

Climate-Watch, May 2001

National Climatic Data Center - (last update June 1, 2001)



Compare and contrast the climate for over 270 U.S. Cities

Comparative Climatic Data - Review

These [data tables](#) of meteorological elements outline the climatic conditions at major weather observing stations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and Pacific Islands. The data are from observing sites presently in use or include data from former sites that are comparable in exposure. A wealth of information. 17 climatic tables for over 250 US cities. Temperature, degree days, and precipitation normals, means and extremes along with wind, humidity, sunshine and cloudiness tables are provided. These data and tables are available without charge, however an offline version of the publication is available [here](#).

Weather Log - May 1 - 10, 2001

The landslide that occurred on May 1st, 2001 in Wulong County of southwestern China's Chongqing Municipality has resulted in the deaths of at least 74 individuals following the collapse of a 9-story building. The landslide reportedly occurred after several days of heavy rains. Officials in Chongqing said **heavy rain earlier in the week caused the landslide.**

Drought and excessive heat are plaguing portions of western Asia from Afghanistan to India. In Afghanistan, nearly half of the country is suffering from severe or extremely severe drought, while the rest of the country is suffering from moderate drought. In Pakistan, media reports indicate that a **heat wave killed at least 36 people** in different parts of Pakistan over the May

5th and 6th weekend. **Temperatures reportedly soared to 122 degrees Fahrenheit** in some parts of the country. Much of the country is already suffering from a severe drought, in fact, in some areas of Sindh and southwestern Balochistan there has been no rain for more than a year. The AP reported that at least 20 individuals have died from malnutrition and hot weather.

Temperatures in **New Delhi reportedly reached 108 degrees Fahrenheit last week** and in the eastern state of Orissa temperatures reportedly **climbed to 113 degrees Fahrenheit**, and schools closed 2 weeks early for summer break. The combination of high heat and drought conditions have affected large areas of India.

Various media sources reported that floods and mudslides caused by torrential rains hit **northern Thailand for a few days beginning last Thursday (May 3rd)** and killed at least 22 individuals and injured approximately 30 others. Flooding is also causing problems in **Russia in the Volga and Ural regions**. The most serious situation is reportedly on the Belaya River where the water level is 9.02m, 2m higher than the critical level.

Weather Log - May 11 - 20, 2001

According to media reports, towns and villages in eastern Siberia have been devastated by the **worst flooding** the region has seen in 100 years. **Warm spring weather** is being blamed for record water levels as rapidly melting snow has caused major rivers to overflow. At least one person has died and more than 1,500 have been evacuated.

Drought conditions in the Pacific Northwest and Southeast are **expected to linger through August**, as the Midwest experiences cool, wet conditions this summer according to NOAA. The latest seasonal outlook calls for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions to share the possibility of a drier-than-normal summer. Warmer-than-normal temperatures are predicted for the deep South. See the [NOAA U.S. Drought and Summer Outlook](#) released on May 17th, for complete information.

Weather Log - May 21 - 31, 2001

Top hurricane experts from NOAA on the 21st, said the 2001 Atlantic hurricane season likely will have **normal levels of activity**, bringing fewer storms than the past three years. However, officials advised residents in Atlantic and Gulf Coast states to be prepared for storms, high winds and flooding throughout the season, which begins June 1. A normal Atlantic hurricane season typically brings eight to 11 tropical storms, of which five to seven reach hurricane strength, with two to three classified as major. A major hurricane packs sustained winds greater than 110 mph and is classified at Category 3, or above, on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale.

Seasons with normal hurricane activity average one to two land-falling hurricanes in the United States, and one in the Caribbean. "Although we expect an average level of activity this season, that is no cause to become complacent. With the possibility of five to seven hurricanes, residents in hurricane prone areas can't afford to let their guard down," said Scott Gudes, NOAA's acting administrator. "**Just one storm can dramatically change your life.**" See the [NOAA 2001 Atlantic and Caribbean Hurricane forecast](#) for complete details.

History teaches that hurricane disasters have occurred in the past and will again in the future. A **lack of hurricane education and planning are common threads among all major hurricane disasters**. By knowing your vulnerability and what actions you should take, you can reduce the effects of a hurricane disaster. This week, May 21st to May 25th, is also [Hurricane Awareness Week](#). The goal of Hurricane Awareness Week is to educate the public about the hazards of hurricanes and provide them with knowledge which can be used to take action.

