Quarterly Climate Impacts and Outlook

Midwest Region

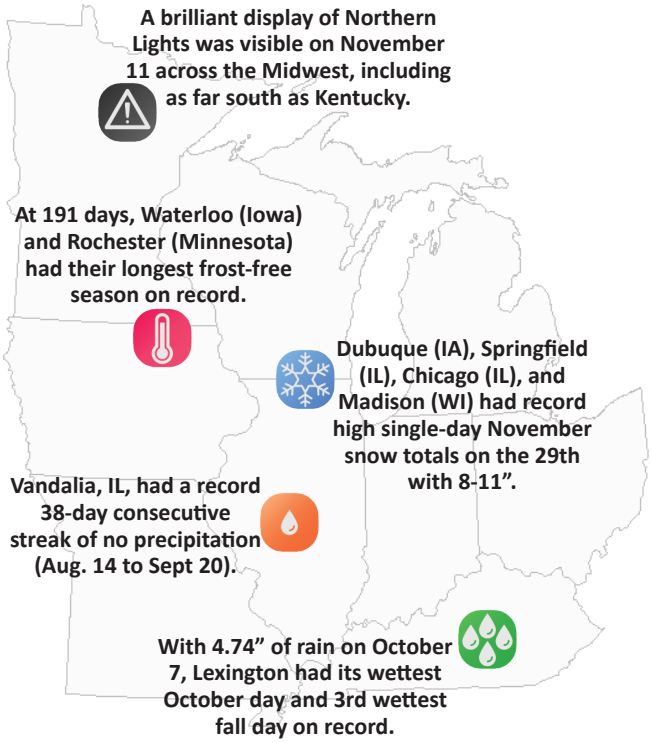
December 2025

Midwest Significant Events – *September - November 2025*

A chilly start to September gave way to a warm, and largely dry, pattern that lingered across the central and western portions of the region for much of fall. This pattern supported drought expansion in the central and upper Midwest, with portions of Illinois, northern Indiana, and northwest Ohio ending fall in extreme drought. Conversely, areas along the Ohio River and across Kentucky had normal to above-normal precipitation in September and October, keeping them drought-free for fall.

Record warmth spread across the region from northwest to southeast from September 25 to October 6, with daytime high temperatures 10-20°F above normal. Much of the upper Midwest had their first fall freeze in early October, slightly later than normal. The central Midwest reached their first 32°F of the season in mid- to late-October, slightly later than usual.

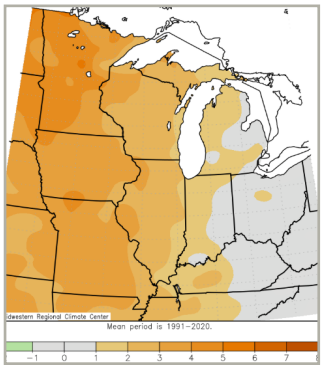
A mid-November warm up brought Sioux City, Iowa, its latest +75°F on record (Nov. 14), and high temperatures in the western half of the region were 20-30°F above normal. An active weather pattern closed the season with pre- and post-Thanksgiving storms accompanied by strong winds, high snow totals, and cold Arctic air. Numerous central Midwest cities had a top-3 November storm-total snowfall the 28th-30th.



Regional Climate Overview – *September - November 2025*

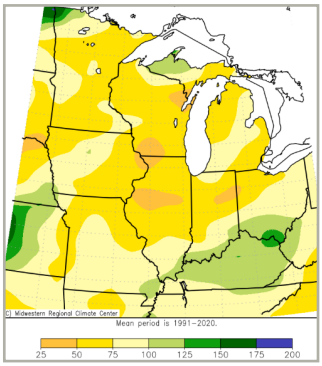
Fall Temperature

Departure from Normal (°F)



Fall Precipitation

% of Normal



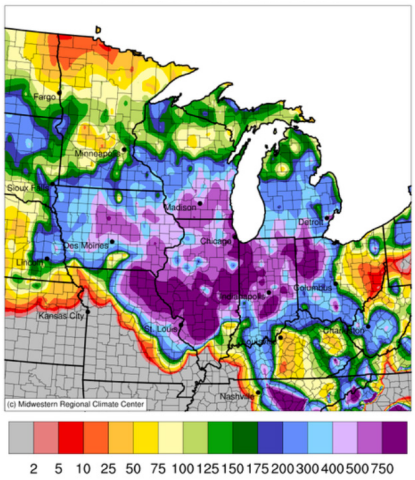
The Midwest had its 6th warmest fall (Sept., Oct., Nov. combined) on record, with average temperatures across the region ranging from near to slightly above normal in the east and up to 4°F above normal in the west (top left map). Missouri and Iowa had their 4th warmest fall and Minnesota had its 5th warmest. Four counties in southwest Minnesota had their warmest fall on record.

Fall (Sept., Oct., Nov. combined) precipitation for the Midwest totaled 6.65 inches, which was 2.41 inches below normal, or 73 percent of normal. The majority of the region had below-normal precipitation, except far northwest Minnesota, around the Ohio River Valley, and across Kentucky, which had above-normal precipitation (bottom left map). Wisconsin had its 7th driest fall.

