

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena - March 2014

Location	Date/Time	Deaths & Injuries	Property & Crop Dmg	Event Type and Details
TEXAS, South Panhandle				
(TX-Z021) PARMER, (TX-Z022) CASTRO, (TX-Z023) SWISHER, (TX-Z024) BRISCOE, (TX-Z025) HALL, (TX-Z026) CHILDRESS, (TX-Z027) BAILEY, (TX-Z028) LAMB, (TX-Z029) HALE, (TX-Z030) FLOYD, (TX-Z031) MOTLEY, (TX-Z032) COTTLE, (TX-Z033) COCHRAN, (TX-Z034) HOCKLEY, (TX-Z035) LUBBOCK, (TX-Z036) CROSBY, (TX-Z037) DICKENS, (TX-Z038) KING, (TX-Z039) YOAKUM, (TX-Z040) TERRY, (TX-Z041) LYNN, (TX-Z042) GARZA, (TX-Z043) KENT, (TX-Z044) STONEWALL	03/01/14 00:00 CST		5M	Drought
	03/31/14 23:59 CST		5M	

Drought conditions continued to worsen through March prolonging exceptional drought conditions. Very little rainfall occurred with an increase in wind and wildfire activity. All counties on the South Plains and Rolling Plains ranged from severe (D2) drought to exceptional (D4) drought conditions.

March saw a continuation of a dearth of precipitation for much of the South Plains, Rolling Plains, and extreme southern Texas Panhandle. Only 0.33 inches of rainfall have occurred at Lubbock (Lubbock County) and only 0.82 at Childress (Childress County). Other extremes included 0.27" at Turkey (Hall County), 0.35" at Plainview (Hale County), 1.10" at Lake Alan Henry (Garza County), and 1.05" at Jayton (Kent County). Precipitation values were only on the order of 25 percent of normal. Periodic cold fronts moved through the region resulting in strong temperature swings from well above seasonal averages to well below seasonal averages. Monthly mean temperatures at Lubbock and Childress were -1.3 and -3.1 degrees, respectively. This also marks the fifth consecutive month in which both Lubbock and Childress were below average on mean temperatures. Keetch-Byram Drought Index values increased through March as well. Values between 400 and 500 were observed over the extreme southern Texas panhandle with 500 to 600 across the South Plains and Rolling Plains.

Several wildfires, haboobs, and blowing dust events were observed throughout the month of March. Agricultural pre-planting activities were struggling because of widespread blowing dust. Energy release component (ERC) values, which are an indicator of wildfire potential, surpassed a critical 90th percentile mark. Only slight greening of vegetation has been noted thus far with grasses and other fine fuels dry and prone to wildfire spread.

Economic losses due to drought through March since the drought began were estimated near \$3.0 billion.



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A section of a fence covered by multiple layers of dust near Ropesville, TX. Photograph taken by Tim Benson.

(TX-Z035) LUBBOCK

03/01/14 13:00 CST	2K	Wildfire
03/01/14 14:00 CST	0	

Early on the afternoon of the first, unseasonably warm, dry and breezy conditions aided in the rapid spread of a wildfire a few miles west of the Lubbock International Airport. The wildfire grew to consume at least two uninhabited structures and the smoke plume became so thick that it resulted in a temporary closure of Interstate 27.



A wildfire in northern Lubbock County consumes an uninhabited structure. Photo courtesy of KCBD news.

(TX-Z035) LUBBOCK

03/02/14 10:30 CST	50K	Winter Weather
03/02/14 14:00 CST	0	

Following a strong arctic front, a light mixture of ice pellets, freezing rain and snow visited much of the South Plains region on the morning of the second, ahead of a decaying upper trough. Ground temperatures were relatively mild enough following the previous day's near record highs, but motorists still found themselves having to contend with some slick spots on overpasses and bridges. In Lubbock, light freezing rain resulted in some hazardous travel. Several mostly minor vehicle accidents occurred along access ramps to Interstate 27, especially near 19th Street. One of these accidents resulted in two serious injuries. Farther northwest, colder air aloft resulted in light snow accumulations of 1 to 1.5 inches in parts of Bailey, Parmer, Castro, Lamb, and Swisher Counties. In parts of Cottle County, elevated instability created a few thunderstorms with freezing rain before noon CST; however, area roads were not adversely affected.

(TX-Z028) LAMB

03/10/14 14:15 CST	0	Wildfire
03/11/14 16:15 CST	0	

Very warm temperatures combined with strong southwest winds and low relative humidity fanned a wildfire on the afternoon of the 10th and 11th. This wildfire was located approximately four miles east of Spade (Lamb County) along State Highway 54. The wildfire persisted for about two hours before it was nearly extinguished and burned 500 acres. A few flare ups were observed the next

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afternoon on the 11th which burned an additional 500 acres for a total of 1000 acres.

(TX-Z021) PARMER, (TX-Z022) CASTRO, (TX-Z025) HALL, (TX-Z028) LAMB

03/11/14 17:40 CST

0

High Wind (MAX 56 kt)

03/11/14 22:55 CST

0

(TX-Z021) PARMER, (TX-Z022) CASTRO, (TX-Z027) BAILEY, (TX-Z028) LAMB, (TX-Z033) COCHRAN, (TX-Z034) HOCKLEY, (TX-Z039) YOAKUM, (TX-Z040) TERRY

03/11/14 17:50 CST

0

Dust Storm

03/11/14 22:45 CST

0

After an abnormally warm afternoon, a strong cold front during the evening of the 11th brought cooler temperatures, high winds, and a haboob. Winds immediately behind the front were strong enough to create a wall of dust, lowering visibilities over a widespread area. Although most areas across the South Plains saw blowing dust, the haboob and visibilities at one quarter mile or less were observed over the western South Plains and extreme southwestern Texas Panhandle. Highest wind speeds were observed over the extreme southwestern Texas Panhandle where sustained wind speeds exceeded 40 mph for at least one hour.

Observed wind gusts below are from the Texas Tech University West Texas mesonet:

64 mph at Memphis (Hall County) and 59 mph at Dimmitt (Castro County).

Sustained winds below are from the Texas Tech University West Texas mesonet:

42 mph at Olton (Lamb County) and 41 mph at Friona (Parmer).



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[Photograph of a haboob approaching Muleshoe \(Bailey County\) taken by Eric Bales.](#)

(TX-Z035) LUBBOCK

03/18/14 12:54 CST	0	High Wind (MAX 50 kt)
03/18/14 12:54 CST	0	

(TX-Z023) SWISHER

03/18/14 17:05 CST	0	Dust Storm
03/18/14 17:45 CST	0	

A strong cold front brought the second haboob in an eight day period across the far southern Texas panhandle, reducing visibilities to as low as one quarter of a mile in Tulia (Swisher County). Additionally, the automated surface observing system (ASOS) at Lubbock Preston Smith International Airport recorded a wind gust to 58 mph at 1254 CST.