Media reports indicated that **brown flood water submerged the Siberian city of Yakutsk** after authorities bombed an 18-mile ice jam clogging the river Lena. Planes dropped explosives to dislodge the ice floes plugging the swollen river, releasing a build-up of water carrying three-foot chunks of ice that swept into homes and lifted cars from the road. Warm spring weather is also being blamed for the record water levels as rapidly melting snow has caused other major rivers to overflow.

Even though flooding occurs in the Lena river basin and other regions each spring, Emergency Situations Minister Sergei Shoigu told the Associated Press that **this year's flooding was unprecedented**. Yakutsk is the largest settlement in the path of the Lena river and is home to almost 200,000 people. So far 3,580 people had been moved out of Yakutsk, along with about 42,000 others from all parts of the Yakutia region. Many residents have refused to leave their homes for fear of looting and have camped out on upper floors or on roofs, where some have erected small shacks and tents for sleeping. Emergency officials have been distributing food and drinking water to stranded residents by boat. Yakutsk is the last large city on the Lena river, which loops northward for about 860 miles through the Siberian tundra into the Arctic ocean.

Flooding was also reported on Sunday in the Altai region on the border with Mongolia and along the Katun river, a tributary of western Siberia's Ob river which burst its banks near the town of Platovo and flooded several dozen homes.

An **intense storm hit southern Chile** during the 26-28th of May and left two individuals dead and approximately 400 homeless, while cutting off more than 2,000 from the rest of country. Heavy rains and powerful winds reportedly caused rivers to overflow, blocked bridges and roadways, and forced authorities to close down several ports. According to the National Emergency Office (ONEMI), the hardest-hit region is near the Bio Bio River, whose overflow cut off traffic on highways and country roads.

A **serious drought** was reported in the northern Chinese Shanxi Province affecting the **wheat industry**. The province's rainfall between March and May 2001 ranged between 10-45mm, 50% less than the normal level, and an official survey indicated that as many as 72 counties have fallen victim to the drought, with 45 of them suffering enormous losses.

Media reports indicate that **severe heat since early May continues** in Pakistan. The central and southern regions are the worst affected with 80 deaths reported. In the Sindh province in central Pakistan the River Indus has nearly dried up and no significant rains have fallen for almost 1 year. According to official sources the losses to livestock are reportedly more than 247 million dollars, and crops have also been lost. A serious drought also affected the same provinces from

November 1999 to July 2000, leaving 143 dead, 1.09 million affected, 2.48 million livestock killed and crops destroyed.

Various media sources reported that the [Mallory Swamp fire](#) near Mayo in northern Florida, which was started by lightning, spread to **61,000 acres in Dixie and Lafayette** counties on the 27th. Heavy smoke has reportedly caused problems for residents of nearby communities, and according to the Florida Division of Forestry, the timber loss is estimated at 10 million dollars.

In addition, **smoke from a band of brush fires** reportedly blinded motorists on I-4 in Polk County between Orlando and Tampa causing an 18-vehicle crash on the 28th. The accidents reportedly resulted in one death and 10 injuries. Three major brush fires reportedly burned in the area, including a 1,400-acre blaze west of Walt Disney Co. theme park, causing intermittent closures of 5 major highways in central Florida over the 26-27th. Smoke from the fires was also blamed for a 9-car pile-up on the Florida Turnpike near Orlando on the 27th. Statewide, 160 brush fires were reportedly burning and could not be declared contained on the 28th.

Other global highlights for the month can be found at [NOAA/OGP Special Global Summary for May 2001](#).

Note: Hazard event satellite images available courtesy of [NOAA OSEI Satellite Images](#).

Selected U.S. City and State Extremes

The [Selected U.S. City and State Extremes](#) provides a list of new monthly or unusual records that were set across the U.S. during May 2001.

Additional Resources

- [NNDC Climate Data Online \(for long-term climate data\)](#)
- [Additional NOAA OSEI Satellite Images](#)
- [NCDC Storm Event Database](#)

Citing the Article

Ross, Tom; "Climate Watch, May 2001", June 2001, NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, Asheville, NC