



# The year in weather

# 2014

By BILL McAULIFFE • Special to the Star Tribune

The 2014 weather story could be told through chattering teeth. The year was bookended by cold and snow, interrupted by the wettest June in state weather records. Some may recall it, though, for its delightful autumn, when fall colors replaced cats as social media’s most popular photographic subject.

	Avg. high temp.	Avg. low temp.	Avg. temp.	Diff. from normal	Precip. (inches)	Diff. from normal	Snow* (inches)	Diff. from normal
Jan.	18.4	-2.5	8.0	-7.6	1.42	0.52	22.7	10.5
Feb.	17.5	-0.2	8.6	-12.3	1.41	0.64	18.4	10.7
Mar.	33.9	17.1	25.5	-7.3	0.82	-1.07	4.7	-5.6
April	51.4	34	42.7	-4.8	6.27	3.61	7	4.6
May	67.8	49.3	58.6	-0.5	4.55	1.19	0	0.0
June	78	61	69.5	0.7	11.36	7.11	0	0
July	80.6	62.5	71.5	-2.3	2.27	-1.77	0	0.0
Aug.	81.8	64.8	73.3	2.1	2.90	-1.40	0	0.0
Sept.	72.2	53.2	62.7	0.7	0.92	-2.16	0	0.0
Oct.	58.4	40	49.2	0.3	1.75	-0.68	0	-0.6
Nov.	32.4	18.5	25.4	-8.3	0.87	-0.9	9.4	0.1
Dec.	29.6	18.9	24.3	5.1	0.86	-0.27	5.6	-6.3
2014	51.8	34.7	43.3	-2.8	35.4	4.81	67.8	14.1

Source: Western Regional Climate Center (Research assistance from InYoung Choi MNDNR Climatology Volunteer)

\*Snow, ice pellets or hail; T=trace amount

**JANUARY**

It was so cold that Minnesotans had to call AAA to get their year started. In what was the coldest January in 20 years, the Twin Cities’ low of minus-23 on Jan. 6 was the coldest reading in 10 years and the high of minus-12 was the coldest high in nearly 18 years. Gov. Mark Dayton ordered public schools closed Jan. 6 and Jan. 7 and again on Jan. 21, 27 and 28 due to extreme wind-chills. The cold came hand-in-hand with snow. The Twin Cities saw 40 days with new snow from Dec. 2 to Jan. 26; another 6.4 inches on Jan. 30 was the deepest dump of 2014. During the siege of early-winter cold, only one daily record temperature was set in the Twin Cities — and that was for warmth: a high of 47 on Dec. 28.

**FEBRUARY**

The month opened with 11 straight days of below zero temps in the Twin Cities. The deep cold produced a plague of frozen or broken water mains and feeder lines all over the state. A Twin Cities snowfall of 4.9 inches on Feb. 17, followed by a slushy 9.9 inches on Feb. 20-21, prompted snow emergencies — the seventh of the winter in Minneapolis, the eighth in St. Paul. In Minneapolis, single-side parking remained in place more than a month, from Feb. 23 to March 27. Snow depth at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport on Feb. 21 measured 24 inches, the deepest in 32 years.

The snow was followed by ice, which clamped down on roads and sidewalks. Temps plummeted below zero and stayed there. In Duluth, it

was the coldest December-through-February period in 141 years. For the Twin Cities it was the coldest in 34 years. To make us feel better, the Minnesota Zoo offered a “Worst Winter Ever” admission discount.

**MARCH**

March kicked off with three more subzero days in the Twin Cities, including March 2, which had a low of minus-15 and a high of 3 — the coldest high on record for the date. (Strangely, it was also the only record-setting daily cold temp in the Twin Cities for the season.) Heading south didn’t help: Theilman, near Wabasha, saw 26 below March 3. By the end of March, the Twin Cities had survived a winter with 53 days of below-zero temps, the fifth most below-zero days in state history.

And the snow? Austin was buried with 10.5 inches of snow March 5, one of many daily snowfall records set across southern Minnesota. March 31 brought a rare event: a tornado in a county that was under a blizzard watch. The tornado near St. Leo, in Lac Qui Parle County, damaged some farm buildings.

**APRIL**

Three days after a weather observer measured 10 inches of new snow in downtown Minneapolis, the Twins opened their home season on April 7 — and the temperature hit 60 degrees. The next day, Iowa Lake in Martin County shook off all of its winter ice, the state’s first lake to do so in 2014.

But days later a massive snow-storm crossed the state. North Branch wound up with 20 inches on April 16-17. Duluth’s final snow — on April 30 — brought its winter total to 131 inches, third-most on record.

Rain saturated the southern half of the state during the last half of the month. New Hope had its wettest April ever, with 8.97 inches of precipitation. The official Twin Cities total, 6.27 inches, was second-wettest. Statewide, April was the sixth straight cooler-than-normal month.

**MAY**

Spring burst into Minnesota May 7-8 with heavy rain, hail and a handful of tornadoes from southwest to east central Minnesota. Princeton tallied 3.1 inches of rain May 7. On May 8, Albert Lea endured a hot flash when the temperature rose from 68 to 82 in 20 minutes just after 1 a.m., then dropped back to 63 two hours later. Continuing rain started to have an impact.

