United States Tornadoes of 2012*

* Through November and subject to revision. 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. Tornado numbers from January through August, 2012 are derived from *Storm Data* while September through November numbers are estimated from preliminary reports.

First Tornado.....8:45 AM CST, 9-Jan-2012 (EF0-TX)
Most Recent Tornado.....5:15 PM CST, 11-Nov-2012 (EF0-LA)

2012 Total Tornadoes (through Nov.).....890 (Ranked 27th since 1950)
Record Total (through Nov.).....1791 in 2004

Greatest 2012 Monthly Total.....206 in April
Greatest Monthly Total on Record.....758 in April 2011

2012 Tornado Days (through Nov.).....164
Annual Average (through Nov.).....172 (50-years, 1962-2011)
Record Tornado Days in Any Year.....211 in 2000

Greatest 2012 Daily Total (Mid-Mid CST).....86 on 14-Apr-2012
Greatest Daily Total on Record.....200 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.....68 (Ranked 25th 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 Tornado Injuries.....794 (Ranked 44th since 1950)
Greatest Annual Number of Injuries.....6000 in 1974

2012 Deadliest Single Tornado.....Henryville, IN, 11, 02-Mar-2012
Record Deadliest Single Tornado (modern era).....Joplin, MO, 158, 22-May-2011

2012 Longest Track.....85 miles (KY-WV, 02-Mar)
Record Longest Track.....235 miles (LA-MS, 22-Mar-1953)

2012 Tornadoes Rated EF4.....4 (Fewest since 2 in 2009)
Record Annual Number.....36 in 1974

2012 Tornadoes Rated EF5 (200+mph).....0 (Fewest since 0 in 2010)
Record Annual Number of (E)F5 Tornadoes.....7 in 1974

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

Statistics compiled by Gregory.Carbin.at.noaa.gov, NOAA/NWS/Storm Prediction Center, www.spc.noaa.gov

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The last year in which fewer than 900 tornadoes occurred was 1989 when 856 tornadoes were reported. In the 23 years since, only 2002 was a year with fewer than 1000 tornadoes. The annual average number of tornadoes over the past 30 years (1982-2011) is about 1200. If 2012 finishes with around 900 tornadoes for the year that will represent about 25% fewer tornadoes than the 30 year annual average number, or 75% of normal.

Not only does 2012 stand in remarkable contrast to 2011 when record levels of violent and deadly tornadoes occurred (140% of the 30 year normal), the year has also exhibited intra-annual contrasts. The first few months of 2012 had well above normal tornado activity when compared to the rest of 2012, especially for those months when the majority of tornado events usually occur (May-June). Through April 2012, the U.S. tornado count was running nearly double the 30 year normal (496 tornadoes through April compared to a 30 year average of 286 tornadoes).

Significant tornado outbreaks in 2012 occurred on 22-23 January (25 tornadoes), 28-29 February (44 tornadoes), 2-3 March (75 tornadoes), and 14-15 April (98 tornadoes). The number of days with significant widespread tornado activity decreased considerably after the April outbreak. April 2012 was only the third April since 1980 to experience a greater monthly tornado total than the subsequent months of May or June (this also happened in April 2011 and April 2006). In contrast, the 394 tornadoes occurring during the remainder of 2012 (May through November) is 442 tornadoes short of the 30 year normal of 836. Thus, since May, the 2012 U.S. tornado count has been running about 50% of normal.

As is clear from the most recent two years, U.S. tornado counts can vary considerably from year to year, and even from one month to the next. The very weakest tornadoes (those rated EF0) have increased over the past 20 years and usually make up more than half of all tornado reports. This increase is due to enhanced public awareness, population growth, and improvements in detection technologies such as Doppler radar. Over 60% of the tornadoes in 2012 to date have been rated EF0 with winds in the range of 65-85 mph. When the 2012 tornado count is adjusted for the upward trend in weak tornadoes by removing EF0 tornadoes, the 2012 count of EF1 and stronger tornadoes may end up being one of the 10 lowest counts in the last 60 years.

This summary will be revised in January when the number of tornadoes in December can be accounted for.