

Illinois Weather Trivia for March

March 1

- 2002: Snowfall totals of 6 to 8 inches were measured in the central Illinois counties along and west of the Illinois River, from early in the evening on the 1st through the 2nd. Strong northwest winds, with gusts approaching 40 mph, produced significant blowing and drifting snow. Most roads were snow and ice covered, with numerous traffic accidents reported. Northern Illinois was hit harder, receiving 6 to 11 inches of snow, with 11.1 inches reported at Rockford.

March 2

- 1940: Several tornadoes touched down across central and southern Illinois. The strongest one moved across Johnson and Pope Counties, peaking at F4 intensity in Johnson County. Four farm homes were destroyed, and 8 others were badly damaged. One person was killed by flying debris near Flatwoods. Other tornadoes touched down at Shawneetown in Gallatin County, in Alton, and near Bunker Hill in Macoupin County.

March 3

- 1978: Winter storm #16 of the 1977-78 winter season produced heavy snow across the central third of Illinois. Totals of 7-8 inches were reported near Quincy, from Springfield southwest into Greene County, and also from Mattoon eastward to the Indiana border near Terre Haute.

March 4

- 1961: A tornado caused \$7 million damage as it moved northeast across Chicago. First touching down at 91st and Hoyne Sts, it eventually moved onto Lake Michigan. 3,000 homes were damaged, and 9 major buildings had to be torn down. One person was killed after being thrown against a building. 115 people were injured.
- 1988: A 50 mile wide area of heavy snow produced 3 to 8 inches from Quincy to Springfield to Danville. South of there, 1/2 to 1-1/2 inches of ice was reported. Power lines and trees were downed from the ice. Severe icing extended from the far northeast St. Louis suburbs eastward to the Indiana border near Terre Haute. In Edgar, Coles, and Clark counties, the icing was considered to be worse than the major ice storm of 1978.

March 5

- 1989: A winter storm produced a 100 mile wide area of heavy snow, from East St. Louis to Danville. Snow totals included 12 inches in Cahokia, 11 inches in Alton, 8-12 inches near Mattoon, 8 inches in Danville, and 7 inches in Champaign.

March 6

- 1961: Several tornadoes moved across parts of central and southern Illinois. One tornado moved along a 120 mile path from Jerseyville to Litchfield to Greenup (Cumberland County), causing \$300,000 damage. Another tornado further south moved

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from Chester to Bellmont.

March 7

- 1978: Central Illinois was in the midst of the latest in a series of severe winter storms which moved across the area during the winter of 1977-78. In this storm, which ended on March 8th, the heaviest band of snow extended in a wide area along and north of I-70. Up to 14 inches of snow was reported in Montgomery, eastern Macoupin, and far southern Christian Counties. The snow tapered off sharply further north, with no snow being reported north of Peoria.
- 2017: An intense line of thunderstorms raced across central Illinois between late evening Monday and early morning Tuesday, March 6-7. This line of storms had originated across western Iowa and eastern Nebraska during the afternoon hours, and caused significant damage all along its path. Most of the severe weather reports received in central Illinois were caused by strong winds. However, [three tornadoes occurred](#), one in northeast Mason County and two in southwest Tazewell County. The strongest one was an EF2 tornado northeast of Delavan.

March 8

- 1871: A tornado moved across the St. Louis area at a reported 70 mph, crossing the Mississippi River near East St. Louis and Venice. There was considerable damage to docks and ferries on the river; damage was reported to have been carried 30 miles. Six railroad depots were destroyed, accounting for most of the \$200,000 damage. Eight of the 9 deaths occurred at the East St. Louis railroad yards, while the 9th occurred on a bridge. 60 people were injured during the tornado, which peaked at F3 intensity.
- 1978: Springfield had a 5-day period from March 7-11th with a snow depth of at least 10 inches. The depth of 16 inches on this date tied the city's record for greatest snow depth.
- 1998: A winter storm developed across Illinois on the 8th, bringing a mixture of freezing rain and snow, which changed to all snow by the evening. The heaviest snowfall occurred in northeast Illinois, with 6 to 12 inches of snow recorded. Snowfall amounts ranged from 2 inches near Mattoon to over 6 inches across Knox, Fulton, and Peoria Counties. Two people died in car accidents in Peoria County, due to the treacherous road conditions. Winds gusting to 50 mph created occasional white-out conditions, which lasted until the 9th. These winds also caused high waves on Lake Michigan, with half a million dollars damage noted to lakefront parks.

