State of Ohio
Monthly Climate Update

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

Review – March 2026

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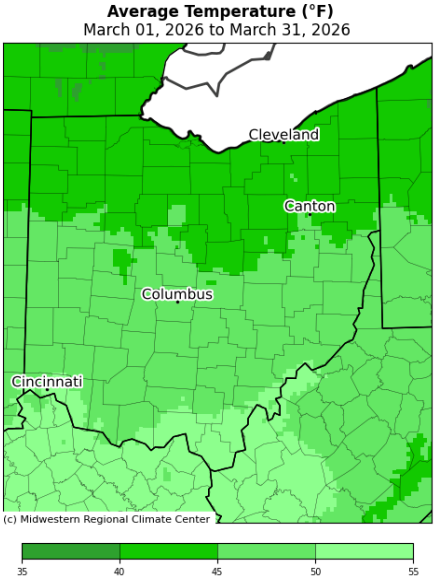

Temperature

March brought consistently mild conditions across the state, with average temperatures holding at or above 40°F. A clear north–south temperature gradient emerged: southern regions were the warmest, averaging 50–55°F, while temperatures gradually decreased to 40–45°F in the northern areas (Fig. 1a). Overall, these values were 3–7°F above the historical norm for this time of year (Fig. 1b).

At the county level, March ranked as the 7th warmest in the 132-year record. Nearly every county experienced much above-average temperatures, with the exception of Erie County. The statewide mean temperature for the month reached 38.5°F (Fig. 2). Although there were still some cold spells and frost for this month, these colder temperatures were muted by prolonged periods of warmer temperatures.

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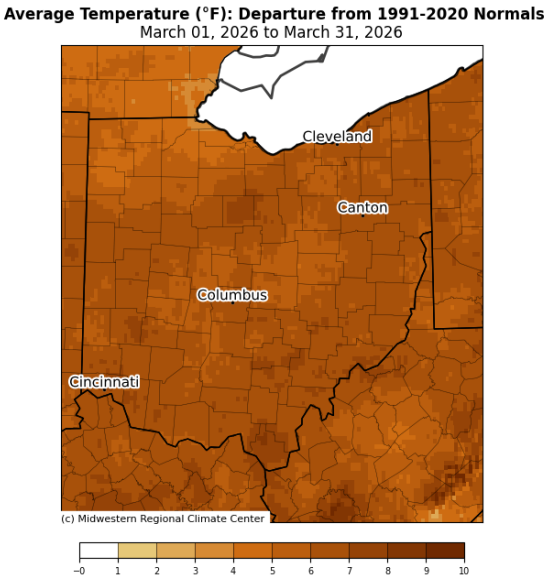


Figure 1a: Average temperature and 1b: Departure from Normal for the month of March 2026. Data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (http://mrcc.purdue.edu).

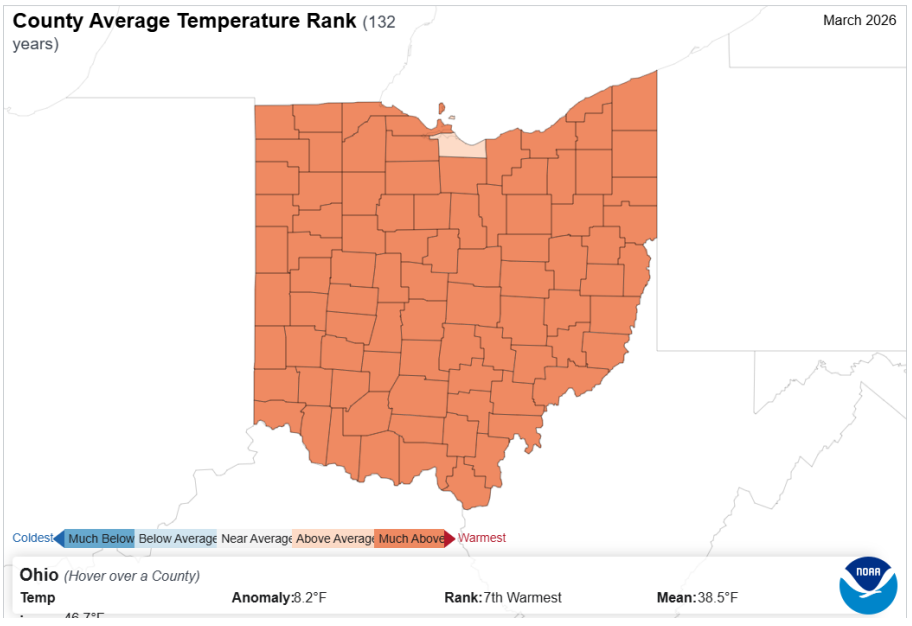
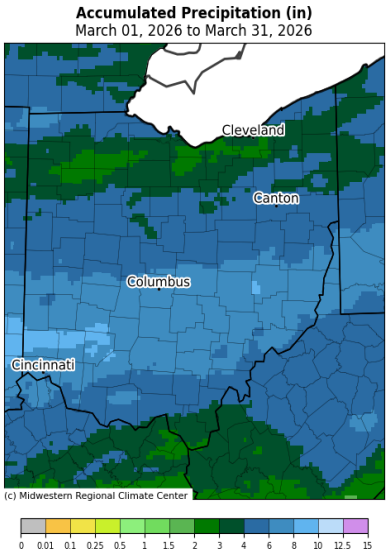


