



United States Tornadoes of 2012*

*Updated February 28, 2013

Comparisons are made for the 62-year period, 1950-2011 unless otherwise noted. The official NOAA/NWS period of record for tornadoes in the United States extends back to 1950. Fatality records for significant tornado events prior to 1950 are used for historical comparison. Annual tornado numbers are derived from NWS *Storm Data* entries and remain preliminary until a final review and certification by NOAA/National Climate Data Center and the NWS.

2012 Total Tornadoes.....939 (Ranked 25th since 1950)
Record Annual Total.....1817 in 2004

First Tornado.....8:45 AM CST, 9-Jan (EF0-TX)
Last Tornado.....5:00 PM EST, 26-Dec (EF1-NC)

Greatest 2012 Monthly Total.....206 in April
Greatest Monthly Total on Record.....759 in April 2011

2012 Tornado Days.....174
Annual Average.....178 (50-years, 1962-2011)
Record Tornado Days in Any Year.....211 in 2000

Greatest 2012 Daily Total (Midnight-11:59 pm CST)...85 on 14-Apr
Greatest Daily Total on Record.....209 on 27-Apr-2011

States Reporting Tornadoes in 2012.....46
Annual Average Number of States.....43 (50-years, 1962-2011)
Most States Reporting Tornadoes in Any Year.....48 (2011 and 1989)

2012 Tornado Deaths.....70 (Ranked 22nd since 1950)
Annual Average Tornado Deaths.....91 (62-years, 1950-2011)
2011 Tornado Deaths.....553 (Ranked 2nd in History)
Greatest Annual Number of Tornado Deaths.....794 (1925)

2012 Deadliest Single Tornado.....Henryville, IN (11, 2-Mar)
Record Deadliest Single Tornado (modern era).....Joplin, MO, 158, 22-May-2011

2012 Tornado Injuries.....822 (Ranked 43rd since 1950)
Greatest Annual Number of Injuries.....6824 in 1974

2012 Longest Track.....85 miles (KY-WV, 2-Mar)
Record Longest Track.....235 miles (LA-MS, 22-Mar-1953)

2012 Tornadoes Rated EF4.....4 (Fewest since 2 in 2009)
Record Annual Number.....30 in 1965

2012 Tornadoes Rated EF5 (200+mph).....0 (Fewest since 0 in 2010)
Record Annual Number of EF5 Tornadoes.....7 in 1974, 6 in 2011

2012 Estimated Property and Crop Losses.....~1.6 billion USD
2011 Estimated Property and Crop Losses.....~10.0 billion USD (Ranked 1st)
Greatest Est. Loss from Single Tornado.....~2.8 billion USD (Joplin, MO)

2012 U.S. Tornadoes: Active Early Followed by Record Low Activity
Greg Carbin, SPC

United States tornado activity in 2012 cannot be adequately placed in perspective without first recalling the devastating tornadoes of 2011. The most recent year provides us with an intriguing contrast to 2011 when the annual tornado count of 1,690 tornadoes was 148 percent of the 30-year annual normal and the greatest number of tornado fatalities (553) occurred in the modern era. By comparison, 2012, with a preliminary count of 939 tornadoes, was at the opposite end of the spectrum (82 percent of normal). This is a dramatic example of how variable tornado activity can be from one year to the next, or even from month to month. There were intra-annual contrasts in 2012 tornadoes as well. The first few months of the year experienced well above normal tornado activity when compared to most of the remainder of the year. The running tornado count through April 2012 was nearly double the 30-year normal (496 tornadoes through April compared to a 30-year average of 286). In contrast, the months of May and June, historically the most active months, were conspicuously quiet.

The last year with fewer than 939 tornadoes was 2002 when 934 tornadoes were reported. Prior to that, one must go back nearly a quarter century, to 1989, to find another year with fewer than 1,000 tornadoes recorded. There were 70 tornado fatalities in 2012 and that is below the 30-year average of 74. The annual average fatality figure is skewed by the unusually high number of tornado fatalities occurring in 2011. If the average number of annual tornado fatalities is computed for the period 1981-2010, the average drops to 56 fatalities. This suggests that 2012 experienced slightly above normal tornado fatalities despite a near record low level of tornado activity.

While a large amount of variability in annual tornado counts is evident when comparing 2012 with 2011, there remains a steady increase in reports of very weak tornadoes (rated EF0) in recent decades. The weakest tornadoes now make up more than half of all tornado reports. This increase is due to enhanced public awareness and improvements in detection technologies such as Doppler radar. Over 60 percent of 2012 tornadoes were rated EF0, with winds in the range of 65-85 mph. When these weak tornadoes are subtracted from the annual count, the resulting total of 364 EF1 and stronger tornadoes will place 2012 amongst the 10 least active years in the past 60 years.