

Weather Review: Louisiana, 2005

Louisiana's weather highlights for 2005 featured the major devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In addition to the highly active tropical storm season and numerous severe weather events, Louisiana experienced drought conditions throughout the year, with the annual rainfall totaling 46.1 inches, more than 14 inches below normal. Statewide, annual temperatures averages were slightly above normal, averaging 67.8°.

January: Statewide temperatures were 7° to 10° above normal for the first half of the month. A severe weather outbreak occurred mid-month producing tornadoes, high winds and hail across North Louisiana. An F2 tornado that touched down in Claiborne Parish injured 12 people and damaged 25-30 homes.

February: The month began with heavy rainfall, with areas in southern Louisiana recording over 5 inches during the first 2 days of the month. On Valentine's Day, another cold front brought over 3 inches of rain to parts of southern Louisiana. The final week of the month brought heavy rains, hail and high winds -- including a 69 mph wind gust in Concordia Parish. Temperatures statewide were almost 3° above normal.

March: Several cold fronts passed through the state causing numerous severe weather outbreaks -- including hail 4.25 inches in diameter -- in Madison Parish. Despite the frontal activity and severe weather outbreaks, rainfall was nearly 2 inches below normal.

April: Severe weather dominated the first week of the month with hail and high winds in North Central Louisiana and a tornado outbreak in extreme southeastern Louisiana. Heavy rains occurred in parts of the state during the first half of the month, but by month's end, central and southwest Louisiana were "abnormally dry".

May: Dry weather dominated most of the month, causing parts of the state to experience "Moderate Drought." Rainfall near month's end brought some drought relief, but statewide rainfall totals were over 2 inches below normal for the third straight month.

June: Heavy rains brought some local drought relief, but statewide rainfall averages were still below normal. Tropical Storm Arlene missed Louisiana but brought unusually dry and mild weather for a few days.

July: Tropical Storm Cindy made landfall near Grand Isle causing high winds, flash flooding and numerous power outages for the greater New Orleans area. The latter part of the month was very hot and dry with heat indices at times reaching 100° to 110°.

August: Hurricane Katrina made landfall early on August 29th as a category 3 storm and was one of the most destructive hurricanes to ever hit the United States coast. Orleans, St. Bernard and Plaquemines Parishes were severely flooded by storm surge and/or levee breaching. Extreme wind damage was reported across most of southeast Louisiana and the Mississippi Coast. The death toll (as of October 20, 2005) was 1053 in Louisiana and 228 in Mississippi.

September: Hurricane Rita made landfall in extreme western Louisiana on September 24th as a category 3 hurricane packing winds of nearly 120 mph. In southwestern Louisiana, many homes and businesses were completely destroyed. Rita produced heavy rains over southern Louisiana, with some areas receiving over 12 inches. The entire Louisiana coast was inundated by the surge, including the New Orleans area previously flooded by Hurricane Katrina. This was the second major hurricane to hit Louisiana's coast in less than a month.

October: Dry weather was the dominant story for October. The Bayou State only received only 0.11 inches of rainfall for the entire month, making it the second driest October in over a century.

November: The month began with much needed rainfall across the entire state. Several cold fronts passed through the state, with some producing severe weather including an F0 tornado in West Carroll Parish. Despite the numerous fronts, rainfall amounts for the month were still well below normal.

December: A cold front during the first half of the month brought severe weather and much needed rainfall, especially to central and southern Louisiana. Despite a few episodes of cold Arctic air, the last week of the year recorded temperatures of 8° above normal.