

THE CAT RESOURCE CENTER

Mid-March 2025 Severe Weather & Fire Assessment

March 17, 2025

As predicted, a strong low-pressure system crossing the central US over the weekend brought a major severe thunderstorm outbreak across a broad portion of the central and eastern US while numerous wildfires ignited across Texas and Oklahoma. Wildfire rapidly spread into the town of Stillwater, Oklahoma, and other smaller communities in the state, with more than 300 structures damaged or destroyed as of Monday morning, March 17. At least 130 fires across 44 counties broke out under highly adverse weather conditions. A multi-day severe thunderstorm outbreak took place as the storm system moved east, with over 1,500 storm reports recorded. More than 40 fatalities have been reported across 10 states, with the highest total of 10 in Missouri. So far two EF-4 tornadoes have been confirmed in Arkansas; the last time more than one EF-4/F4 were reported in the state was March 1997. Elevated winds were also commonplace across other portions of the country. The highest recorded wind gust across the three-day period was in Latrobe, Pa., with a peak gust of 89 mph as a strong squall line traversed the northeast US.

Central U.S. March 2025 Fire Statistics

As of March 17, 2025



Oklahoma Fires:

Structures Impacted: 300+
 Counties Impacted: 44
 Communities Impacted:
 Stillwater, Normal, Wellston,
 Mannford, OK



Monday March 17 Critical Fire Weather Risk

Area: 315,000 sq. mi.
 Population: 19,391,511
 Large Cities: Denver, CO,
 Oklahoma City, OK, Miami, FL,
 Tulsa, OK, Colorado Springs, CO



Tuesday March 18 Extreme Fire Weather Risk

Area: 49,890 sq. mi.
 Population: 1,247,022
 Large Cities: Texas: Lubbock,
 Amarillo, Midland, Odessa; New
 Mexico: Clovis



Tuesday March 18 Critical Fire Weather Risk

Area: 196,921 sq. mi.
 Population: 3,847,829
 Large Cities: El Paso, TX,
 Oklahoma City, OK, Wichita Falls,
 TX, Lawton, OK

March 2025 Severe Weather Outbreak

March 14-16, 2025



Number of Hail Reports: 373,
 24 greater than 2.0"

Impacted Areas: TX, AL, LA, MO,
 IL, IN, NC



Number of Tornado Reports: 105
 Confirmed Tornadoes: 48 (and
 rising)

Impacted States: LA, AR, MO, IL,
 IN, MS, AL, GA



Number of Wind Reports:
 1,051, 17 above 75 mph

Top Gusts by State: PA, OH,
 AL, NC, IA, NE, IL



Highest SPC Categorical
 Risk: High (5 out of 5)

Impacted Areas: Gulf Coast
 States

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Wildfire Summary March 17, 2025

Ideal Conditions for Wildfire Spread

Evacuations

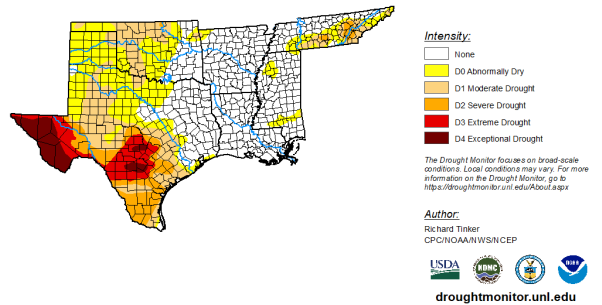
Over the weekend, a series of wildfires across Oklahoma and Texas have caused the loss of several hundred structures. These fires were driven by unusually high winds, low humidity and dry vegetation due to moderate drought conditions. A broader storm system originating in California moved eastward into drought-stricken areas of Oklahoma, bringing elevated winds, dust storms and wildfires, before spawning severe thunderstorms across the Midwest and South.

Ideal Weather Conditions for Rapid Fire Propagation: The fires were driven by strong winds (at times reaching hurricane force), low humidity and dry vegetation, creating ideal conditions for rapid fire spread. Winds reached speeds of 55-75 mph, which significantly increased the rate of fire spread and made firefighting efforts challenging. The dormant vegetation combined with minimal recent rainfall created abundant fuels for the fires. Some affected areas had experienced up to 112 consecutive days without rainfall. Although temperature is not the most critical factor in fire severity and spread, warm conditions also contributed to the overall dryness of fuels. The NOAA Storm Prediction Center (SPC) forecast Extremely Critical fire weather conditions, the most severe rating, for Friday, March 14, indicating the expected severity of conditions that day.

