

2026 U.S. Severe Convective Storm (SCS) Outlook

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El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Outlook

- ENSO strongly influences where hailstorms and tornadoes tend to be most active across the United States.
- For most of spring, ENSO is expected to be neutral.
- By late spring into early summer, El Niño is expected to develop.

ENSO Impact on SCS Activity

As La Niña weakens, the weather patterns that typically lead to frequent tornado outbreaks become less organized. As a result, tornado activity is expected to be lower than last year and near the historical average.

This season, with ENSO shifting toward a neutral phase, the chances of experiencing large hail and straight-line winds alongside intense rainfall are higher.

- The greatest overall risk is expected from the Mississippi Valley into the Gulf States, where storms are most likely to produce loss causing straight-line winds and flash flooding from intense rainfall.
- The largest hail risk is expected from Texas to Alabama, with another hotspot around Iowa and northern Missouri.
- As El Niño develops in late spring to early summer, tornado and hail activity may be less frequent in the south-central U.S. and more frequent in parts of the western U.S.
- Cooler air in the Northern Plains and Midwest is expected to delay the onset of severe weather until late April, potentially limiting early-spring severe activity in those areas.

Official NOAA CPC ENSO Probabilities (issued March 2026)

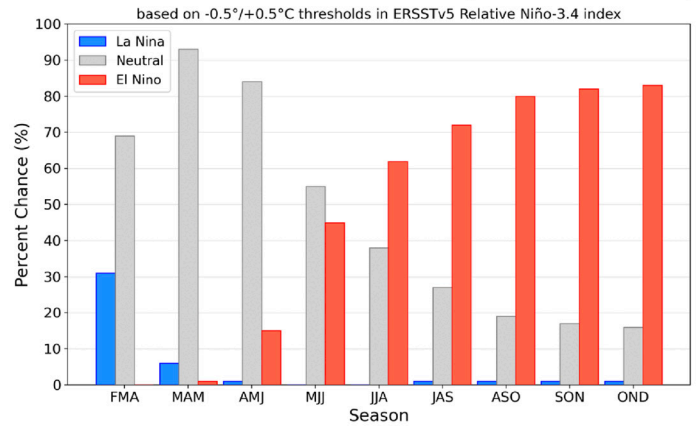


Figure 7. Official ENSO probabilities for the Niño 3.4 relative sea surface temperature index (5°N-5°S, 120°W-170°W minus tropical mean (20°N-20°S). Relative index is re-scaled to match variance of the traditional index). Figure updated 12 March 2026.

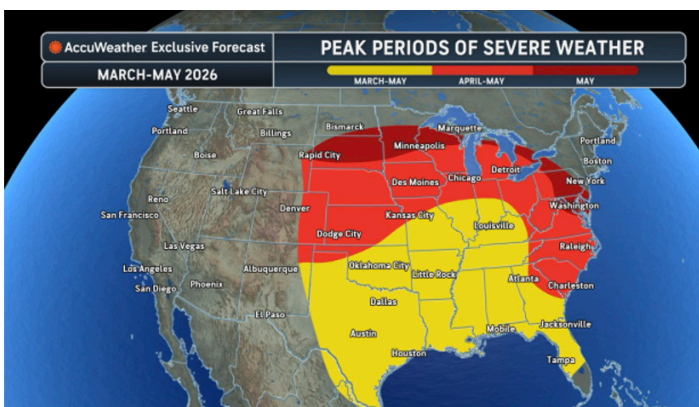
Source: [National Weather Service – NOAA](#)

	April	May	Yearly Total
2026 Forecast	150-225	200-275	1,050-1,250
Historical Average (1991-2020)	182	268	1,225
2025	352	332	1,544*

* Preliminary estimate as of Feb 25, 2026

Source: [AccuWeather 2026 Tornado Forecast](#)

AccuWeather's Spring Outlook Projection for Periods of Severe Weather



AccuWeather's Spring Outlook Projection for Hail Density Areas

