

# Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

## December 1

- 1970: Record warmth spread across central Illinois. High temperatures included 72 degrees at Decatur, 70 degrees in Springfield, 68 degrees in Champaign, and 65 degrees in Peoria.
- 2008: A winter storm moved across the Midwest from November 30<sup>th</sup> through December 1<sup>st</sup>. Snow accumulations in excess of 6 inches were noted just north of the I-74 corridor. Considerable blowing snow occurred after the snow had ended.

## December 2

- 1982: A tremendous rainstorm in central Illinois brought 6.12 inches of rain to Springfield during a 24 hour period on the 2nd and 3rd. This is the most rain ever to fall in the city during such a time frame. Jacksonville had 4.80 inches, and Peoria recorded 2.89 inches during this period. Lake Springfield rose two feet over the old record stage, flooding nearby land. \$100,000 damage occurred to the dam at the lake, due to the tremendous flow of water.

## December 3

- 1978: A winter storm brought very heavy snow to the northern 1/3 of the state, with freezing rain and thunderstorms across the central third. Snow totals of 10 inches or more extended from north of the Quad Cities to the northwest Chicago suburbs.
- 2012: December started unseasonably mild, with highs in the 60s and 70s. The high temperature of 74 degrees in Springfield on this date tied its December record high temperature.

## December 4

- 1973: A tornado touched down in Morgan County, moving across Murrayville and causing extensive damage to homes, trailers and other buildings. One injury was reported.

## December 5

- 2002: A [major winter storm](#) brought significant snow and ice accumulations to all of southern Illinois, beginning the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> and continuing into the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup>. The precipitation was mostly snow, except in counties bordering the Ohio River, where the snow changed to an extended period of freezing rain. Ice accumulations were around one quarter inch from Cairo to Metropolis and Golconda. Snow accumulations across southern Illinois were generally 6 to 8 inches. Travel was heavily impacted by the winter storm. Numerous vehicle accidents occurred. Schools were closed for the remainder of the week in some counties. The winter storm began during the early morning hours and ended late the following night.

# Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

## December 6

- 1978: Parts of northern Illinois affected by a snowstorm a few days earlier received another round of heavy snow, as did the west-central parts of the state. By the conclusion of the 3-day storm, the heaviest snow of 8 inches or more extended from near Keokuk, Iowa, northeast across the Galesburg area to near LaSalle. A second band of 6 or more inches of snow extended from near Sterling east to Chicago.

## December 7

- 1830: The winter of 1830-31 was known as the "Winter of the Deep Snow" in Illinois. Records from Fort Armstrong (present-day Moline), Fort Dearborn (present-day Chicago), and Augusta indicated that heavy snowfall of 2 to 3 feet had fallen during the month of December. This severe winter, along with a poor corn harvest, compelled northern Illinoisans to seek grain in southern parts of the state, which had escaped the extreme conditions of the north. The furnishing of grain led to the use of the term "Little Egypt" being used to describe southern Illinois.

## December 8

- 1991: A late-season outbreak of severe thunderstorms moved across central Illinois. Baseball-size hail was reported at Manito in Mason County, as well as Tremont in Tazewell County. In Menard County, tennis-ball size hail was reported at Petersburg. A tornado touched down in far southern McLean County near the town of McLean and moved east to near Heyworth. This tornado caused some damage to a manufacturing plant as well as several outbuildings on farms along the storm's path.

## December 9

- 1982: Springfield's wettest December on record occurred in 1982, with 8.94 inches. Most of this fell on the 3rd and 4th of the month. In comparison, Peoria recorded 5.45 inches during the month, less than what Springfield reported in a single day.

## December 10

- 1889: A normal December brings about 5 inches of snow to Springfield and Peoria. Many Decembers have seen less than an inch of snow. However, only one year -- 1889 -- has not seen any snow during the month in Springfield. 1889 and 1890 are the only two snowless Decembers in Peoria history.

## December 11

- 1949: An out-of-season tornado moved across Christian and Shelby Counties, unroofing seven homes in Pana. One person was injured when a barn was destroyed. Another tornado near Hannibal, MO, moved across the Mississippi River into Pike County, damaging barns and sheds on 3 farms.
- 2000: A major winter storm affected a large part of central and northern Illinois. The heaviest snowfall of 10 to 15 inches occurred in Cook and DuPage Counties of the

# Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

Chicago area, with 6 and 10 inches as far south as central Illinois, along and north of a Canton to Morton to Gridley line. Freezing rain and sleet mixed in with the snow, especially along and south of this line. Northwest winds of 25 to 35 mph, with gusts to 45 mph, produced considerable blowing and drifting snow, with near blizzard conditions in northeast Illinois, and wind chills of 30 to 40 below zero. 19 people in the Chicago area died while shoveling snow, from heart failure or hypothermia.