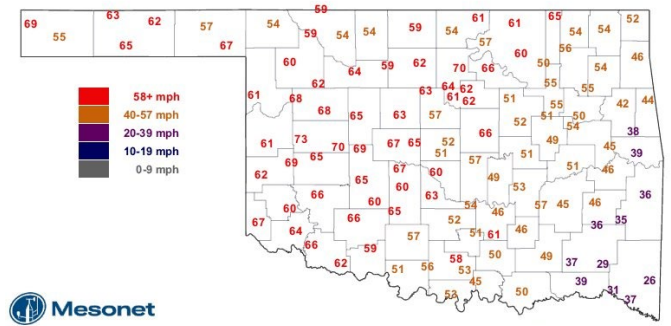
Containment: As of Monday, March 17, the Oklahoma wildfires are not fully contained. While some progress has been made, key fires, such as the Roger Mills and Dewey County fires, are still at 0% containment.

U.S. Drought Monitor
South

March 11, 2025
(Released Thursday, Mar. 13, 2025)
Valid 8 a.m. EDT



Drought monitor for the south-central U.S., featuring moderate drought across west-central Oklahoma and extreme to exceptional drought in southwest Texas. *Source: University of Nebraska-Lincoln, U.S. Drought Monitor.*



Damage Assessment

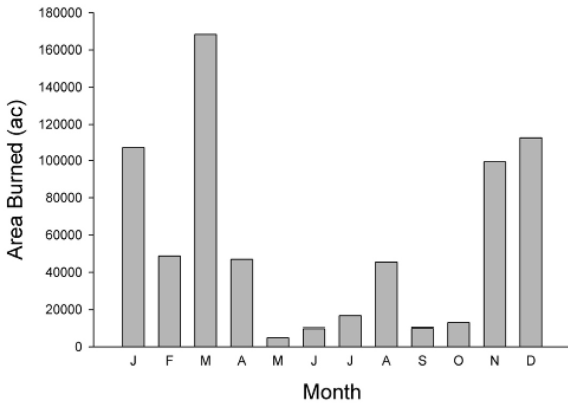
Over 300 homes and structures were destroyed statewide, with 74 homes lost in Stillwater, Oklahoma, alone. Other hard-hit areas include Mannford in northeastern Oklahoma and smaller communities such as Wellston, located approximately 30 miles northeast of Oklahoma City. Gov. Kevin Stitt reported losing his own farmhouse near Luther, Oklahoma, located just to the west of Wellston. Damage was reported in 44 counties, with some neighborhoods completely destroyed. Damage assessments are ongoing to identify the exact impact of the wildfires, according to media reports.

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Wildfire Summary March 17, 2025

Ongoing Wildfire Threat Early Week

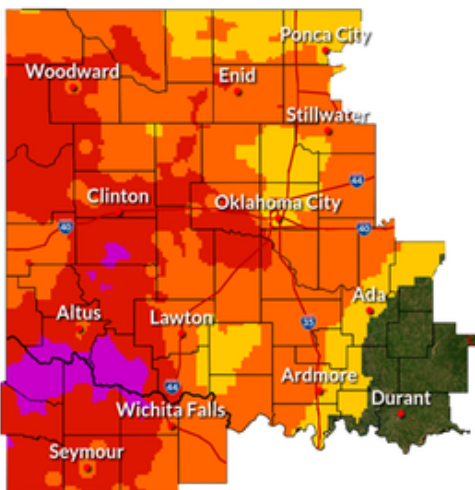
A Red Flag Warning remains in effect for much of Oklahoma today due to gusty winds, low humidity and dry vegetation. A Fire Weather Watch extends to Tuesday. Conditions conducive to enhanced wildfire activity are expected to persist through Tuesday, March 18, as the SPC forecasts critical fire weather conditions over much of Oklahoma on Monday, March 17 and western Oklahoma on March 18. Extremely critical fire weather conditions are being forecast for the Texas Panhandle and parts of western Texas on Tuesday, March 18.



Climatological study of acres burned by wildfire in the state of Oklahoma in the early 2000s. *Source: Oklahoma State University.*

Past Oklahoma Fire Activity: Oklahoma is no stranger to wildfires due to its dry climate and strong winds. March is historically the peak month for both fire frequency and acreage burned due to high winds, dormant vegetation, and low precipitation amounts. While most historical fires in Oklahoma have been small, larger wildfires are rare but impactful, including the Anderson Creek Fire in March 2016 that burned over 620 square miles in Oklahoma and Kansas, and destroyed 16 homes, 25 structures, and miles of fencing. The wildfires last weekend will far surpass any historical event in Oklahoma in terms of damage, underscoring the region’s vulnerability during extreme weather patterns.