Figure 2: State of Ohio average temperature ranks by county for March 2026. Courtesy of the National Centers for Environmental Information (https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/).

a)



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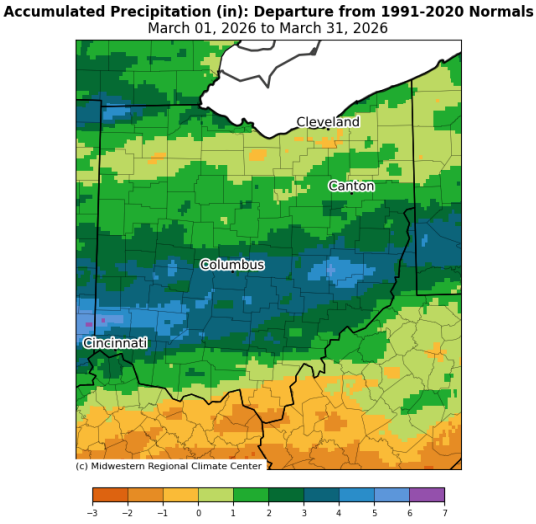

Figure 3a: Accumulated precipitation and 3b: Departures from Normal for the month of March 2026. Data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (http://mrcc.purdue.edu).

Precipitation

Compared to the rest of the year, Ohio experienced an upward trend of precipitation in March. Statewide totals ranged from about 2–3 inches to as much as 8–10 inches. The highest rainfall occurred in central Ohio, while northwest and eastern regions saw comparatively lower amounts (Fig. 3a). Despite March only being the beginning of spring, precipitation totals were generally above normal. Only a few localized areas experienced deficits of around 1 inch, while most of the state was near or above average. Central Ohio, which received the most rainfall, recorded anomalies of 4–5 inches above normal, highlighting an especially wet March (Fig. 3b).

County rankings continue to show this pattern with no counties recorded below-average levels; instead, the highest precipitation was concentrated from the southwest to the northeast and central regions (Fig. 4). The remaining areas, primarily in the south and far north, maintained near-average totals. Overall, March was the 13th wettest in 132 years with an average of 3.37 inches of precipitation.

