

2006 Top 5 Weather Events

As 2006 comes to an end, we decided to take a look back at what happened weather-wise across eastern Kentucky and pick out the top five most significant weather events for this past year.

5. October 17 High Wind Event

Photo Courtesy of Tri-City News



The night of October 17 saw 50 to 100 mph winds from 5000 to 10,000 feet above the ground. As wind flows over a mountain, it is displaced upward. If the atmospheric conditions are right, the mountain creates waves as the wind is deflected upward and then back downward. Very rarely, this deflection downward can be back to the ground. The terrain in Harlan and Letcher counties is very complex and there are multiple mountains. On October 17 the mountain wave that formed helped create the most unusual weather event of the year with high winds causing damage in parts of Letcher and Harlan counties.

According to the Harlan Daily Enterprise, "Cumberland resident Arthur Johnson was relaxing on his sofa in his house when he thought he heard a train". The train turned out to be a roof from a neighbor's house which he found on parts of his house. There were several roofs blown off across the city and there were too many power lines down to count. Numerous trees blew down and blocked roads near Cumberland. Windows, both large and small were blown out from the winds which were estimated to be 80 to 100 mph. This damage was concentrated in a very small area and the only reports of damage were within a 25 mile radius of Cumberland.

4. Summer Heat Wave

Biker Cooling Off



Between July 31 and August 3, the daily high temperature at the London Corbin Airport was 93 degrees or higher each day. We have to go back to August of 1999 to find at least 4 consecutive days in a row with daily high temperatures of 93 degrees or higher at London. At the Jackson National Weather Service Forecast Office the daily high temperature was at least 94 degrees each day between July 31st and August 3rd. You have to go all the way back to August of 1995 to find a string of at least 4 days with temperatures at or above 94 degrees in Jackson. During this time, 7 records were broken including new record highs for the Jackson Julian Carroll Airport of 97 degrees on Aug 2 and Aug 3.

3. Unusual Warmth



2006 was a very warm year. In 2006, Both London and Jackson had their 5th warmest years on record. If it wasn't for September, Jackson would have ranked even higher. September was actually the coolest September on record at the Jackson National Weather Service Office.

The year 2006 was book ended by unusual warmth across eastern Kentucky. To start the year, January was the warmest on record at the Jackson National Weather Service Office. For the month, the average temperature was 45.1 degrees, which is more than ten degrees above the normal of 33.9 degrees.

Across the nation, January was also the warmest on record, going back 112 years. In December there were eight consecutive days of maximum temperatures of 60 degrees or higher at both Jackson and London. This set a record at Jackson and tied a record at London. April was the warmest on record for the Jackson National Weather Service Forecast Office and also the warmest for the nation as a whole. The average temperature for the month at Jackson was 62.5 degrees, well above the normal level of 56.3 degrees.

2. September 22-23 Flood Event

Mt. Sterling Advocate Photo

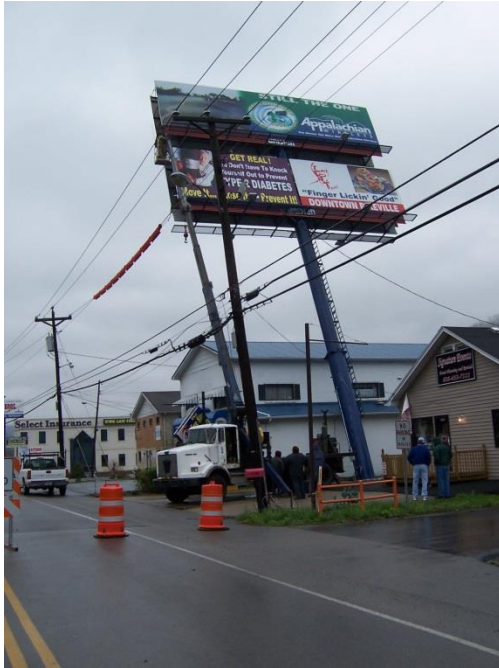


On September 22, the weather maps showed a very deep and large area of low pressure spinning over the upper Midwest. A warm front extended across eastern Kentucky. The low pressure system brought very warm and moist air up from the Gulf of Mexico. The stage was set for the second biggest event during 2006, when extremely heavy rains fell across much of central and parts of eastern Kentucky.

The Mt. Sterling water treatment plant on Howard's Mill Road reported 6.13 inches of rain. According to the Mt. Sterling Advocate, "This brought widespread flooding across much of Montgomery County. Flood waters crashed through homes and office buildings, overran local bridges and left havoc in its wake". The McCormick

Lumber company had up to four feet of water in the yard and according to the Mt. Sterling Advocate there was substantial damage to the Queen Street business. According to the National Climatic Data Center September ended up as the wettest September on record for the state of Kentucky as a whole.

1. Record Number of April Severe Weather Events



Eastern Kentucky saw more severe weather in April 2006 than in any other April since 1950. The previous high was in 2002 where there were 50 severe weather reports. In 2006, there were 101 severe weather reports in eastern Kentucky during the month of April. In fact from 1950 to 2005, there were only 301 severe weather reports for the month of April. In only one year, 33 percent of the total number of reports from the previous 56 years was reached. Statistically, this was a very incredible month with significant events on April 2-3, and April 7. Other events occurred on the 13th, 15th, 17th, 19th, and 20th. Many of the hail events that took place in April featured hailstones of 1 inch diameter or larger. Hail of this size is estimated to fall at speeds which exceed 90 mph. Hailstorms don't usually cause loss of life, but they can destroy agricultural crops, shatter windows, leave pockmarks in home siding, dent automobiles, and destroy or damage roofs. April storms were responsible for \$40.5 million worth of damage across the state of Kentucky.

Honorable Mention

December 1, 2006 High Wind Event

This was an unusually widespread high wind event that was not associated with thunderstorms. A very strong cold front moved across the region bringing showers and strong winds. Fifteen counties in eastern Kentucky reported trees down and wind damage. At the Jackson National Weather Service Forecast Office a wind gust of 58 mph tied the all time record high wind speed. The powerful cold front that brought the high winds also resulted in rapidly falling temperatures. Once the front moved through, the temperature at the Julian Carroll airport near Jackson dropped from a morning high of 71 degrees to 40 degrees by early afternoon during the time of day temperatures are normally warming.

January 23, 2006 Flood Event...

A slow moving system with deep moisture and light steering winds was responsible for some widespread flash flood across eastern Kentucky. The widespread rain helped to close roads in eight counties, extending from Whitley to Montgomery County.

January 2, 2006 Severe Weather...

On January 2 a very strong cold front moved across the area and severe thunderstorms brought down numerous trees, and some roads were blocked. Penny sized hail was reported in Breathitt and Lee Counties and nickel sized hail was reported in Elliot County, while 1.25 inch diameter hail was reported in Clay County. 58 to 65 mph winds were reported in 11 eastern Kentucky counties.