

Winter 2025-2026 Season Summary

The winter of 2025-2026 was an old fashioned cold winter for northern Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania, but it ended early. Temperatures were persistently colder than normal from November through early February, with December and January seeing the most impressive departures. Temperatures in December averaged around 5 degrees colder than normal, and temperatures in January were anywhere from 6 to 7.5 degrees colder than normal. Despite the persistent cold, snowfall continued the trend of the past decade of averaging lower than normal, although it was much closer to normal compared to recent years. Overall, the region experienced the coldest and snowiest winter since the 2014-2015 season.

The Fall of 2025 was pleasant and uneventful, and winter took its time getting started. The first measurable snow did not occur until November 10 and 11 when lake-effect snow showers deposited generally 2 to 6 inches across the primary snowbelt of Northeast Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania, with nearly all accumulation occurring in the higher terrain inland from the lake. This was when the pattern began to shift to one that would bring frequent arctic air masses across the Midwest, Great Lakes, and Northeast United States for the remainder of Fall and throughout the bulk of Winter. Thanksgiving was white across the primary snowbelt east of Cleveland for the second consecutive year. Arctic air and west to northwest winds across the warm waters of Lake Erie brought lake-effect snow showers and squalls on Thanksgiving Day, and most areas from the eastern suburbs of Cleveland through Northwest Pennsylvania had anywhere from a coating to a couple inches of snow on the ground by evening. The lake-effect snow intensified on Thanksgiving evening and into that night when a heavy and persistent band dropped a solid 6 to 12 inches across eastern Cuyahoga, Geauga, and northern portions of Summit and Portage Counties. A couple of inches fell on the northern and southern fringes of this band too. The heavy and wet snowfall clogged snowblowers, was extremely difficult to shovel, and delayed many eastsiders from starting the holiday shopping on Friday morning. Additional snow occurred from a low pressure system the Saturday and Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend, and this allowed areas outside of the snowbelt to see snow on the ground too.

The cold and snowy pattern continued mostly unabated through about December 15. Multiple arctic cold fronts and weak Alberta Clipper systems brought light to moderate snows areawide, with lake-effect snow adding a boost to accumulations over the primary and secondary snowbelts. A predominantly northwest wind direction allowed the lake-effect to fan out over a larger area of the northern Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania snowbelts, so the greatest snow totals throughout the month occurred in the higher elevations inland from Lake Erie, with lesser amounts near the lakeshore. For those dreaming of a white Christmas, the first of only two notable thaws unfortunately occurred in the 10 days leading up to Christmas. Temperatures warmed into the 40s and 50s with occasional rain, and this melted the entire snowpack. However, for the first time since 2013, a significant snowstorm occurred on New Years Eve as a low pressure system and arctic front brought arctic air back into the region. A widespread, general snow of 1 to 4 inches fell with this system on New Years Eve across all of northern Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania. Deepening arctic air combined with a well-aligned northwest flow across Lake Erie enhanced the snowfall across the south and east suburbs of Cleveland through northern portions of Akron and points east into Pennsylvania, where 4 to 6 inches was common. This led to treacherous travel for the evening festivities.

Deep arctic air remained entrenched across the region to start January 2026, but then the second notable thaw of the winter occurred January 5-10, characterized by temperatures eventually reaching the 50s and 60s. This briefly melted all of the snowpack before the toughest stretch of the winter season began. Colder air started to return through mid month, and a very impressive snowstorm smothered the region on January 15. A large area of 8-12 inches was common from north central Ohio through Northeast Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania, and lake enhancement boosted totals to 12 to 24 inches across portions of eastern Cuyahoga, Geauga, southern Lake, and Ashtabula Counties in Northeast Ohio and Erie and northern Crawford Counties in Northwest Pennsylvania. Frequent light snows in the wake of this system and persistent cold further built the snowpack through late month until the second major storm in 10 days occurred January 25-26. This was a high impact winter storm that affected a large portion of the Midwest and Northeast United States, with local snowfall averaging 8 to 10 inches across all of northern Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania. A strip of 12 to 18 inches fell across Knox, Holmes, Stark, and Mahoning Counties. This storm occurred during a remarkable 8 consecutive days when temperatures did not rise out of the teens to close out the month, so in addition to a consistently deep snowpack, all rivers built up thick ice, and Lake Erie completely froze over. Ice coverage across the Great Lakes was the highest since 2014-2015 by early February.

The arctic cold continued through the first 10 days of February when low temperatures fell below zero for several more nights, but then, winter largely ended. The pattern flipped to very mild conditions on most days from February 10-20 which gradually melted all of the snowpack, and although some colder air and light snows returned for the last week of the month, it was largely insignificant. Snowfall was well below normal for the month of February, and that continued through March when temperatures ended up averaging 5 to 6 degrees warmer than normal for the month. The most memorable event of March was the ferocious March 13 windstorm that produced an 85 mph gust at Burke Lakefront Airport and caused widespread damage and power outages. The unusually warm temperatures continued through April, but as is usually the case, some stubborn light snows occurred during the month. In fact, many spotters in Northeast Ohio and Northwest Pennsylvania recorded a brief coating of snow on May 2 to officially close out the snow season.

Seasonal snowfall averaged 25 to 30 inches across Northwest Ohio and 30 to 40 inches in most of north central Ohio, including the Central Highlands region. Amounts of 40 to 60 inches were common from Lorain County and the west suburbs of Cleveland through northern Medina County, the north suburbs of Akron, and the Youngstown area. The primary and secondary snowbelts did very well, with 60 to 90 inches across south central and southeast Cuyahoga, far northern Summit, far northern Portage, and far northwest Trumbull Counties. Snowfall exceeded 100 inches from far eastern Cuyahoga County through most of Geauga, far southern Lake, and central Ashtabula Counties, with 100 to 150 inches common in southern Erie and most of Crawford Counties in Northwest Pennsylvania. Totals were lower in the lakeshore portions of the primary snowbelt and averaged 50 to 80 inches.



Seasonal Snowfall 2025-26

National Weather Service Cleveland, OH