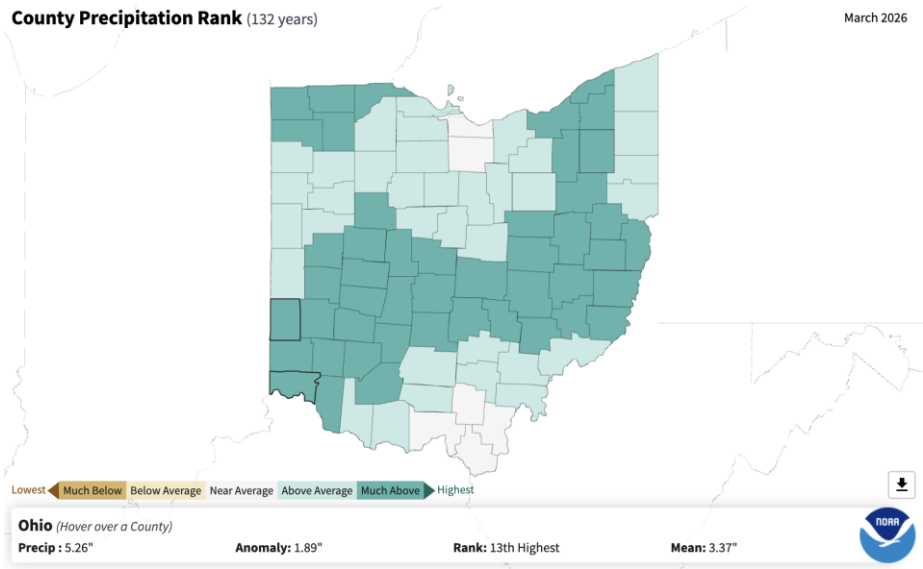

Figure 4: State of Ohio precipitation ranks by county for March 2026. Courtesy of the National Centers for Environmental Information (https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/).

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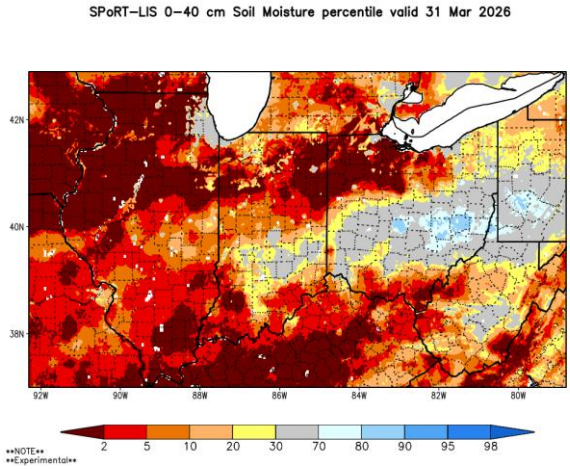

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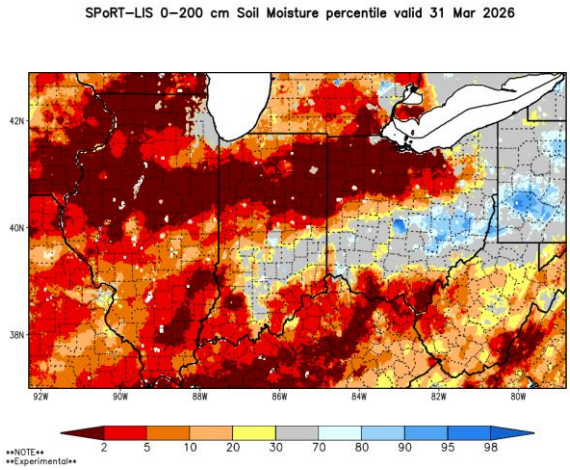


Figure 5a: 0-40 cm and 5b: 0-200 cm soil moisture percentile across the region at the end of March 2026. Courtesy of NASA SPoRTLIS (https://weather.msfc.nasa.gov/sport/case_studies/lis_IN.html).

Soil and Energy

Despite above-normal precipitation in March, several areas across Ohio remain in the 2nd percentile for soil moisture. At the 0–40 cm depth, northwest Ohio and portions of southern Ohio continue to exhibit very dry conditions, while central Ohio falls within the 70th–90th percentile, indicating much wetter soils (Fig. 5a). A similar pattern is evident at the 0–200 cm depth, though both the drier and wetter regions expand somewhat in coverage (Fig. 5b).

Heating Degree Days (HDDs) and Cooling Degree Days (CDDs) have shifted notably since last month. CDDs are no longer at zero, reflecting periods when average temperatures exceeded 65°F and signaling a transition toward warmer conditions. At the same time, cooler intervals persisted, with HDDs averaging 591 statewide (Fig. 6). These fluctuations between heating and cooling needs can significantly impact energy demand, as households and systems increasingly switch between heating and cooling.

Product Note: Both NASA SPoRT LIS soil moisture products contain small pockets of inaccurate data indicating extremely wet or dry conditions. These small-scale errors can emerge in remote sensing products covering large areas or grid-spacings. For more information, please contact Geddy Davis (davis.5694@osu.edu).