Beginning on May 9, Grays Bay dam could no longer hold back flows from Lake Minnetonka into Minnehaha Creek; that continued until July

30, a record duration. The Twin Cities got 2.25 inches of rain May 19, nearly doubling the record for the date, which had been set just the year before. An 80-degree high in the Twin Cities on May 24 was the first in 236 days. Ice floes were last seen at Duluth’s Park Point May 28 and were still drifting around Wisconsin’s Apostle Island National Lakeshore on May 30, an event unseen, some said, in 40 years.

**JUNE**

In this super-soaker month, the rainiest June on record statewide, Redwood Falls gasped for air from under 14.24 inches. Up to 7 inches of rain in southwestern Minnesota June 14-15 closed Interstate 90. At the state’s northern border, the Rainy River just downstream of International Falls reached its highest crest ever on June 17, and sandbags sprouted around town.

The Twin Cities fell into the dunk tank June 19, when 4.13 inches of rain fell, making it the wettest June day ever recorded. Lake Minnetonka reached its highest level in 109 years. West River Parkway in Minneapolis was closed by a mudslide. (Repairs won’t be completed until this spring.) The Mississippi reached its highest June crest in St. Paul, forcing a revival version of the Taste of Minnesota festival to move from Harriet Island to Waconia. The Twin Cities saw rain on 19 April days, and the wettest April-through-June period on record, with 22.18 inches. (The old mark, set in 1908, was 18.89.)

Ultimately, 37 of Minnesota’s 87 counties were declared federal disaster areas, with \$40 million in damage to public structures.

**JULY**

Rain slacked off as the month started, but rivers and lakes overflowed again July 11, when morning storms brought 4.83 inches to Wadena and just over an inch to the Twin Cities. July 21 was the hottest day of the not-so-hot year in the Twin Cities, where the high of 92 was the second and last day of 90 or above all summer. It was the fewest number of 90s since 1992, when there were none. Rochester and Duluth never hit 90. Nor did Pipestone and Morris, for the first time in 99 years.

**AUGUST**

Northern Minnesotans were shocked by lows of 37 degrees on Aug. 14. Could snow be far behind? Well, no. (See September.) But in the Twin Cities, August was the year’s only month without any need for home heating — statistically, at least.

Monthly rainfall in the Twin Cities was below normal, but most of it

fell during the State Fair. Elsewhere in the state, monthly rain totals were excessive, from 6 inches and more in western Minnesota to 8.59 at Minnesota City in southeastern Minnesota.

**SEPTEMBER**

A hailstorm Sept. 3-4 across central Minnesota temporarily turned the ground white in places and devastated apple trees just as they were ready for picking. St. Cloud saw nearly an inch of rain in six minutes; Onamia, which received 8.2 inches of rain in August, got 4.26 more in the storm. Frost touched the Minnesota corn belt Sept. 13. The month brought 4 to 6 inches to much of the state, but the Twin Cities stayed dry, receiving less than an inch of rain. (Normal September rainfall is 3.08 inches.)

**OCTOBER**

Traces of snow were recorded by the National Weather Service at Chanhassen both Oct. 3 and Oct. 4. Then a splendid October emerged — gentle and warm, with seemingly every tree transforming itself into a gallery of stunning colors. The Minnehaha Creek Watershed District closed the Grays Bay dam Oct. 20; by then Lake Minnetonka had dropped about 30 inches from the record level it had reached in June.

**NOVEMBER**

Winter kicked in the door early, leaving more than a foot of new snow across central Minnesota Nov. 10-11. Cambridge got 16.5 inches. The snow had a wicked accomplice: deep cold. Subzero readings reappeared across northern Minnesota Nov. 14. The Twin Cities temperature remained below freezing Nov. 10-20. Only 1880 had a longer November cold streak. The shipping season on the Mississippi River ended Nov. 20 — the earliest closing in 45 years — due to ice. The Thanksgiving Day high temperature of 10 in the Twin Cities was the lowest since 1930.

**DECEMBER**

The warmth found its way back. Marshall never dropped below 46 degrees on Dec. 14, breaking a 123-year-old state record by 6 degrees. The Twin Cities saw a record high of 51 on Dec. 15. The El Niño-induced mildness also produced the gloomiest December in 52 years of record keeping. It also produced a green Christmas in the Twin Cities. But 4.2 inches of snow Dec. 26-27 was well-timed for new skis and sleds — and ushered in the season’s first snow emergencies.

Bill McAuliffe, a former metro reporter for the Star Tribune, continues to be an avid weather watcher.



**MARCH 8:** A late-winter thaw had pedestrians (and dogs) dodging puddles.



**APRIL 16:** Blizzard conditions returned, taxing tires and patience.



**JUNE 19:** Minnehaha Creek overflowed after a record-setting one-day deluge.



**OCT. 15:** Fall, glorious fall, redeemed the three seasons before it.

Star Tribune photos