FloridaClimateCenter
Office of the State Climatologist

Climate Summary for Florida – May 2026

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Online at: http://climatecenter.fsu.edu/products-services/summaries

Summary

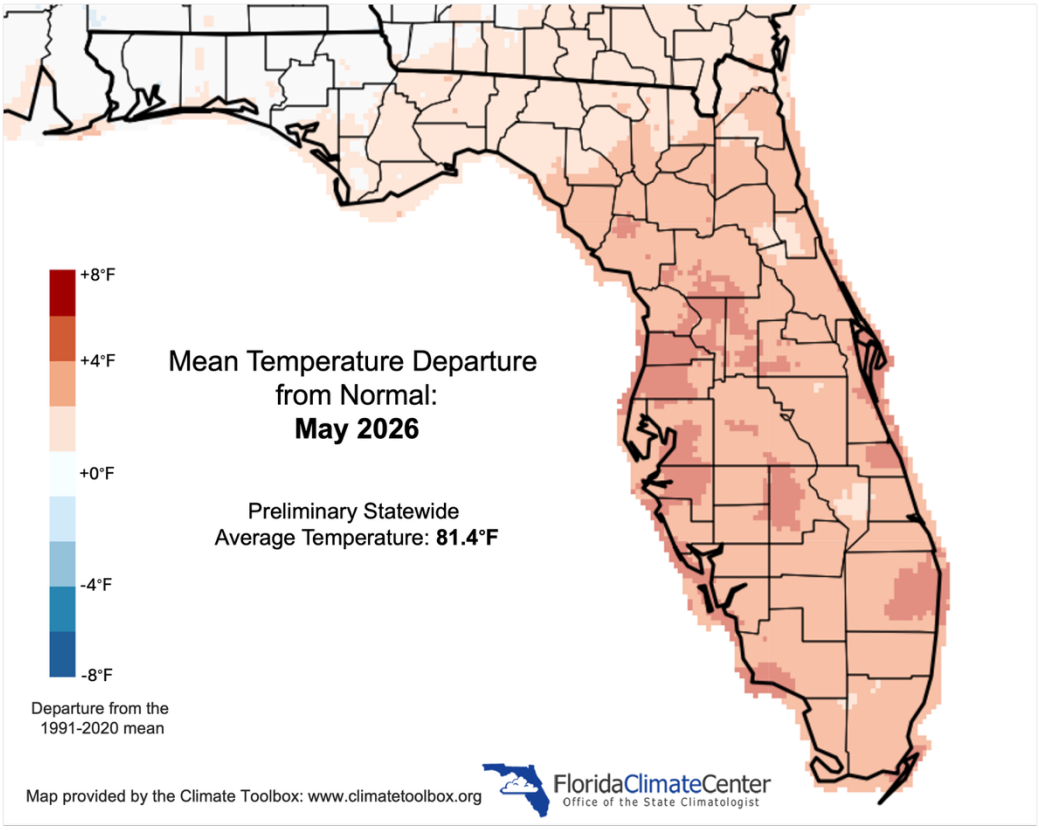
- Monthly mean temperatures in May were above normal in the Florida Peninsula and near to below normal in the Panhandle.
- Monthly precipitation totals in May were well above normal in the Panhandle and North Florida, and below normal in parts of central and south Florida.
- Drought persisted but improved in the western Panhandle. By the end of the month, about 17% of the state remained in exceptional drought (D4) and 47% was in extreme drought (D3), according to the U.S. Drought Monitor.
- ENSO-neutral conditions continued in the tropical equatorial Pacific Ocean, with a transition to El Niño likely in the next 1-2 months (82% chance May-July 2026).