March 9

- 1999: A winter storm moved into Illinois, producing heavy snow on the 8th and 9th across northern and central parts of the state. The heaviest snow was 11 inches in Havana, with 9.3 inches in Virginia. Heavy snow of 9 inches also fell in Galesburg and South Pekin, with 8 inches in Bradford. A swath of 9 to 12 inches of snow occurred near I-80 in northwest Illinois. Winds gusting to 30 to 40 mph caused local whiteout conditions.
- 2002: High, gradient winds of 40 to 50 mph occurred across much of Illinois. A measured gust of 87 mph was reported by an observer in Arcola, in Douglas County. Other measured gusts included 65 mph in Galesburg, 62 mph in Tremont (Tazewell

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County), 61 mph in Oblong (Crawford County) and 58 mph in Lincoln. Three people were killed in downtown Chicago, when a piece of scaffolding was blown off the John Hancock Center, falling 40 stories and crushing two cars.

March 10

- 1960: March of 1960 went down in the record books as being the coldest March on record. Average temperatures during the month included 22.6 degrees at Peoria, 24.2 in Springfield, and 25.6 in Champaign. A normal March averages around 40 degrees.

March 11

- 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches, accompanied by blowing and drifting, occurred in parts of central and southeast Illinois from the morning into the early evening. Several weather related traffic accidents resulted in nine serious injuries and one fatality. A 16 year old male was killed in a one car accident near the town of Oakland in Coles County. Four people were injured in a traffic accident near Neoga in Cumberland County, three people were injured in an accident near Assumption in Christian County, and two people were injured in an accident near Windsor in Shelby County. A second, but smaller band of heavy snow, occurred from eastern Morgan County into northern Sangamon County, where 6 to 8 inches was reported.

March 12

- 1976: Three strong tornadoes affected northeast and east central Illinois during the early afternoon hours. One moved across DuPage and Cook Counties, peeling many long-span roofs back near O'Hare Airport. Two people were killed by this tornado. A second tornado moved from near Oswego to Villa Park, destroying several homes in a subdivision near Oswego. A third tornado started in Kankakee County near St. Anne, moving east into Indiana.
- 2006: A supercell thunderstorm, which had originated in northern Oklahoma during the late morning hours, moved northeast across central Illinois during the evening. This storm produced a number of tornadoes across the state, including [one that was on the ground for approximately 65 miles](#), from the southeast tip of Pike County to Springfield; a second tornado then formed in southern Springfield and moved through the eastern part of the city. The two Springfield tornadoes were each rated at F2 intensity, and were just over ½ mile wide at their widest. Over 1,000 buildings in the Springfield area were damaged or destroyed. Further north, severe thunderstorms produced a measured wind gust of 107 mph at the Quad City Airport near Moline, destroying a hotel under construction and damaging many nearby homes and businesses. A downburst in Henry County produced 95 mph winds in Atkinson, and winds in Stephenson County were estimated near 80 mph.

March 13

- 1990: A tornado which first touched down near Riverdale, IA, moved on an erratic path to north of Cordova, IL, northeast of the Quad Cities. Damage at Cordova amounted to \$2.5 million, where 12 homes were destroyed or severely damaged, and 26 other homes had some degree of damage. One person was injured at the Cordova Nuclear Plant.

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March 14

- 2017: Following a widespread snow in northeast Illinois, a [band of lake effect snow](#) developed late on the 13th and continued into the 14th. O'Hare Airport reported 5.2 inches of lake effect snow; the total between the two events was 7.7 inches. Collectively, many locations in the counties along Lake Michigan reported 8 to 12 inches of snow, with 16 inches reported near Waukegan.

March 15

- 1938: A violent tornado touched down in the St. Louis metro area 5 miles southwest of Belleville, and moved north to O'Fallon. 60 homes were destroyed in Belleville, where 8 people were killed and 52 injured. Two more people were killed in O'Fallon. Glass from a gas station was carried 25 miles. The tornado's roar could reportedly be heard for 10 minutes before the storm struck.
- 2016: Severe thunderstorms produced four tornadoes in central Illinois. A pair of EF2 tornadoes occurred. One was on the ground for 18 miles and 4 counties, traveling from [Good Hope to near St. Augustine](#). Another was in [central Peoria County](#), from near Trivoli to Kickapoo. Weaker tornadoes also occurred on the northwest side of Peoria, as well as the far southwest edge of Springfield.

March 16

- 1942: A tornado in east central Illinois touched down in southwest Champaign County near Ivesdale, then moved northeast to the Indiana border. Farms were swept away in the Savoy, Mayview, and St. Joseph areas. In the town of Alvin, about 25 homes were damaged. A total of 9 people were killed, with 60 injured. Further northwest, [a violent tornado touched down](#) near Kickapoo (northwest of Peoria), and moved northeast through Chillicothe and Lacon. A quarter of Lacon was destroyed, amounting to about 60 homes, many of which were completely swept away. Eight people died in this tornado, which peaked at F5 intensity. Two others were killed by a third tornado which moved just west and north of Lincoln.
- 1960: A late-season winter storm moving across central Illinois produced 4.8 inches of snow in Peoria and 2.9 inches in Springfield, both records for the date. The two-day total for the 15th and 16th was close to 6 inches in both cities.

