

Dreary, chilly start to holiday weekend breaks records across Northeast

By Mary Gilbert May 30, 2021



Some residents across the Northeast may have swapped air conditioners for space heaters at the start of the Memorial Day weekend. Areas that experienced temperatures indicative of July at midweek were subjected to weather whiplash to start the weekend as temperatures were generally closer to those of April or even March.

With June only days away as temperatures plummeted and dreary conditions settled in, many folks across the northeastern quarter of the United States were left asking one question: Why did this happen?

“A cool, damp northeasterly flow that wrapped around a storm tracking through the Northeast is generally to blame for the cold and gray weekend,” AccuWeather Meteorologist Brandon Buckingham said.

A webcam image captured Saturday, May 29, 2021, shows a rainy, dreary day at a nearly empty boardwalk in Seaside Heights, New Jersey. (EarthCam)

“As moisture-laden air from the Atlantic Ocean wrapped around the storm, it tended to get wedged in areas from the Appalachian Mountains to the Atlantic Coast, resulting in cloudy skies, drizzle and in some cases, a steady rainfall,” Buckingham explained.

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Many locations from the Ohio Valley to the mid-Atlantic and Northeast picked up over an inch of rainfall as storms moved through the area Friday and Saturday. Some daily rainfall records were broken on Friday as rain soaked the region.

“Not only will a storm like this lead to an extended stretch of gray and damp conditions, but temperatures tend to flatline in the 40s and 50s F in many Northeastern locales,” Buckingham added.

Temperatures did in fact flatline. AccuWeather forecasters say dozens of records were broken on Saturday. Many locations broke daily low temperature records, while others shattered lowest daily high temperature records. Some of these records for lowest high temperature dated back to the 1800s.

[Harrisburg](#), [Reading](#) and [Allentown](#), Pennsylvania, all experienced a 41 degree Fahrenheit difference in high temperatures from Wednesday, May 26, to Saturday, May 29. Reading, for example, soared to a high of 93 degrees on May 26, just 1 degree shy of matching a 107-year-old record. Just a few days later on May 29, the city struggled to reach a high of 52. This high of 52 became the

lowest high temperature ever recorded for the city on May 29. It shattered the previous record of 58 from 1996.

[Pittsburgh](#) was only able to top out at 51 degrees on Saturday and in doing so, broke a record that had stood since the late 1800s. The previous lowest high temperature for the city was 54 degrees, set in 1897. On the other side of the state, [Philadelphia](#) broke an even older record with a high temperature of only 54 degrees on Saturday. The previous lowest high temperature for the date was 56 degrees from 1884.

More than two dozen locations from Ohio and Kentucky, eastward to southern New England either broke or tied daily records for lowest high temperature on May 29. A few notable cities in this list are New York City and Baltimore.

In addition, record low temperatures were broken or tied across portions of the Great Lakes, Northeast and other areas in the northern tier of the country.

Both Binghamton, New York, and LaGuardia Airport in New York City, tied record lows when temperatures dropped to levels more akin to April than late May.

In addition to the chilly actual air temperatures and rain, AccuWeather RealFeel® Temperatures lagged several degrees lower than the thermometer read to start the holiday weekend. For anyone hoping to squeeze in a trip to the beach or host an outdoor barbecue, conditions were less than ideal on Saturday.

While the high temperature nearly made it into the middle 50s in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on Saturday, AccuWeather RealFeel® Temperatures remained in the 40s or even into the upper 30s throughout the afternoon. Even in Ocean City, Maryland, where air temperatures topped out in the upper 50s, AccuWeather RealFeel® Temperatures still lagged behind in the 40s and lower 50s.

A webcam image captured Saturday, May 29, 2021, shows a drizzly, dreary day in Coney Island, New York. (EarthCam)

In addition to the unseasonable chill and rain, some of the highest elevations in the Northeast even woke up to a fresh coating of slushy snow to start the holiday weekend.

In some of the interior mountaintops in the Northeast, accumulating snow was reported Saturday morning. Nearly an inch of snow could be seen on webcams at Mount Snow, Vermont. A slushy coating was also caught at Stratton Mountain Resort in Stratton Mountain, Vermont.

Webcam image from the Stratton Mountain Summit, Vermont, at Stratton Mountain Resort on Saturday morning, May 29, 2021.

Even before snow fell in parts of the Northeast, unseasonable chill posed a real danger to crops for parts of the Great Lakes. Friday night into Saturday morning, a wide swath of freeze warnings were in effect for portions of Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. Frost advisories were in effect for other parts of the area, leading many residents to take steps to mitigate damage to their plants or crops.

Frost advisories persisted across much of Michigan and Wisconsin even into Sunday morning.

Freeze warnings (darker blue) and frost advisories (lighter blue) were in effect for portions of the Great Lakes early in the morning of Saturday, May 29, 2021. (AccuWeather Severe Weather Center)

The good news for residents impacted by Mother Nature's whims early this holiday weekend, is that AccuWeather forecasters say that Memorial Day itself will turn out rather nice for much of the Great Lakes and portions of the Northeast. However, New England will continue to deal with pesky clouds, rain and chilly air on the holiday.

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