Monthly average temperatures in May were above normal in the Florida Peninsula and near to below normal in the Panhandle. Average monthly temperature departures from normal ranged from -1.6℉ in Pensacola to +4.8℉ in Leesburg for the month (see Table 1 and Appendix 1 for select cities). May was among the warmest months of May on record for most stations across Peninsular Florida; it was record warm, or tied as the warmest May on record, at Clermont (71 years), Melbourne (84 years), Moore Haven (104 years), Vero Beach (84 years), the Sarasota/Bradenton area (115 years), and Key West (154 years). Spring (March through May) saw widespread above-average temperatures, and a few locations registered their warmest spring on record. These included the Sarasota/Bradenton area (113 years), Key West (153 years), and Plant City (122 years). Select daily record high maximum temperatures tied or broken during May are provided in Appendix 2.

Table 1. May average temperatures and departures from normal (℉) for select cities.

Station	Mean Temperature	Departure from Normal
Pensacola	74.4	-1.6
Tallahassee	75.6	+0.4
Jacksonville	76.8	+1.9
Orlando	81.2	+3.9
Tampa	81.7	+2.2
Miami	82.4	+2.3
Key West	84.7	+3.6

Figure 1. Monthly average temperature departures from normal (˚F) for May 2026 for Florida.

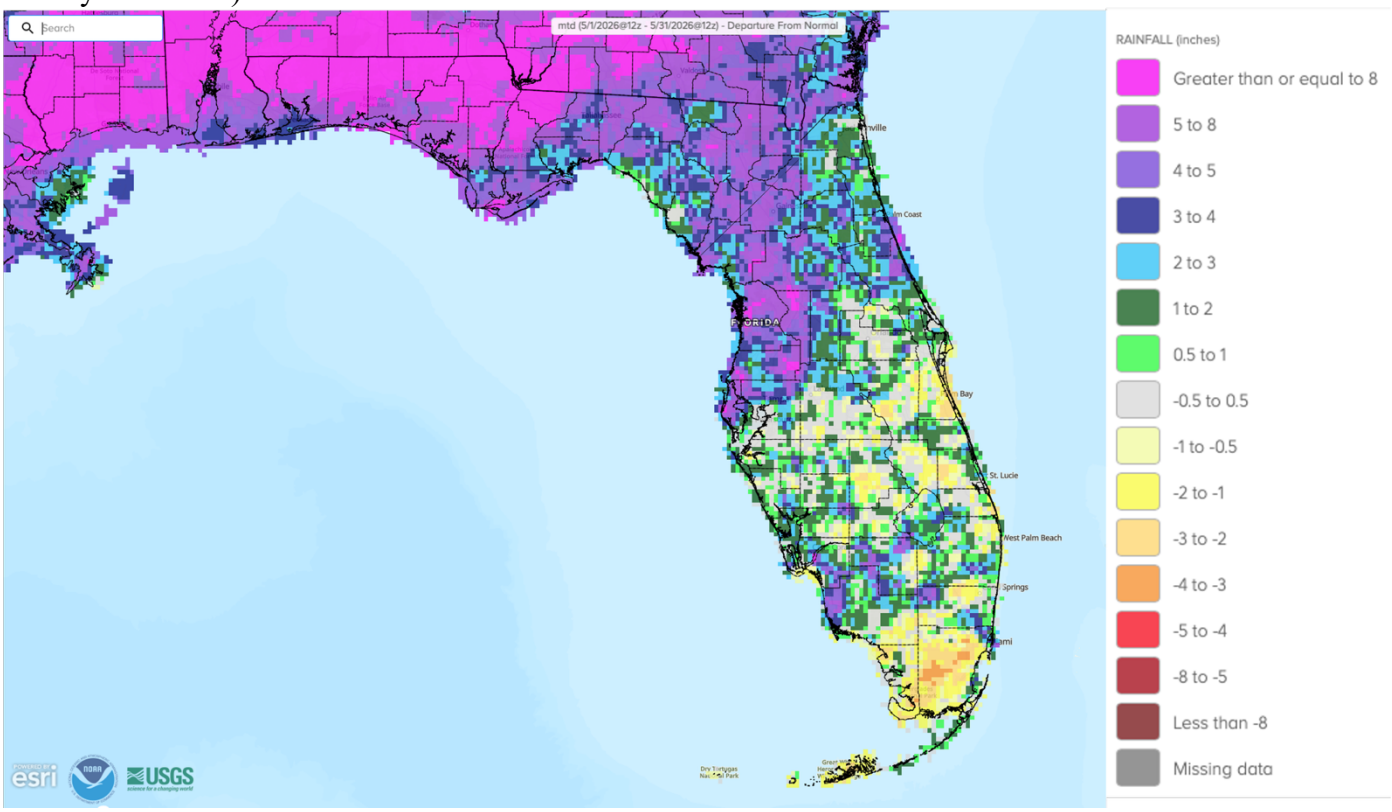


Monthly precipitation totals in May were well above normal in the Panhandle and North Florida, and below normal in parts of central and south Florida. The monthly precipitation departures from normal ranged from -3.11 inches in Miami (at Tamiami) to +11.51 inches in Crestview (see Table 2 and Appendix 1 for select locations). The Florida Panhandle received abundant rainfall during the month. Crestview had its wettest May on record (51 years) with a monthly rainfall total of 15.64 inches, which was 11.51 inches above the long-term average. Apalachicola registered its 2nd-wettest May on record (89 years) with a monthly total of 10.18 inches, which is 7.09 inches above average. Daytona Beach had its 5th-wettest May on record (104 years), with a total of 8.92 inches which was 5.23 inches above average. The driest areas were located in the central and southern parts of the Peninsula, with deficits of between one and three inches in general, with some isolated areas receiving above normal rainfall.

Table 2. May precipitation totals and departures from normal (inches) for select cities.

Station	Total Rainfall	Departure from Normal
Pensacola	6.01	+2.11
Tallahassee	5.28	+1.92
Jacksonville	8.09	+4.67
