

Grand Rapids Winter Preparedness

Office of Emergency Management
December 16, 2025

Benjamin Rance

- › Served as Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras
 - Spanish
 - Altruism and Public Service
- › FEMA – Community Resilience Technical Assistance Program Manager
- › Emergency Management Vision and Perspective
 - Resilience through Community Outreach and Education



Winter Outlook



MOST COMMON WINTER HAZARD

Lake Effect Snow

- **Forms when colder air moves over the warmer Lake Michigan water**
- **Highly dependent on wind speed and direction**
- **Can take the form of individual bands, single cells, or broad plumes**
- **Overwhelmingly responsible for most multi-car pile ups on interstates and highways**



Multi-car pile up on US 131, November 18, 2022. Lake effect snow developed within one week of temperatures in the mid 70s. Highs dropped by 50 degrees into the mid 20s. Kent County received 20"- 30" of snow over the course of 3 days.

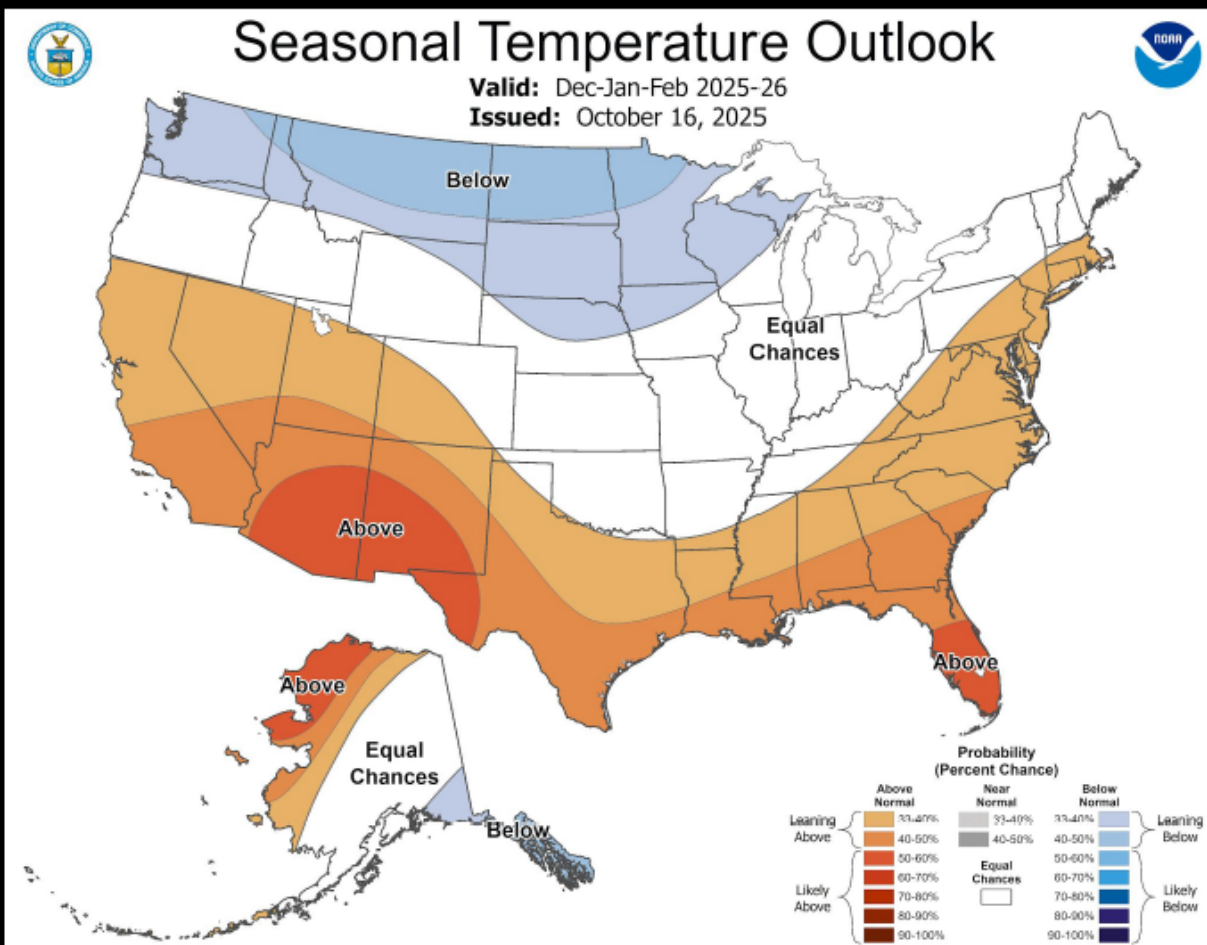


Winter Outlook - Temperature



CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER

Winter Temperature Outlook



Forecast

Equally likely temperature outcomes, but leaning colder than normal late in the winter. Weak La Niñas can produce colder than normal temperatures, though long term temperature trends indicate warming winter temperatures.