March 17

- 2012: An extended period of unseasonably warm weather occurred from the 14th through the 21st, with highs in the mid 70s to lower 80s. Urbana, Normal, and Galesburg all saw their earliest 80 degree temperatures on record, while Springfield and Peoria set new marks for the warmest March night on record.

March 18

- 1925: The [Tri-State Tornado](#) moved from southeast Missouri, across southern Illinois,

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and into southwest Indiana. The tornado traveled a total of 437 miles across the three states; the death toll of 695 is the greatest loss of life in the U.S. due to a tornado. In the first 120 mile stretch of the tornado's path through Illinois, 541 people were killed in a 40 minute span, including 234 people in Murphysboro and 148 in West Frankfort. The death toll in Murphysboro was the largest on record in the country for a single city. 33 students in De Soto were killed, the worst school death toll from a tornado in U.S. history. The tornado at times was a mile wide and traveled between 55 and 75 mph.

March 19

- 1948: Illinois' 6th deadliest tornado on record affected areas in and just east of the St. Louis metropolitan area. The tornado traveled from Alton east to Bunker Hill, in far southern Macoupin County. 33 people lost their lives, and 449 were injured. Half of Forestburg and 80% of Bunker Hill was damaged or destroyed. The parent storm produced another violent tornado further northeast, from near Litchfield to Moweaqua. Much of the damage from this storm was 3 miles northwest of Litchfield and 3 miles southeast of Morrisonville. No deaths were reported from this particular tornado.

March 20

- 1976: A violent tornado carved a 63 mile long path of destruction across east central Illinois. The tornado first touched down just southeast of Decatur and moved east-northeast to near Danville. The worst damage occurred at Sadorus, in southwestern Champaign County. 13 houses and 7 mobile homes were destroyed, and another 25 houses were damaged beyond repair; total damage was estimated at \$2 million. At the time, the tornado was 1/2 mile wide and had multiple vortices within the main tornado funnel. The tornado then destroyed several homes in Philo. Downtown Ogden took a direct hit from the tornado, with \$1 million damage reported.
- 1996: A winter storm moved across southeast Illinois on the 19th and 20th, producing up to 11 inches of snow. In Clark County near Casey, a semi-truck skidded out of control and slammed into an overpass, killing the driver. The truck was carrying a chlorine compound, requiring nearby buildings to be evacuated as a precaution.

March 21

- 1907: Springfield recorded a high temperature of 91 degrees, marking its earliest 90 degree day on record and a record for the month of March. Month record highs were also established at Peoria, with 87 degrees, and Champaign, with 85 degrees.
- 2006: A major winter storm impacted central Illinois. A swath of heavy snow fell across much of the region, with 6 to 10 inch snowfall totals common. In addition, blizzard conditions occurred across Scott, Morgan, Sangamon, Christian and Shelby counties with wind gusts to 45 mph recorded. No major injuries or fatalities were reported, though numerous vehicle accidents occurred.
- 2008: Heavy snowfall occurred across portions of far northern Illinois, on the first full day of spring. Totals up to 11 inches were reported near Gurnee, with 5 to 10 inches common from Rockford to the northern Chicago suburbs.

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March 22

- 1991: A tornado made several sporadic touchdowns as it moved across Vermilion County during the late evening. The first touchdown was in Tilton, damaging 10 homes and the city hall. The last touchdown was on the southwest side of Danville, damaging some signs, store windows, and trees. Total damage was around \$1 million.

March 23

- 1906: Champaign was in the midst of its snowiest month on record, when 32 inches of snow was recorded. Monthly records were also established at Decatur, with a total of 30.5 inches, and at Springfield, at 23.4 inches.

March 24

- 1913: A tornado touched down in southern Illinois 2 miles west of Makanda, and moved northeast to near West Frankfort. 21 of 41 railroad cars were derailed, with 10 of the cars completely destroyed. Damage to the train was \$17,500. 39 farms had \$30,000 worth of damage. Three people were killed.
- 2013: [A major snowstorm struck central Illinois](#), producing several rounds of moderate to heavy snowfall accompanied by thunderstorms. Snowfall rates of 2 to 3 inches per hour were noted. A total of 10 to 18 inches fell in an area from Rushville to Danville, south to near I-70, with the heaviest totals in Logan, Sangamon, and Christian Counties. Several locations established their all-time 24-hour snowfall record, including Springfield (17.4 inches), Pana (13.8 inches), and Taylorville (17.7 inches). The snow depth of 16 inches at Springfield the next morning tied its all-time greatest depth. Total for the entire storm in Springfield was 18.5 inches.

