

May 2022 Northern Michigan Climate Summary

Alpena

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
56.8°F	+3.4°F	3.68"	+0.90"	0.0"	-0.2"

Houghton Lake

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
58.5°F	+3.8°F	3.76"	+0.61"	0.0"	-0.1"

Sault Ste. Marie

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
54.4°F	+2.3°F	2.64"	+0.00"	0.0"	-0.4"

Gaylord

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
58.8°F	+6.7°F	1.07"	-2.15"	0.0"	-0.5"

Traverse City

Avg Temp	Avg Temp Departure	Precip	Precip Departure	Snowfall	Snowfall Departure
59.1°F	+3.8°F	1.42"	-2.03"	0.0"	-0.0"

Following the chilly end to April, temperatures hovered near to slightly below normal at the start of May, with colder high pressure. The tables quickly turned between May 9th-14th as a 4-5 day period of summer-like heat soared into the Great Lakes, which saw most of northern lower Michigan exceed 90°F, and the eastern U.P. reach into the upper 80s. As a matter of fact, on May 12th, Traverse City observed a high of 96°F, which set the all-time monthly maximum temperature! The heat helped dry out conditions across the region considerably, and raised fire danger across northern lower Michigan in particular. This came to a head on May 13th when a 2,200+ acre wildfire erupted in far northwest Montmorency County, just outside of Pigeon River Country State Forest. Following a brief cooler period between May 15th-18th, temperatures quickly warmed back to above normal, this time featuring an abnormally moist air mass.

This spelled disaster on the afternoon of May 20th as a cold front was passing through, initially driving an area of strong thunderstorms across Leelanau and Antrim Counties, which produced widespread significant wind damage, particularly across Bellaire. As these storms interacted with the very unstable airmass over land (complete with changing wind directions aloft), the storm that went through Bellaire quickly transitioned into a powerful supercell thunderstorm, producing hail as large as 2" in diameter near Elmira.

This particular storm then quickly spawned a tornado that initially touched down east of Alba near Lakes of the North before rapidly strengthening as it approached Gaylord, ultimately inflicting major damage across the city. Two people lost their lives and 44 people were injured by the tornado, which was rated an EF3 with peak winds of 150mph as it moved through Gaylord. The tornado eventually lifted north of Sparr, but the storm was not done inflicting damage just yet. The supercell thunderstorm remained potent given the favorable airmass and relatively isolated nature of the storm, which allowed for the updraft of the storm to continue to produce large hailstones. As the storm finally crossed into Lake Huron, the storm had produced baseball sized hail (2.75") near Posen, and 3" hail near Grand Lake.

The tornado that struck Gaylord was the first tornado to impact the city since reliable tornado records began in 1950. It was also the first EF3 tornado in the state of Michigan since 2012 (Dexter) and the first to cause multiple fatalities in the state since 2007 (Williamston).