Critical to Extreme Fire Danger Monday March 17, 2025 7:59 AM



What We Know

- **Critical to extreme** fire weather danger across much of the area.
- Southwest winds of 15 to 25 mph with **gusts up to 35 to 45 mph.**
- Minimum relative humidity of 10 to 20 percent



Timing

- A **Red Flag Warning** is in effect for Monday from 11 AM to 10 PM.

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Central US Severe Weather March 14-16, 2025

A Well Forecasted Event

Multiple days in advance, the SPC forecasted the potential for a multi-day severe weather outbreak, which verified along expectations. The rarely issued “High Risk” potential for severe weather, the top rating on the five-category severe weather forecast scale, verified with multiple EF-3 and EF-4 long-track tornadoes.

Tornado Statistics: National Weather Service (NWS) ground surveys continue across multiple states including tornado reports from 10 separate states from Louisiana to Illinois to South Carolina. At least 48 tornadoes have been confirmed to date including 27 of EF2 strength or higher.

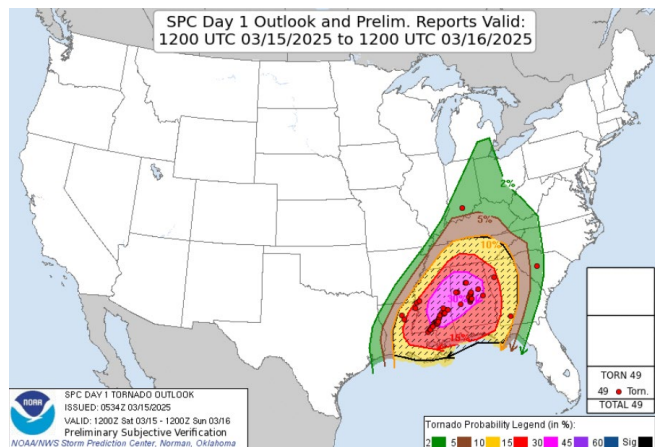
Wind and Hail: Over 1,000 wind reports were received by the SPC, with the majority along the Interstate 80 corridor from Nebraska to Pennsylvania and New York. Impressively, 7 weather stations in New York State exceeded their highest wind reading on record. Hail occurred mainly with individual supercell thunderstorms on Friday the 14th in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri and Illinois.

Season to Date: With the prolific amount of thunderstorm wind reports over the weekend, 2025 ranks second behind 2017 for the fastest start to the thunderstorm wind season.

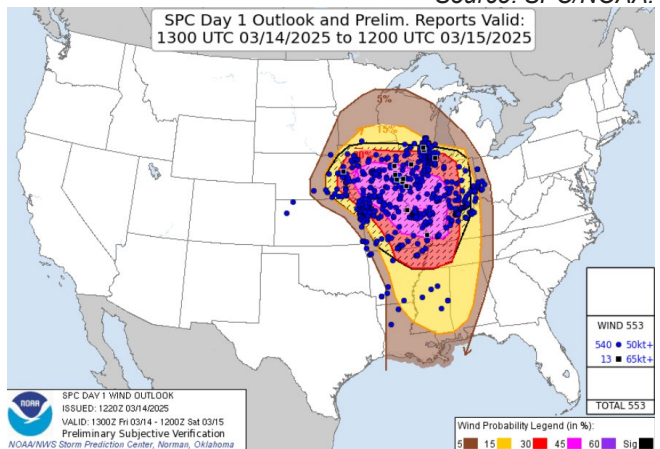
Tornado and hail activity is tracking near normal thus far in 2025, with more than 85% of the season still ahead.

About Guy Carpenter

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Tornado outlook for Saturday, March 15 relative to confirmed tornado reports. 105 tornado reports in total were observed over the weekend outbreak with 48 confirmed tornadoes surveyed by the National Weather Service. *Source: SPC/NOAA.*



Wind outlook for Friday, March 14 relative to confirmed thunderstorm wind reports. Reports of 65 knots or greater (hurricane force of which 17 were reported) are indicated by squares. 1,051 wind reports in total were observed over the weekend outbreak. *Source: SPC/NOAA.*

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