For the central and lower Midwest, November brought record to near-record monthly snowfall totals, with a sizable portion of the region accumulating 300-1000 percent of normal snowfall for the month (bottom right map). In northern Indiana, Goshen had its snowiest November in 112 years with 27 inches for the month, which was 23.6 inches above normal. Racine, Wisconsin, had its 2nd snowiest November in 130 years with 15.3 inches. Spencer, Iowa, had its 3rd snowiest November in 131 years with 15.8 inches.

November Snowfall

Percent of average



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Regional Impacts – *September - November 2025*

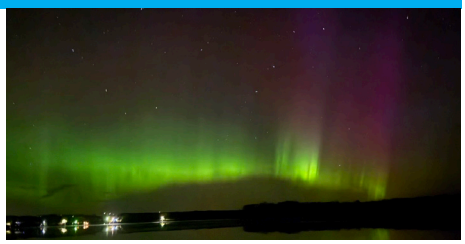
Agriculture

Row crops matured early, leaving plenty of time to dry down crops in the field prior to harvest. Drought-affected areas, like northern Indiana, faced some soybean yield losses resulting from pod shattering, and the risk of harvest fires was elevated in Illinois and elsewhere. Some yield reductions were reported in the west due to southern rust and tar spot, but largely, Midwest row crop yields were strong. Preliminary data suggests record corn and soybean yields in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Pumpkins and apples had a plentiful harvest. Mild conditions, with low winds and rainfall, were suitable for agritourism.

Large pile-up on I-70 near Terre Haute, IN on Nov. 29 (Credit: INDOT)

Drought

Warm, dry fall weather resulted in drought expansion and intensification across the central and upper Midwest. Several lakes and reservoirs in central Illinois had low levels, including Lake Decatur which supplies water to the Cities of Decatur and Mt. Zion. Decatur initiated stage 1 water rationing in mid-November. Low surface water supplies were also reported throughout Missouri. Wisconsin entered the winter with its driest conditions since November 2012. Several counties received a USDA drought declaration in central Michigan. Reduced streamflow on the Mississippi River resulted in barge weight restrictions that contributed to increased grain shipping costs for farmers. For the 4th consecutive year, Tower Rock was accessible by foot in southern Missouri.



Northern Lights over Minong, WI on Sept. 29 2025 (Credit: Dakota Hall)

Fall Foliage

Vibrant fall leaf colors were reported across the Midwest. Warmer-than-normal temperatures and low winds helped extend the viewing season. Peak shades remained on display across central and southern Wisconsin through the end of October. Indiana's peak colors also arrived later than usual.

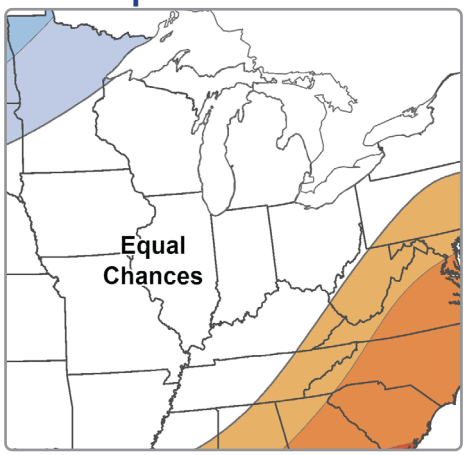
Regional Outlook – *January - March 2026*

NOAA forecasters are predicting equal chances of above-, below-, or near-normal temperatures for most of the Midwest. The outlook has slightly increased chances of below-normal temperatures in the northern half of Minnesota. The precipitation outlook shows a strong chance of above-normal precipitation centered over Indiana. The rest of the Midwest has slightly to moderately increased chances of above-normal precipitation, except a small portion of the western region where precipitation has equal chances of being above, below, or near normal.

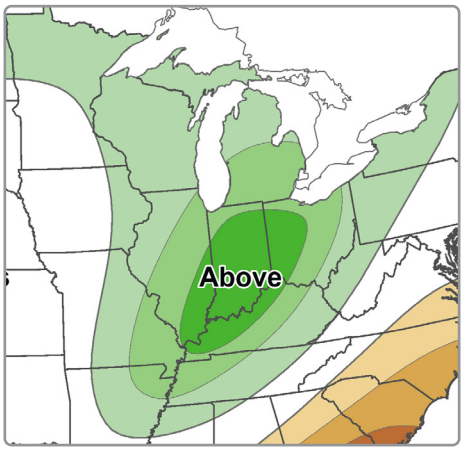
La Niña conditions persisted through November, and the latest outlook indicates a 68% chance that conditions will become ENSO-neutral during the January to March 2026 period.

Drought is expected to improve or be removed for nearly all the Midwest. Drought persistence is expected in far western Missouri, northeast Minnesota, and far northwest Wisconsin.

Temperature Outlook



Precipitation Outlook



Midwest Partners

- Midwestern Regional Climate Center
- American Association of State Climatologists
- National Integrated Drought Information System
- USDA Midwest Climate Hub
- National Drought Mitigation Center
- NWS Climate Prediction Center
- NWS Central Region Headquarters
- North Central River Forecast Center
- Ohio River Forecast Center
- National Centers for Enviro. Info