Climate Division	Heating Degree Days	Normal	Departure	Cooling Degree Days	Normal	Departure
1	670	869	-199	2	1	1
2	662	867	-205	2	1	1
3	681	900	-219	0	1	-1
4	602	823	-221	5	1	4
5	581	800	-219	3	1	2
6	638	855	-217	0	1	-1
7	620	838	-218	0	1	-1
8	514	740	-226	8	2	6
9	472	709	-237	8	2	6
10	529	768	-239	2	1	1
Statewide	591	812	-221	3	1	2

Figure 6: (Left) March 2026 heating & cooling degree days. (Right) Corresponding Ohio Climate Divisions. Data courtesy of the Midwestern Regional Climate Center (http://mrcc.purdue.edu).

Notable Event

March brought a series of impactful storm systems across Ohio, including thunderstorms, large hail, and multiple tornadoes. The first notable outbreak occurred on March 11, producing three EF0 tornadoes in Shelby and Auglaize Counties, with the longest path extending 3.02 miles. On March 22, a narrow but intense band of storms moved through western and central Ohio, bringing frequent lightning and severe hail (Fig. 7). Areas impacted by these storms saw quarter to golf ball sized hail, such as this example in Fig. 8. The most significant event of the month took place on March 26, originating in northern Illinois and tracking east through Indiana into Ohio. A total of 109 storm reports were submitted to the SPC that day, including five tornadoes (Fig. 9). Of these, three occurred in Ohio: two EF1 tornadoes in Morrow and Hardin Counties, and one EF0 in Knox County. The strongest of these tracked 1.53 miles in Morrow County, with estimated peak winds of 95 mph (Fig. 10). Another round of severe weather impacted northeast and northwest Ohio on March 31, producing two EF1 tornadoes in Geauga and Defiance Counties and one EF0 in Wayne County. With frequent tornado activity and associated hazards, including large hail, damaging winds, and heavy rainfall, March highlighted the importance of remaining weather-aware. These events serve as a reminder to stay alert for warnings and take appropriate precautions during rapidly changing conditions.

Figure 7. Picture of lighting that struck in Columbus, OH on March 22. Source: Geddy Davis

Figure 8. Picture of quarter-size hail in Mendon, OH on March 22. Source: Jeffery Clouser

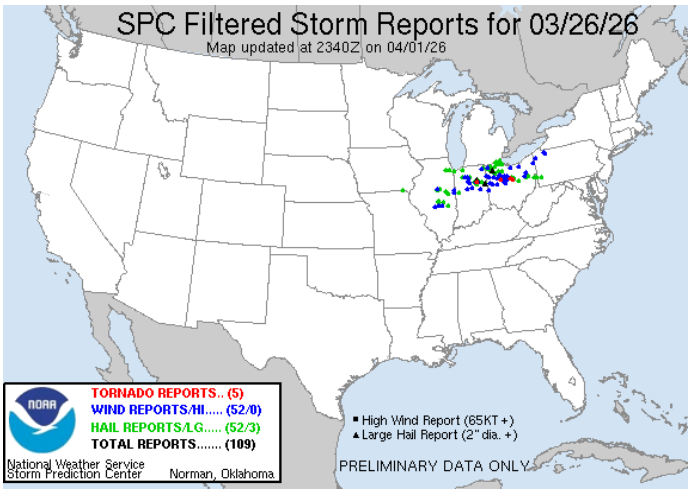


Figure 9: Map of storm reports for March 26. Source: Storm Prediction Center. Accessed at https://www.spc.noaa.gov/products/archive/

