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## National Weather Summary December 13 - 19, 2009

**Highlights:** For the second time in less than 2 weeks, a major winter storm took aim on the U.S. However, the latter storm developed across the **South** and **East**, allowing blizzard recovery efforts to continue across the **central Plains** and the **upper Midwest**. In the **Southeast**, late-week downpours caused local flooding and indefinitely halted late-autumn fieldwork, including cotton harvesting. Farther north, an historic early-season snow storm blanketed the **Mid-Atlantic States** with as much as 1 to 2 feet of snow, paralyzing pre-holiday travel. Farther west, final corn harvesting inched ahead across the **Midwest**, hampered by wet conditions in the **central Corn Belt** and a substantial snow cover in the **northern and western Corn Belt**. However, milder weather aided **upper Midwestern** livestock stressed by the previous week's blizzard. Meanwhile, milder, mostly dry weather prevailed across the **Nation's mid-section**, although a deep snow cover persisted on the **east-central Plains**. Concerns related to developing dryness in winter wheat areas continued across portions of the **southern High Plains**. Elsewhere, much of the **West** also experienced a return to mild, dry weather, although rain and snow showers lingered in the **Northwest**. **Western** fieldwork activities included final cotton harvesting in **Arizona**. During the second half of the week, milder air overspread the **western U.S.**, where weekly temperatures were generally within a few degrees of normal. Meanwhile, chilly conditions in the **Northeast** held temperatures as much as 5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit below normal. Bitterly cold weather persisted during the early- to mid-week period across the **northern Plains**, where readings of -20 to -40 degrees Fahrenheit were reported. On December 15, sub-zero readings were common as far south as **northern Kansas**. However, a widespread snow cover across the **northern and central Plains** helped to insulate winter wheat.

Very cold weather continued early in the week across the **north-central and northwestern U.S.**, resulting in daily-record lows in locations such as **Moses Lake, WA** (2 degrees Fahrenheit on December 13), and **Jordan, MT** (-40 degrees Fahrenheit on December 14). On December 15, lows plunged to -37 degrees Fahrenheit in **Simpson, MT**; -30 degrees Fahrenheit in **Havre, MT**; and -28 degrees Fahrenheit near **Harrold, SD**. In **Grand Island, NE**, temperatures remained low enough to secure the coldest December 1-15 period since 1972. **Grand Island's** temperature averaged 14.3 degrees Fahrenheit (13.2 degrees Fahrenheit below normal) from December 1-15, compared to 10.2 degrees Fahrenheit during the same period in 1972. In stark contrast, record-setting warmth continued across **Florida's peninsula**, where highs included 86 degrees Fahrenheit (on December 13) in **Vero Beach** and 85 degrees Fahrenheit (on December 15) in **Miami**. Farther north, however, enough cold air settled across the **Northeast** toward week's end to induce a daily record-tying low of 13 degrees Fahrenheit (on December 18) in **Bridgeport, CT**.

Early in the week, rain continued in the **Southeast**, while heavy snow blanketed the **Great Basin** and the **Intermountain West**. In **Utah's Wasatch Range**, December 11-14 snowfall included 56 inches at **Brighton Crest** and 45 inches at **Alta**. Daily-record snowfall totals for December 13 reached 9.0 inches in **Stanford, MT**, and 6.6 inches in **Ely, NV**. Meanwhile in **Georgia**, December 12-15 rainfall totals included 5.22 inches in **Columbus** and 3.60 inches in **Savannah**. Similarly in **Louisiana**,

