

Iowa snowfall running near normal so far

DES MOINES (AP) — You'd never know it by looking outside, but Iowa has received a normal amount of snowfall this winter.

In fact, the 24 inches received through February is half an inch more than normal. But Mother Nature has also arranged for all of the snow cover to vanish soon after it falls.

"A normal winter? I don't believe it," said Lue Schell, manager of Ski Valley in Boone. "It's been bad. Terrible. We haven't had enough snow to open up. Last year, we never got open either."

Last year, the state had only 19.5 inches of snow for the entire season, making it one of the mildest on record.

The average winter snowfall is 32.5 inches, and acting state climatologist Harry Hillaker said it's likely Iowa will get enough new snow to meet the norm this year.

Many remember 1961 when 59 inches fell, or 1983 when Iowa got 45.7 inches, but Hillaker said those years are aberrations. He also said this year seems more mild than it is.

"We've had no prolonged periods of cold weather and snow," he said. In addition, warm weather has followed quickly on the heels of major snowfalls, making the snow cover vanish sooner than usual.

Most of the snow has hit the northern half of the state, and there's still a few inches left in places like Decorah.

And the Sundown ski area in Dubuque remains open, with manager Mary Woerdehoff, saying the season has been "fairly normal. We have a 24- to 48-inch base, and everything is open."

The first two months of this year have been slightly colder than normal, with January's average 16.3 average being about a degree lower than usual and February's average 19.9 being 3.6 degrees cooler. December was an average 4.4 degrees warmer than normal, however.