

The Pennsylvania Observer

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December 2008 – Pennsylvania Weather Recap

The final month of 2008 was much wetter than average and a bit colder than normal. In spite of this combination, most of the southern half of the Commonwealth measured below average snowfall. The month began with an intense storm over the Great Lakes that brought chilly air into Pennsylvania on gusty winds from the west. Snow showers followed on the 2nd with a light to moderate accumulation (2-5 inches) from the northwest counties to the Laurel Highlands. After a dry, cool period, a cold front crossed the state with rain showers on the 4th. This was followed by chilly conditions with several Alberta Clippers producing snow showers in the hilly terrain of the state. A slow moving soggy front, preceded by very mild air, crossed the state on December 10th and then stalled just south of Pennsylvania. A complex disturbance from the Gulf States moved up the Atlantic Seaboard as cold air held its ground in central and northern sections of the state. The result was a serious ice storm from the central mountains into the Poconos. As the low approached, ice changed to snow in northern counties leaving as much as 8-10 inches from Coudersport to Lake Wallenpaupack. After a very cold weekend from Dec 12-14, milder air quickly returned as a new disturbance arrived. Freezing rain once again produced treacherous travel for the northern and central sections on December 17. A pair of disturbances from the northwest brought successively colder air into the Commonwealth until we bottomed out on December 22 with readings between -5F in the northwest and 12F in the southeast accompanied by 25-40mph winds. As the cold air receded, a wedge of warm, moist air streamed in early on Christmas Eve. Much of the state had several hours of freezing rain during the morning. Some sections received another half inch of ice before temperatures crept through the 30's. Periods of heavy rain dropped another 0.50-1.00 inch of liquid before rain ended just before Christmas. Only the northern half of the state saw a stale white Christmas. A rapid warming trend brought record maximum temperatures to western Pennsylvania on Dec 27 and eastern parts of the state on December 29. The corridor from Reading to Allentown and southward notched afternoon readings into the 60's. A fast moving cold front caused gusty winds and temperatures to fall back to near seasonal levels. As the month ended, another push of polar air arrived with snow showers and squalls in parts of northwest Pennsylvania. Overall, temperatures averaged between 0.5 and 2.0F below normal while much of the state measured more than 200% of the normal liquid equivalent.

Here are the weather extremes across Pennsylvania (**observations taken at 8AM EDT**) during December 2008 from the NWS Cooperative & ASOS Networks. The extremes occurred in the 24-hour period prior to the date listed.

Parameter	Location	Value	Date (8 AM EDT)	County
Highest Temperature	Washington	69°F	December 27 th	Washington
Lowest Temperature	Coudersport	-5°F	December 22 nd	Potter
Greatest Cumulative Liquid Precipitation	Chalk Hill	8.72"	-	Fayette
Least Cumulative Liquid Precipitation	Sabinsville	3.51"	-	Tioga
Greatest Cumulative Snowfall	Chandlers Valley	24"	-	Warren