@noaa.gov](mailto:Jake.Crouch@noaa.gov)*

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