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2008 twisters on record-setting path

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By Steven Hausler, The Hays (Kan.) Daily News, via AP

On average, there have been eight deaths per 100 twisters from Jan. 1 to May 31 in the years 1997 through 2007, according to the National Weather Service.

By Oren Dorell, USA TODAY

The 2008 tornado season has been the second most lethal since record-keeping became more reliable 11 years ago, according to National Weather Service data.

There have been 14 deaths per 100 tornadoes so far this year, second only to 1998, which saw a fatality rate of 18 deaths per 100 tornadoes through the same period.

On average, there have been eight deaths per 100 twisters from Jan. 1 to May 31 in the years 1997 through 2007, according to numbers provided by the National Weather Service and analyzed by USA TODAY.

"The tornadoes have been stronger," says Greg Forbes, a severe-weather expert at The Weather Channel. "We've had a lot of strong, wide, long-track tornadoes. There's been lots of opportunities for them to hit people in their path."

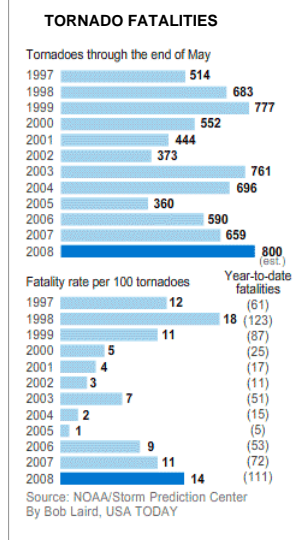
Forbes says more of these intense tornadoes have occurred east of the flat and sparsely populated "Tornado Alley" states. They include Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, eastern Colorado, Nebraska and South Dakota. This year's batch has often hit east of the Mississippi, where more wooded and rolling terrain and hazier skies offer less warning time in more densely populated areas.

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Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee have each averaged 88.5 twisters this year compared with an average of 41.8 in each of the Tornado Alley states.

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Greg Carbin, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla., estimates that about 800 of the 1,191 tornadoes reported this year were unique events. Before 1997, a lot of lesser tornadoes and tornadoes that didn't hit structures were not reported, so those totals are



less reliable, Carbin says.

Forbes says the USA's geography, with a cool jet stream flowing east out of the Rocky Mountains and warm, moist air rushing north from the Gulf of Mexico, creates more large, twisting thunderstorms that spawn tornadoes than anywhere else in the world. This year, warmer-than-usual Gulf temperatures and a colder-than-normal winter in the West made matters worse. When temperatures warm earlier, tornadoes occur earlier, he says. February, for example, was the largest tornado outbreak on record, with at least 79 tornadoes hitting 10 states.

Typically, May has the most tornadoes, followed by June, and fewer people are killed by tornadoes in the year's latter half.

The conditions that led to the devastating storms thus far this year are likely to give way to shorter and more sporadic events, Carbin says. Whether that means fewer deaths is hard to say.

"We've seen fatalities into December," Carbin says. "So I hate to say that the worst is over."

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Pennywigeon (85 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5/31/2008 2:50:39 PM
this story was already reported and commented on earlier this week. USA Today must be running out of doom and gloom stories they like to publish to "scare up" readership. Just changing the headline and not even the photo is kinda lame on USA Today's part. There has to be something to report on in the weather or regurgitating stories and changing headlines is a new way to "report news?"
:-)

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shamalama (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5/31/2008 2:28:24 PM
This is a sign from God and a warning, an angry warning to midwest states to stop their angry ways and start to love as Jesus Christ did. Note to the midwest, God is not happy with what you have been doing.

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JM1212 (0 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5/30/2008 8:09:29 PM
The 2008 tornado season has been the second most lethal since record-keeping became more reliable 11 years ago.
=====
So you could also say that in the last 11 years it has been worse and we really don't know about before that because nobody kept accurate records. Or you could also say this article really is just fluff and the writer didn't have much else to write about.

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someone should say (21 friends, [send message](#)) wrote: 5/30/2008 7:41:29 PM
Here we go again. That fictitious global warming I suppose is bringing bad weather. First it was hurricanes, then melting ice, next drought - all something that happens every hundred-thousand years or so and now tornados. You would think that all of the sudden in the past 20 years there had been massive changes in the climate. Even Bush's own personal scientists Karl Rove and Dick Cheney have gone on record with their independent scientific studies that prove this is all a hoax.

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