December 11-15 rainfall reached a phenomenal 14.44 inches in **New Orleans** and 3.01 inches in **Baton Rouge**. With additional rainfall on December 17-18 of 2.45 inches in **New Orleans** and 2.70 inches in **Baton Rouge**, respective month-to-date totals surged to 24.93 and 12.37 inches. At the **New Orleans International Airport**, the previous wettest December occurred in 1977, when 10.77 inches fell, while the previous wettest month occurred in May 1995, when 21.18 inches fell. December rainfall records were also established in several other **Southeastern** locations, including downtown **Charleston, SC** (9.72 inches; previously 5.53 inches in 1976); **Savannah, GA** (10.00 inches; previously, 9.44 inches in 2007); **Columbus, GA** (12.02 inches; previously, 9.39 inches in 1953); and **Mobile, AL** (13.77 inches; previously, 13.09 inches in 1853). **Columbus** also established a record for its wettest year (78.60 inches, or 168 percent of normal, through December 19), surpassing the 1964 annual standard of 73.22 inches. By December 16, heavy rain developed across **southern Texas**, where daily records included 2.93 inches in **McAllen** and 2.86 inches in **Brownsville**. Two days later, heavy snow developed in the **southern Appalachians** and spread northeastward. On December 18, **Asheville, NC**, received 10.1 inches of snow, a record for the date. December 19 became the snowiest December day on record in several **Mid-Atlantic** locations, including **Philadelphia, PA** (22.5 inches); **Baltimore, MD** (20.5 inches); and **Washington, DC** (15.0 inches). December 18-20 storm-total snowfall at those three locations climbed to 23.2, 21.1, and 16.4 inches, respectively. **Philadelphia** (23.2 inches on December 19-20) experienced its second-highest single-storm total, behind 30.7 inches during a January 1996 event. In **West Virginia**, **Elkins** set an all-time snowfall record for a 24-hour period (20.7 inches on December 18-19), eclipsing 18.8 inches on January 7-8, 1996. Similarly on **Long Island**, the **Brookhaven National Laboratory** (26.3 inches on December 19-20) noted its highest single-storm total on record, edging the Blizzard of 1978 total of 23.0 inches. Wind gusts during the storm were clocked to 48 m.p.h. (on December 19) at **Wallops Island, VA**, and 61 m.p.h. (on December 20) in **Nantucket, MA**.

In **Hawaii**, a period of mostly dry weather ended late in the week across windward locations. On the **Big Island**, for example, **Hilo** netted a daily-record rainfall of 7.92 inches on December 19. During a 48-hour period on December 18-20, **Big Island** totals reached 11.50 inches in **Laupahoehoe** and 8.42 inches in **Piihonua**. On **Oahu**, however, **Honolulu** last received measurable rainfall on December 3, leaving its month-to-date total at 0.73 inch (43 percent of normal). Similarly, December 1-19 rainfall totaled just 0.04 inch (1 percent of normal) in **Lihue, Kauai**. Farther north, there was a gradual transition to mild, stormy weather in much of **Alaska**. However, weekly temperatures averaged as much as 20 degrees Fahrenheit below normal across the **Alaskan interior** due to lingering cold. Temperatures in **McGrath** rebounded from a low of -45 degrees Fahrenheit on December 19 to a daily-record high of 43 degrees Fahrenheit on December 21. Elsewhere, **Fairbanks** received 5.7 inches of snow from December 14-18, while **Bettles** (7.9 inches on December 18) reported a daily-record total. During the same period, a record-setting snow storm unfolded in **southern Alaska** at **Valdez**, where 77.0 inches fell from December 14-17. With a 38.7-inch snowfall on December 15, **Valdez** experienced its second-snowiest day on record behind 47.5 inches on January 16, 1990. **Valdez** also noted its second-snowiest 3-day period, with 68.2 inches from December 14-16, behind only 74.6 inches on February 4-6, 1996.

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

## **Agricultural Summary** **December 14 – 20, 2009**

**Highlights:** Mostly dry weather prevailed across much of the Southwest, Great Plains, and Corn Belt while areas in the Pacific Northwest, Delta, and Southeast received precipitation totaling 4 inches or more. With the exceptions of New England and Florida, near-normal temperatures settled in across much of the eastern half of the country. In contrast, average temperatures in the northern Rocky Mountains and Great Plains fell to as much as 12 degrees below normal.

**Corn:** Harvest in the 18 major corn-producing States advanced to 95 percent complete by week's end. Harvest was most active in North Dakota where mostly dry weather allowed producers to combine 8 percent of their acreage during the week.

**Cotton:** Nationally, 94 percent of the 2009 cotton crop was harvested by December 20. The most activity was evident in the Great Plains States of Kansas and Oklahoma where producers harvest 21 and 19 percent of their crop, respectively.

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