



## Snowstorms and Iowa’s High School State Basketball Tournaments Facts

Snowfall and the Girls and Boys High School State Basketball Tournaments go hand in hand. We often receive inquiries about expected snowfall during one or both of these tournaments. March snowfall in Iowa is quite common and to be expected, however, typically snowfall that does occur in March doesn’t stay around very long.

The High School State Basketball Tournaments have moved around from town to town through their history. However, this document will only examine data for Des Moines from 1950 to the present, and only for the first two weeks of March when the current tournaments occur. These two weeks should generally capture any snowstorms over the last 76 years that may have affected travel to and from the tournaments.

The following tables depict the top ten 24-hour snowfall totals, 48-hour snowfall totals and Week 1 and Week 2 snowfall totals for Des Moines from the period 1950-2025.

<b>Week of March 1-7</b>					
<b>Ranking</b>	<b>24-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Ranking</b>	<b>48-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches)</b>	<b>Date</b>
1.	7.8	03/05/1959	1.	8.6	03/05-06/1959
2.	7.5	03/02/1965	2.	7.5	03/02-03/1965
3.	4.6	03/03/1982	3.	6.5	03/01-02/2007
4.	4.4	03/04/2003	4.	6.4	03/03-04/1982
5.	4.0	03/05/1963	5.	5.1	03/06-07/2022
6.	3.8	03/02/1978	6.	4.6	03/01-02/2002
	3.8	03/05/1971	7.	4.5	03/04-05/2003
8.	3.6	03/02/2008	8.	4.5	03/04-05/1963
	3.6	03/01/2007	9.	4.3	03/04-05/1965
10	3.5	03/01/2014	10.	4.0	03/02-03/2008

The table above shows that in Des Moines, only two individual days and four 2-day periods over the last 76 years have received snowfalls greater than 6” in the first week of March. Six inches of snow is generally the point at which the National Weather Service would issue a Winter Storm Warning. In fact, the four 2-day totals greater than 6” actually occurred in four years: 1959, 1965, 1982, 2007. In other words, during this 76-year period there were only four snowstorms, each spanning two days, that brought snowfall greater than six inches; or only 6% of the time. The other 94% of the years, in Des Moines, produced less (or no) snowfall.



Week of March 8-14					
Ranking	24-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches)	Date	Ranking	48-Hour Snowfall Totals (inches)	Date
1.	12.0	03/08/1999	1.	12.1	03/08-09/1999
2.	11.0	03/08/1998	2.	11.0	03/08-09/1998
3.	8.0	03/08/1962	3.	8.7	03/10-11/1951
4.	6.4	03/11/2023	4.	8.0	03/08-09/1962
5.	5.1	03/10/1951		8.0	03/11-12/1951
6.	4.9	03/08/1960	6	6.4	03/11-12/2023
7.	4.4	03/12/1951	7.	5.7	03/08-09/1960
8.	4.2	03/14/1959	8.	5.1	03/09-10/1951
9.	3.6	03/08/1982	9.	4.6	03/12-13/1951
	3.6	03/11/1951	10.	4.2	03/13-14/1959

Similarly, for the second week of March, there were only four individual days and five 2-day periods over the last 76 years in which Des Moines has received snowfall greater than six inches. Two of the five 2-day periods of snow greater than six inches occurred on three consecutive days: March 9-11, 1951. Again, around 95% of the time, in Des Moines during the second week of March, less (or no) snowfall occurred.

Total Snow During the Week of March 1-7			Total Snow During the Week of March 8-14		
Ranking	Amount (inches)	Year	Ranking	Amount (inches)	Year
1.	11.8	1965	1.	13.3	1951
2.	9.5	1959	2.	12.3	1999
3.	8.2	1982	3.	11.8	1998
4.	6.7	2007	4.	8.8	2023
5.	6.3	1978	5.	8.5	1962
6.	6.2	1952	6.	8.4	1960
7.	5.1	2022	7.	6.7	1961
8.	4.8	2003	8.	5.3	1959
9.	4.6	2002	9.	3.7	1982
10.	4.5	1995	10.	3.0	2013

During the first week of March, 1965, 1955 and 1982 have the highest 7-day totals. The second week has 1951 on top of the heap and remarkably, four consecutive years from 1959-1962 in the #4-#8 spots.



Overall, while in any given year central Iowa could experience a big snowstorm in the first half of March, it is much more likely that little to no snow will fall and ruin your Basketball Tournament travel plans. Before heading out, remember to check the latest forecasts and travel conditions so you may make informed decisions regarding travel and types of clothing to pack. Above all, have a safe and fun time!