Category	DJF Avg Highs	DJF Avg Lows
Colder than Normal	27F - 32F	13F - 19F
Near Normal	32F - 34F	19F - 22F
Warmer than Normal	34F - 39F	22F - 26F

Impacts

A weak La Niña should help establish periods of Arctic air intrusion into the Great Lakes. These periods may be short lived, however. Freeze/thaw cycles have been shown to increase in frequency in recent years.



National Oceanic and
Atmospheric Administration

National Weather Service | Grand Rapids, MI

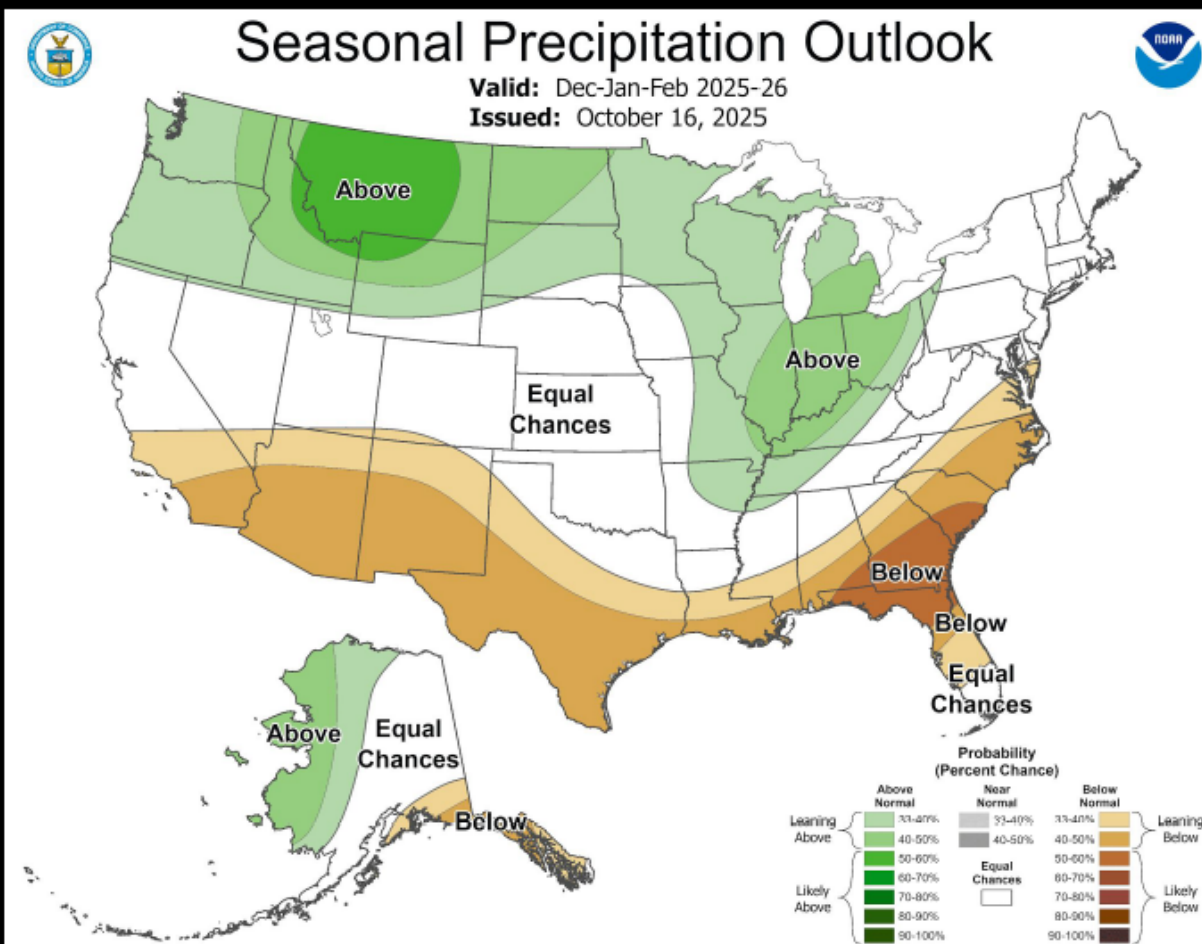
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weather.gov/grr

Winter Outlook - Precipitation



CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER

Winter Precipitation Outlook



Forecast

Odds favor above normal precipitation. This assumes a more active storm track near our region. Canadian clipper systems will likely play the biggest role in precipitation amounts.