Orlando	2.37	-1.65
Tampa	4.31	+1.71
Miami	6.62	+0.30
Key West	1.81	-1.31

Figure 2. A graphical depiction of the monthly rainfall departure from normal (in inches) for May 2026 (courtesy of NOAA).



El Niño Watch.

Over the past month, ENSO-neutral conditions have persisted in the tropical equatorial Pacific Ocean. Above-average sea surface temperatures and subsurface temperatures recently emerged across the central and eastern equatorial Pacific. A transition to El Niño is likely soon (82% chance during May-July 2026) due to increasing subsurface temperature anomalies and westerly wind anomalies observed over the western equatorial Pacific. While confidence in the occurrence of an El Nino has increased, there remains uncertainty in its peak strength. Strength probabilities currently are estimated at 22%, 30%, and 37% for a moderate, strong, and very strong El Niño event, respectively, during the Northern Hemisphere 2026-2027 winter (November through January).

Hazardous Weather Events in May.

According to the Local Storm Reports issued by the local National Weather Service offices serving Florida, there were 241 individual local reports of hazardous weather events recorded across the state during the month of May (see Table 3 for a breakdown by event type). With the beginning of the rainy season, thunderstorm activity picked up during the month along with reports of heavy rain, flash flooding, hail, and high wind gusts. Ping pong sized hail (about 1.5 inches) was reported on the 10th in Volusia County. Wildfire activity was slowed by rainfall and storms, but lightning strikes were responsible for igniting wildfires in the Apalachicola National Forest within Wakulla County, which grew to 1,900 acres by May 25, as well as in Putnam and Broward Counties. Lightning also struck a kayaker on the Blackwater River on the 31st, which became fatal. In addition, several wildfires were active in Miami-Dade County during the month. The Highway 41 wildfire was reported as fully contained by the 4th, with a total of 9,149 acres burned; the Max Road fire grew to 11,443 acres and was fully contained as of the 14th; and the 172 Avenue fire was at 300 acres and 30% contained as of the 11th. Another wildfire in Collier County, known as the Rifle Range Road fire, was fully contained as of the 22nd with a total of 650 acres burned. Rip currents were responsible for one injury and two fatalities.

Table 3. Breakdown of storm reports submitted in Florida during the month of May 2026 (compiled from Iowa State University/Iowa Environmental Mesonet).