March 25

- 1978: A major ice storm affected a large portion of central Illinois over a two-day period. The storm, leaving several inches of ice, was described as one of the worst in many years. 24 counties were declared disaster areas. The thick ice combined with strong winds to down power lines, tree limbs, and TV antennas; small fires resulted from the broken power lines. Cleanup across the area lasted up to a week.

March 26

- 2002: A winter storm produced areas of heavy snow and ice accumulations, from the morning of the 25th through the morning of the 26th. Snowfall totals of 2 to 4 inches, along with significant blowing and drifting snow, created near whiteout conditions in Peoria, Woodford, northern Tazewell and northwest McLean counties the morning of the 25th. Numerous accidents occurred as a result of the snow covered roads and decreased visibility. Northern parts of Fulton County reported one-half inch of sleet, mixed with freezing rain. Further southeast, freezing rain late in the evening of the 25th into the early morning hours of the 26th produced 1/4 to 2 inch of ice in the counties between I-72 and I-70. The freezing rain changed to sleet, then snow before daybreak. Snowfall amounts ranging from 4 to 7 inches, with significant blowing and drifting, occurred along a line from Pana through Monticello to Danville.

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March 27

- 1890: Several strong to violent tornadoes affected southern Illinois. One tornado near Rockwood threw 18 inch thick trees across the Mississippi River into Illinois. Another tornado crossed the river further downstream and tore through Grand Tower, where some of the 27 destroyed homes were completely swept away, before lifting north of Carbondale. A family of tornadoes affected areas along the Ohio River, while another tornado destroyed 32 buildings in Olney.
- 1961: Intense low pressure produced high winds of 50 to 80 mph across much of Illinois. At the Joliet airport, a wind gust of 100 mph was recorded before the wind gage was blown away. A gust of 74 mph at Capital Airport in Springfield caused damage to a hangar. In Dwight (Livingston County), one person was killed in a car accident when a dust storm reduced visibility to near zero.
- 1991: Intense low pressure produced severe weather in northern Illinois as well as high winds in central and eastern parts of the state. In Springfield, a 71 mph wind gust was recorded at Capital Airport, while the Peoria airport reported a wind gust of 68 mph. Further northeast, severe thunderstorms produced a wind gust of 84 mph at O'Hare Airport in Chicago, and a strong tornado caused \$8 million damage in the far southern Chicago suburbs.

March 28

- 1920: Two strong tornadoes moved across parts of the west and southwest Chicago region. One tornado of F3 strength moved across Kane County, touching down 1.5 miles southeast of La Fox and tracking to Elgin. This tornado killed 8, injured 100, and damaged much of the business district of Elgin. Another tornado touched down in Will County 2 miles north of Channahon. The tornado moved northeast through Romeoville while on the ground intermittently, then touched down and strengthened in Cook County in the Bellwood and Maywood areas. The Melrose Park area was particularly hard hit, destroying 50 homes and killing 10 people. The tornado eventually moved out over Lake Michigan. A total of 28 people were killed by the two tornadoes. A separate tornado touched down in the Bridgeview area of Chicago, and passed between Midway Airport and Cicero before lifting 4 miles west southwest of the Loop.
- 1998: A tornado touched down a mile southwest of Mattoon around 5:30 am, and traveled to the northeast. It damaged 4 homes in the initial touchdown area, and turned over 4 empty 30-ton coal cars on the railroad tracks. It then destroyed 6 buildings in a storage complex, and several homes and businesses. After moving aloft for a short time, it touched down again, with damage limited to roofs and treetops. Overall, about \$3 million damage was recorded. Three people were injured, one seriously.

March 29

- 1922: Records for the wettest March were established in Decatur, with 9.82 inches, and Champaign, with 8.35 inches. A total of 6.81 inches in Springfield was the 3rd wettest March on record.

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March 30

- 1938: A family of three of 5 tornadoes moved across central and west central Illinois during the afternoon. The tornado damage stretched from near Quincy east-northeast to areas south of Peoria. The worst damage from the outbreak occurred in South Pekin, where 3 city blocks were leveled and 250 homes were damaged or destroyed. 9 people were killed in South Pekin, two in Morton, one in Timewell (Brown County), and one in Astoria. Eight other strong tornadoes were reported in the state that day. A home destroyed near Edwardsville had also been destroyed by another tornado in 1883.

March 31

- 1898: Springfield reported a total of 9.65 inches of rain during the month, establishing its wettest March on record.