Category	DJF Liquid
Below Normal	3.49" - 5.48"
Near Normal	5.48" - 8.46"
Above Normal	8.46" - 11.32"

Impacts

Most of our winter impacts will likely come in the form of lake effect snow. Numerous mixed precipitation events are also likely. Overall this looks like a fairly active winter.



Winter Outlook - Snowfall



LOCAL SNOWFALL FORECAST

Seasonal (DJF) and Total Overall (Through April)

**Grand Rapids Area:
Near Normal Snowfall is Favored.**

What Does “Near Normal” Equate To?

DJF Months: 48.6”-65.6”

Grand Total Through Spring: 69.2”-81.3”

Why Near Normal?

A sustained cold pattern is not likely to dominate. Above normal precipitation still may occur, but rain and/or mixed precipitation events may contribute to some of those totals.



Winter Preparedness Operations

- FD/PD
- Water
- Public Works
- Community Development
- Mobile GR
- Communications
- Office of Emergency Management



FD/PD/Water

- FD: Fully-staffed
- PD: Ready to respond to traffic accidents
- Water: Hydrants pumped down, fully-staffed
- LMFP: Backup generators onsite



PUBLIC WORKS

- Staff: 2 shifts (day/night). Winter ops training
- Equipment: 35 plow/salt trucks. 14 pick-up plow trucks. 2 sidewalk plows.
- Facility: Scribner offices. Salt dome.
- Collaboration: Kent County. MDOT. NWS.



Community Development

GRAND RAPIDS AREA WARMING CENTERS

The availability of warming centers may change based on weather conditions, power outages, or holidays.
We recommend calling ahead to confirm their status or contacting 2-1-1 for the most up-to-date information.

Lotus Brew Coffee

211 Diamond Ave SE; 616-419-8613

Weds 8:00am - 6:00pm, Thurs-Sun 8:00am - 8:00pm

Kent District Library

616-784-2007

See branch hours at kdll.org/locations.

Grand Rapids Public Library

Main Library: 616-988-5400

See branch hours at grpl.org/locations.

Westminster Presbyterian Church

47 Jefferson Ave SE; 616-717-5581

Mon-Weds 9:30am - 2:30pm

Community Center and Service Center at Westminster

47 Jefferson Ave SE

Mon-Fri 8:00am - 3:00 pm

November 17 - March 31

Matthew's House

766 7th St NW; 616-233-3006

Mon-Fri 8:30am - 3:30pm

West Grand Neighborhood Organization

754 Leonard St NW #2; 616-451-0150

Mon-Fri 8:30am - 5:00pm

Mel Trotter Ministries

225 Commerce Ave SW; 616-454-8249

When in Code Blue: Warming center open daily from 8am - 7pm. No Services and Curfew remain in place. Emergency shelter hours 4pm - 8am daily. Curfew is 7pm unless documentation of reason.

In the Image

4255 Kalamazoo Ave SE; 616-456-6150

Mon-Thurs 9:00am - 3:00pm

Open after Thanksgiving

The Salvation Army

1235 Fulton St E; 616-454-1459

Mon-Fri 9:00am - 4:00pm

1215 Fulton St E; 616-459-9468

Mon-Fri 8:30am - 4:30pm



Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness

endhomelessnesskent.org

rvandyke@hwmurw.org

UPDATED DECEMBER 2025

Mobile GR and Communications

- Truck maintenance and preparation
- Staff safety meetings
- Parking ramp water shutoff
- Odd/even parking news release
- Winter Guides available
- We are GR and GR Connected winter focus

Office of Emergency Management



- Emergency Alerts (public and City staff)
- NWS collaboration
- Social media messaging
- Community Engagement and Education

Additional Updates

- Community Engagement
 - VAI Disaster Detectives (Dec 16, 2025)
 - OEM Arena Night Takeover (Jan 2, 2026)
- Supporting Stakeholders
 - Exercises (Calvin, Acrisure, Kent Co.)
 - Training (Kent ISD)
 - CERT en Español (Garfield Park Churches)



Office of Emergency Management