## **December 12**

- 1855: The first weather observations began in downtown Peoria this month, at the corner of Washington and East Franklin. Dr. Frederick Brendel made the first observations of temperature and precipitation. His records, which span from 1855 through 1905, serve as the backbone of the Peoria climatological database.

## **December 13**

- 2000: Between 6 and 8 inches of snow accumulated along and east of a Bloomington to Decatur to Taylorville line, with a light ice coating on top of the heavy snow. The snow started between 8 and 10 am, with 6 inches accumulating by 5 pm, and ending by 10 pm. Freezing rain and sleet mixed in with the snow after 3 PM.
- 2013: A winter storm dumped several inches of snow across the northern 2/3 of the state on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. The heaviest snow, of over 10 inches, was reported northeast of Rushville near Astoria. An area of 8 to 10 inches also occurred from Pana, northeast through Champaign, to Hoopeston.

## **December 14**

- 1919: Champaign's driest December on record occurred in 1919, when only 0.13 inch of precipitation was measured. Springfield and Peoria both reported 0.30 inch, for 3rd driest Decembers on record in both cities.

## **December 15**

- 1987: A powerful winter storm produced 6 to 12 inches of snow in an area from Quincy to Rockford to Chicago. Winds gusting as high as 75 to 90 mph produced blizzard conditions, downed power lines, and drifted roads closed. Snow totals included 11.4 inches in Rockford, 9.1 inches at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, 11.2 inches in Moline, and 8.9 inches in Peoria. The storm system also produced thunderstorms which lasted from 2 to 4 hours, an unusual length of time for a winter storm. The thunderstorms also produced sleet and hail, with 3/4 inch hail reported in Joliet.

## **December 16**

- 1996: A narrow band of heavy snow, only about 25 miles wide, extended across southern Illinois from Carbondale to Mount Vernon. Snowfall totals of 5 to 7 inches were reported. The precipitation initially started as rain, then changed to freezing rain and sleet before becoming snow. Numerous accidents occurred, as roads turned into skating rinks.

# Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

## December 17

- 1981: A two-day snowstorm produced heavy snow across the central third of Illinois. The heaviest snowfall, of 8-10 inches, fell from near Springfield east to Decatur.

## December 18

- 1957: An out of season severe weather outbreak produced 19 tornadoes in Illinois. Collectively, 13 people were killed and 259 injured, with property damage between \$8-10 million. Tornadoes were reported as far north as Mason and Vermilion counties, but most of the tornadoes were across the southern third of the state. The city of Murphysboro was hardest hit, with 10 people killed and electricity lost for a few days. One of the tornadoes, in Perry County, reached F5 intensity, while F4 strength tornadoes affected the Mt Vernon and Murphysboro areas.

## December 19

- 1973: Heavy snow fell across much of central and northern Illinois over a 3-day period. The storm produced 10 to 18 inches of snow. As a result, travel was at a standstill for two days. Springfield recorded a total of 14.6 inches of snow from the storm.

## December 20

- 1981: A three-day winter storm across central Illinois produced freezing rain on this date, followed by very heavy snow on the 22nd. Snow totals were in excess of 8 inches in an area extending from Lincoln southwest to Jacksonville. 5 to 6 inches of snow were reported as far east as Champaign. The snow tapered off sharply to the south and north, with 1 inch or less north of Peoria and south of I-70.
- 2012: Areas along and west of I-55 saw widespread blizzard conditions, with the passage of an intense area of low pressure. The highest snow amounts of 3 to 5 inches occurred west of the Illinois River, and many areas saw wind gusts of 50 to 60 mph.

## December 21

- 1836: A spectacular cold front passed through Illinois. Although no reliable temperature records are available, estimates from eyewitness reports indicated that temperatures fell from the 40's to zero degrees almost instantly. The water in ponds and streams was pushed into waves by 70 mph winds, then froze in place. Small animals were frozen in their tracks. Two men near Rushville, in Schuyler County, froze to death. A man riding horseback from Chatham to Springfield started the trip in rain; by the time he arrived, his coat was frozen solid, and he was frozen onto the saddle. This was the beginning of what was referred to as the "Winter of Starving Time" in Illinois.

# Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

## December 22

- 1989: [Bitter cold](#) gripped a good part of the nation for several days before Christmas. At the peak of the cold wave, temperatures fell to less than 20 below zero. Peoria reported 11 consecutive days with lows below zero, tying a record; the coldest temperature of 23 below zero on the 22nd was the 5th coldest on record in Peoria. Springfield reported a monthly record low temperature of 21 below zero on the 23rd, as did Champaign on the 22nd; Decatur had its second coldest December temperature on record with a 21 below zero reading on the 22nd.

## December 23

- 1983: Springfield was in the midst of a record long cold wave. During the period from the 22nd through the 26th, the city saw temperatures of zero or colder for 101.5 hours. The cold spell contributed to an average temperature for the month of only 16.1 degrees, a December record.
- 1996: Out-of-season severe thunderstorms moved across central and southern Illinois. Southeast of St. Louis, a tornado touched down near the town of Evansville, damaging several buildings and uprooting trees. Hail of 3/4 to 1 inch in diameter fell as far north as Tazewell and McLean Counties.

## December 24

- 1915: Springfield reported 10.5 inches of snow on this Christmas Eve, setting a record for the date. This served as most of the 13.4 inches that fell during the month, a total which stands as the 5th snowiest December on record.

## December 25

- The chance of a "White Christmas" is based on 30 years' worth of climatological data, and gives the likelihood of there being at least 1 inch of snow on the ground. In Illinois, chances of a White Christmas range from around 50% near Lake Michigan, to around 10% along the Ohio River. In central parts of Illinois, the chance is around 25 to 30%.

## December 26

- 1988: A narrow band of heavy snow affected northern Illinois, from Rockford to Chicago to Kankakee. Snow totals included 14 inches in Kankakee, and 9.5 inches in Rockford.
- 2012: Blizzard conditions occurred over portions of southeast Illinois, as a storm system produced widespread heavy snow across the western Ohio Valley. Snowfall totals were close to a foot around Lawrenceville. However, there was a very sharp cutoff to the snow, with only an inch occurring around Effingham.

## December 27

- 2008: A strong cold front pushed into an unseasonably warm air mass over central Illinois, causing severe thunderstorms with widespread wind damage. In Springfield, part

## Illinois Weather Trivia for December

---

of the roof was blown off a school, and 3 large barns and the grandstand were damaged at the state fairgrounds. In addition, heavy rain fell on partially frozen ground, causing flooding in a few areas.

- 2015: A multi-faceted storm system brought [several periods of heavy rain to central and southern Illinois](#) from December 26th through 28th. Widespread rainfall of 3 to 6 inches occurred, with locally higher amounts. The amount of rain falling on saturated soils from recent wet conditions produced widespread flash flooding and fast rises on creeks and streams. Once the flash flooding subsided, ongoing areal and river flooding persisted into January 2016. Many rivers climbed to major flood stage as a result of the excessive rainfall. The flooding situation was made even worse by levee breaches, including one along the Embarras River near the Jasper-Crawford County line. Four people died as a result of this major flooding event across central Illinois. All four died when their vehicles were swept away by high water in Christian County early in the morning of December 29th.

### **December 28**

- 1924: Record cold was found across central Illinois. Peoria's low temperature of 24 degrees below zero established a December record, while daily record lows were established at Champaign, at 20 below zero, and Springfield, at 14 below zero.
- 1984: Spring-like weather spread across Illinois just a week after astronomical winter began. Springfield recorded a high temperature of 74 degrees, which tied the city's December record high. A high of 70 in Peoria stands as the second warmest December temperature on record, while Champaign recorded a daily record high of 68 degrees.
- 2012: The second winter storm of the week produced 7 inches of snow in Lawrenceville. By the next morning, there were 16 inches on the ground, establishing Lawrenceville's record snow depth.

### **December 29**

- 1973: Springfield's snowiest December on record was noted during this month, with a total of 22.7 inches of snow. Much of it fell in a two-day period, on the 18th and 19th. The month also serves as the 3rd snowiest month ever.

### **December 30**

- 1978: The northern 2/3 of Illinois started to feel the effects of a 3-day winter storm. Parts of the northeast received up to 20 inches of snow, with 8 inches being reported as far south as the Illinois River southwest of Peoria.

### **December 31**

- 2010: Severe thunderstorms moved through central Illinois on New Years Eve. The majority of the damage was confined to the Lake Petersburg area of Menard County, where an EF3-strength tornado caused extensive damage near the lake. The tornado was on the ground for 3.6 miles.