

Northeast Montana Seasonal Weather Summary for the Winter of 2008-2009

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December was colder and much snowier than normal. It was a bitter and sudden change from the mild conditions of November, which continued into the first 12 days of December. Blizzard conditions struck suddenly on the 13th, accompanied by a turn to bitter cold. For many observation sites, the temperatures on the 14-15th were the coldest December readings in 12 years with the coldest wind chill reading 55 below zero!

Numerous locations had over 1.00 inches of precipitation, led by 1.59 inches at Glasgow 46SW, 1.39 inches at Glasgow 14NW, and also at Saco. Baylor, Port of Raymond, and St Marie were among the drier spots, reporting only about one quarter of an inch. The very strong winds, along with resulting severe blowing and drifting made precipitation and snowfall measurements very difficult at times.

Below zero lows were widespread and routine from the 13th on. Numerous locations reported readings colder than 30 below zero. Flatwillow, Port of Morgan, Redstone, and Circle all had 34 degrees below zero lows on the 15th, for the coldest reported. Below zero highs were common as well, the coldest reported being a 23 degrees below zero high at Cohagen, and a 20 degree below zero high at St Marie on the 15th.

Almost all the warmest temperatures occurred in the first week, as Flatwillow hit 65 degrees on the 1st, while Content 3SSE had 56 degrees.

For some places, it was the snowiest December ever recorded, including the record 24.5 inches at Glasgow. The Port of Raymond had 32.3 inches, the highest report from all stations. Opheim 12SE had 28.0 inches, while several other stations also reported snowfalls of more than 20 inches for the month also.

The biggest snowfalls occurred from the blizzard that struck on the 13-14th. Hinsdale 4SW had 11.0 inches, Glasgow 10.5 inches, and Opheim 12SE 10.0 inches from the storm. Most other places had 4 to 8 inches. Another snowstorm around the 30th produced up to 8 inches in places, but for a number of areas, only very light amounts fell from it.

January was a little colder than normal, with near normal precipitation. Grassrange 13NE led the way, reporting 1.01 inches, followed by 0.95 inches at Glasgow 46SW, and 0.90 inch at Medicine Lake. The dry spots were .05 inches at Cohagen, 0.11 inches at Circle, and 0.13 inches at Hinsdale 21SW.

The first half of the month was cold and snowy, continuing the pattern that started in mid-December. The last half of the month tended to be dry and not quite so cold. All reporting sites had at least a few days climb above freezing during the month. For the most northerly sites though, it was a struggle to reach much above freezing. Zortman hit an amazing 64 degrees on the 21st, the warmest of all locations, followed by 56 degrees at Flatwillow, and then Culbertson reporting 48 degrees on the 30th.

Although fewer in number than in December, there were places that fell to 30 degrees below zero or colder in January. Redstone led the way with 38 degrees below zero on the 14th, followed by 37 degrees below zero at Medicine Lake, and 36 degrees below zero at Scobey 4NW. There were a few subzero high temperatures at most locations as well, the coldest occurring around the 4th. Redstone could manage a high of

only 19 degrees below zero, while Port of Raymond had only 15 degrees below zero. Culbertson and Opheim 12SE had 14 degrees below zero, all of those being highs on the 4th.

Snowfall totals for the month of over 12.0 inches were quite common, as total snow depths in some areas exceeded 20 inches. The most snowfall reported in January was 19.0 inches at Port of Raymond, 16.0 inches at Zortman, and 14.0 inches at Opheim 12SE. Several observers reported severe blowing and drifting in blizzard-like conditions at times. The biggest storm was on the 2nd, where Hinsdale 4SW picked up 8 inches, Zortman 7.5 inches, and Glasgow 6 inches. Westby reported 6 inches from a storm on the 9th.

February was a little colder and drier than normal. Flatwillow had the most precipitation, 0.62 inches, followed by 0.51 inches at Carlyle 13NW, and 0.44 inches at Winnett 12SW. At least 19 locations had under a tenth of an inch for the entire month. Just traces were reported from Richey, and Brockway.

There were only a few significant snowfalls during the month. It was unusual that the temperature stayed in a narrow range for most of the month. Very few below zero temperatures occurred, but very few really mild days happened either. Flatwillow did report a 67 degree high temperature on the 5th, while Mosby hit 61 degrees, and Zortman 59 degrees.

All of the coldest readings occurred on the last day or two of the month. Malta 7E and Redstone had 19 degrees below zero, while Westby and Port of Raymond had 18 degrees below zero for the coldest reported. There were just a few subzero highs that occurred then too, a 5 degree below zero high at Opheim 12SE, a 3 degree below zero high at the Port of Raymond, and 2 degree below zero high at Westby.

The most snowfall was 13.2 inches of Port of Raymond, 9.3 inches at Carlyle 13NW, and 9.0 inches at Flatwillow. The most snowfall from a single storm was the 6.5 inches at Flatwillow on the 26th, while several other reporting stations had 1-3 inches at that time.

For much of northeast Montana, all 3 winter months, December, January, and February were colder than normal, and in some cases, it was the first time since the late 1970s that all 3 of the main winter months were all colder than normal.