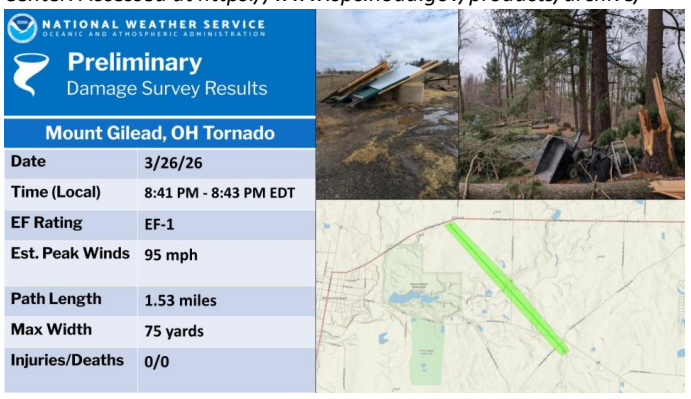
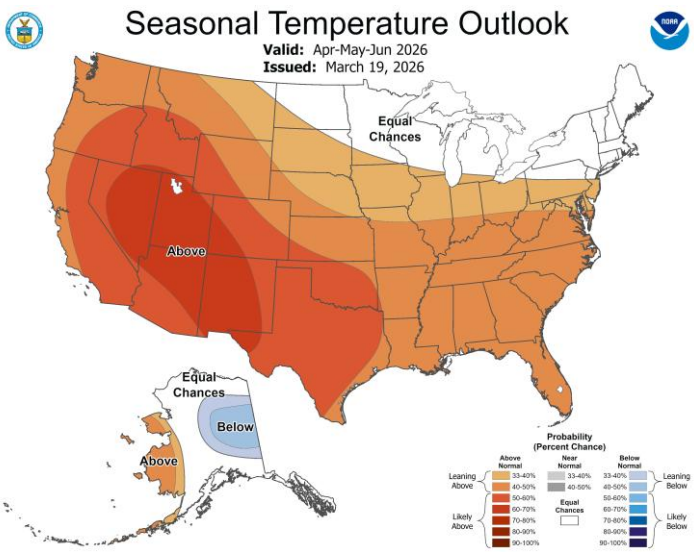


Figure 10: Preliminary damage survey results of a tornado in Mount Gilead, OH on March 26. Source: National Weather Service. Accessed at https://www.weather.gov/iln/20260326_Kenton

Forecast: April – June 2026

a)



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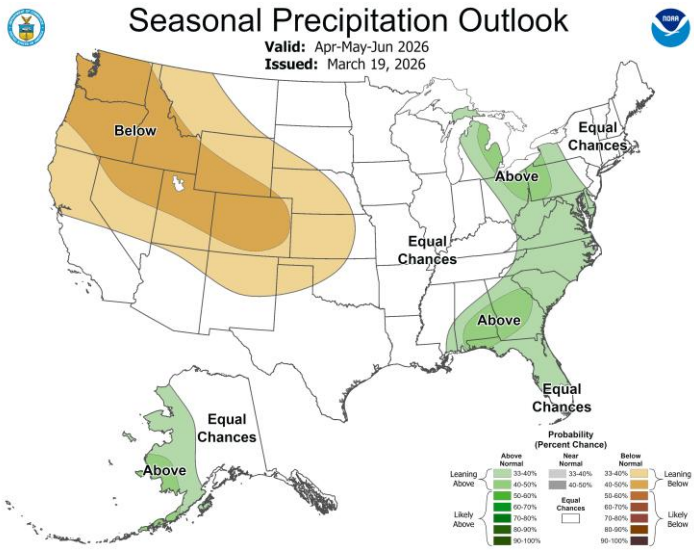

Figure 11a: Nationwide Seasonal Temperature and 11b: Precipitation Outlook for April – June 2026. Courtesy of the Climate Prediction Center (https://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/).

Looking Ahead

With March bringing warmer and wetter-than-normal conditions across Ohio, a similar pattern is expected to persist through April, May, and June. Northeastern Ohio is forecast to have equal chances of below- or above-normal temperatures, while the rest of the state leans toward above-normal conditions. Southern Ohio shows the strongest signal, with a 40–50% likelihood of above-normal temperatures, while central and northwestern Ohio have a 30–40% chance of above-normal warmth (Fig. 11a). Precipitation patterns, however, are less consistent across the state. Southwest and parts of northwestern Ohio have equal chances of below- or above-normal precipitation. Meanwhile, much of the eastern two-thirds of the state is outlined with above normal probabilities. The strongest signal is located in northeastern Ohio, with a 40–50% likelihood of above-normal precipitation (Fig. 11b).

Note: these outlooks do not provide the quantity of above or below normal conditions, just the likelihood of occurrence (i.e., the probability).

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