Report Type	Number of Reports
Heavy Rain	35
Flood	9
Flash Flood	7
Hail	15
Lightning	6
Marine Thunderstorm Wind	33
Non-Thunderstorm Wind Gust	1
Thunderstorm Wind Damage	40
Thunderstorm Wind Gust	68
Non-Thunderstorm Wind Damage	0
Tornado/Waterspout/Funnel Cloud	5 / 6 / 7
Wildfire	7
Rip Currents	2

Daily Record Events in May.

Table 4. Summary of daily records **broken** in Florida in May 2026 (source: NCEI Daily Weather Records).

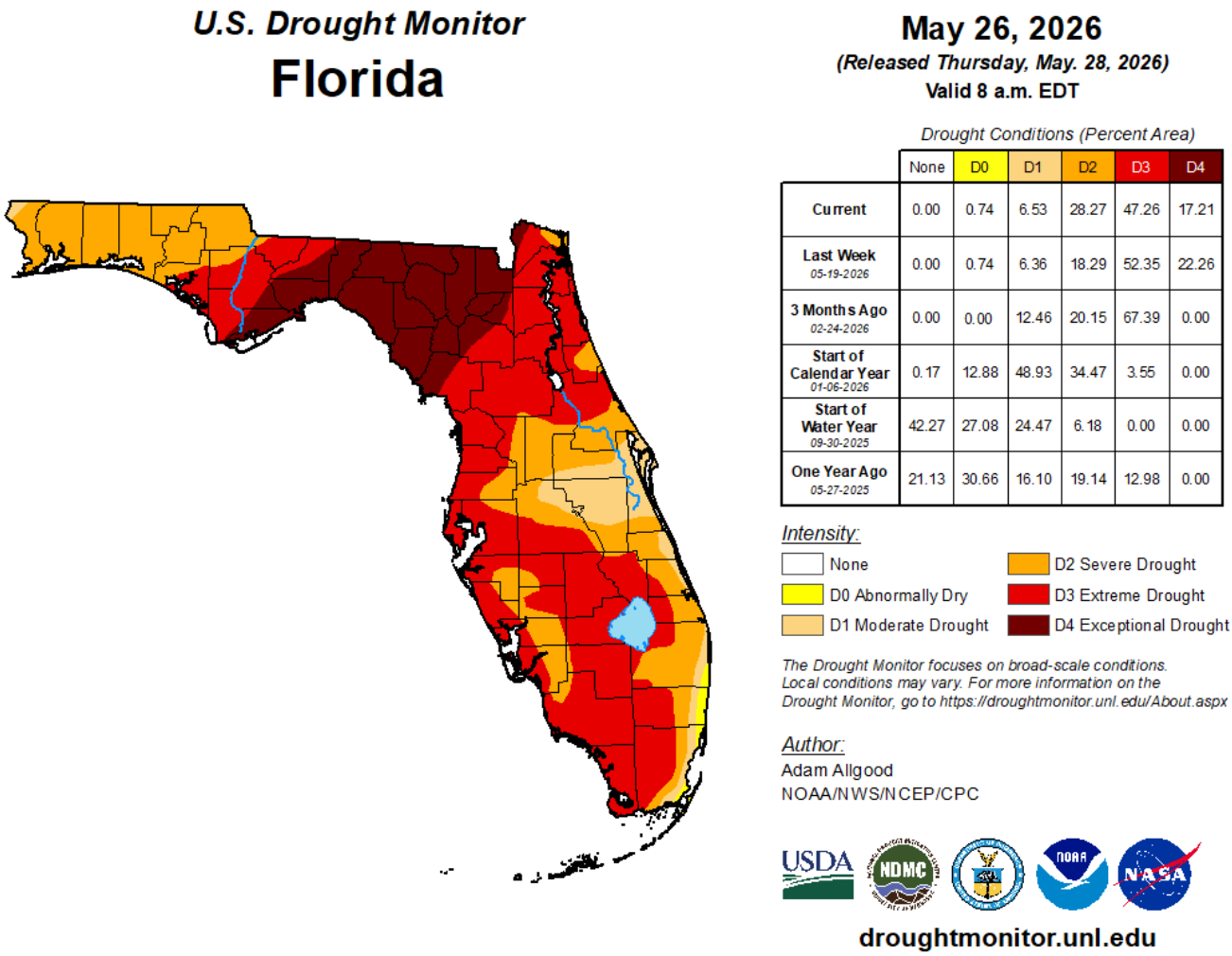
Category	Number of Records
Highest daily max. temp.	42
Highest daily min. temp.	107
Lowest daily max. temp.	14
Lowest daily min. temp.	12
Highest daily precipitation	39
Total	**214**

