

Top 10 U.S. Weather Events 2012

The weather event rankings consider the following: rarity (once every decade, 100 years?), geographical extent (local? regional? national?), monetary impact (costs exceeding \$100 million? \$1 billion?), duration (days, weeks, months?), and socioeconomic impacts (fatalities, injuries, power outages, transportation, evacuations, homelessness, etc.).

- 1. Superstorm Sandy.** October 28-29. Category 1 Hurricane Sandy transitioned into a monstrous extratropical storm while making landfall along the New Jersey coast, resulting in one of the most intense and damaging East Coast storms of all time. Surging Atlantic waters (8-14 feet) inundated the Jersey shore and low-lying areas of NYC and Long Island, causing estimated damages of at least \$60 billion. The storm caused 72 direct deaths (87 indirect) in the United States, the loss of power to 8.5 million homes and businesses, and the cancellation of more than 18,000 airline flights.
- 2. Midwest Drought.** June-August. Hot, dry weather led to the most intense drought since 1988 over the Corn Belt, wilting crops, drying up pastures, shrinking lake and river levels, and lifting commodity prices to record levels. By mid-July, severe to extreme drought gripped nearly the entire Corn Belt from Nebraska to Ohio, causing over \$30 billion in agricultural losses. Nationwide, this was the most extensive drought since 1939.
- 3. Summer Heat Wave.** June 22-August 4. Extreme heat that began over the High Plains, expanded to the East Coast, and then centered on the Heartland broke thousands of temperature records and resulted in July 2012 edging out July 1936 as the hottest month on record for the contiguous United States. The heat, which was blamed for over 100 deaths, contributed to the drought that affected much of the country.
- 4. Southern Tornado Outbreak.** March 2. Dozens of tornadoes ripped across 12 states, killing 40 people, including 13 in Indiana and 22 in Kentucky. Damages exceeded \$4 billion.
- 5. Mid-Atlantic and Midwest Derecho.** June 29. The widespread severe winds associated with the band of rapidly moving thunderstorms (a derecho) left a trail of destruction from Illinois to the mid-Atlantic, leaving some 4.25 million homes and businesses without power, killing 24 people, and costing hundreds of millions of dollars in property damage.

6. Hurricane Isaac. August 28-29. Category 1 Isaac made landfall in Southeast Louisiana and moved slowly northward across the state bringing heavy rain and flooding to Louisiana and Mississippi. Five died, some 900,000 customers lost power in Louisiana, and losses totaled \$2.35 billion.

7. Summer in March. A record warm March, featuring a summer-like heat wave that broke thousands of records and contributed to the warmest spring (March-May) on record for the Lower 48.

8. Mild Winter. December-February warmth made this the fourth mildest winter in over 100 years across the contiguous United States, which also experienced the third smallest snow cover extent.

9. February Tornado Outbreak. February 28-29. One of the deadliest February outbreaks on record, Kansas to Indiana, took 15 lives. .

10. Western Drought. Winter - summer. Abnormal spring warmth plus a dearth of winter season snowfall contributed to severe drought across much of the southwestern quadrant of the nation, contributing to enormous wildfires from Oregon to Colorado.