Drought-Related Impacts.

Due to the long-standing nature of the drought, rainfall has slowly brought improvements to the Panhandle where the highest rainfall totals were observed, but some areas such as the Big Bend and South Florida have remained much drier. By mid-May, approximately 24% of the state was in exceptional drought (D4), 57% in extreme drought (D3), 14% in severe drought (D2), and 4% was in moderate drought (D1), with about 1% abnormally dry (D0), according to the U.S. Drought Monitor. By the end of the month, approximately 17% of the state was in exceptional drought (D4), 47% was in extreme drought (D3), 28% was in severe drought (D2), and 7% was in moderate drought (D1), with 1% still abnormally dry (D0) (Figure 2 below).

As of May 31, the Lake Okeechobee water level was 11.19 ft. above sea level (Feet-NGVD29), which is below average for this time of year. At the first of May, the water level was 11.64 ft. above sea level.

Figure 3. A graphical depiction of the latest drought conditions in Florida according to the U.S. Drought Monitor (courtesy of the National Drought Mitigation Center, University of Nebraska-Lincoln).



Agriculture-Related Impacts.

Rainfall during the month helped to improve soil moisture and streamflows in many areas. In mid-May, topsoil moisture conditions were adequate in 47% of the state, short in 33%, and very short in 19% of the state, while 1% had surplus topsoil moisture conditions. By the end of May, topsoil moisture conditions were adequate in 55% of the state, short in 20%, and very short in 12% of the state, while 13% of the state had surplus topsoil conditions. For more information, consult the Crop Progress and Conditions report, which are published by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Appendix 1. Additional May departures from normal data for select Florida locations (source: NWS).

Station	Average Temperature (ºF)	Departure from Normal (ºF)	Total Rainfall (in.)	Departure from Normal (in.)
Gainesville	77.6	+2.6	5.74	+2.66
Sarasota	81.4	+3.6	5.07	+2.49
Melbourne	80.6	+3.8	2.40	-1.13
Fort Myers	82.3	+3.0	4.57	+1.11
West Palm Beach	82.8	+4.1	5.51	+0.60

Appendix 2. Select daily record high maximum temperatures tied or broken during May (compiled from NOAA).

Location	Date	Record (°F)	Broken/Tied	Last
Homestead	2	95	Broken	93 in 2021
Miami	2	94	Broken	92 in 2005
West Palm Beach	2	96	Broken	92 in 2021
Fort Lauderdale	3	97	Broken	89 in 2017
Key West	5	90	Broken	88 in 2019
Orlando	7	95	Broken	94 in 2006
Daytona Beach	7	97	Broken	93 in 1952
Lakeland	7	96	Broken	95 in 1955
Clermont	8	99	Broken	96 in 1950
Daytona Beach	8	96	Broken	94 in 1952
Lisbon	8	95	Broken	92 in 2024
St. Augustine	8	94	Broken	93 in 2010
Sanford	8	96	Broken	94 in 1977
Titusville	8	95	Broken	94 in 1967
Miles City	8	99	Broken	98 in 2009
Clermont	9	98	Broken	97 in 2024
Mountain Lake	9	100	Broken	99 in 2024
Vero Beach	9	94	Broken	93 in 2024
Melbourne	10	97	Broken	95 in 1978
Miles City	11	100	Broken	98 in 2011
Ochopee	16	94	Broken	93 in 2017
Lakeland	23	97	Broken	96 in 2025