



## Climate Summary for Florida February 2012

Prepared by Melissa Griffin, Preston Leftwich, and David Zierden  
Florida Climate Center, The Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida

Online at: <http://climatecenter.fsu.edu>

### Average temperatures were well above normal in February.

Average temperatures were well above normal across the entire state (Table 1). Departures from normal ranged from 2.6°F at Miami to 4.5°F at Pensacola. There was only one strong cold front that passed through the state around the middle of the month, leading to record low temperatures being tied and broken on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> (Appendix). For the rest of the month, most of the state experienced warmer than normal temperatures, which are typically reported with La Niña conditions. Various record high temperatures were tied and broken at the end of the month (Appendix). Some of the record high temperatures were in the upper 80s, with Melbourne reporting a record high of 90°F on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Table 1.** February average temperatures and departures from normal (°F) for selected cities.

Station	Average Temperature	Departure from Normal
Pensacola	59.2	4.5
Tallahassee	58.9	4.2
Jacksonville	59.8	4.0
Orlando	67.0	4.0
Tampa	67.9	4.5
Miami	72.8	2.6
Key West	74.0	3.0

### Rainfall totals varied statewide in February.

Rainfall totals varied statewide in February (Table 2). Most stations saw below normal rainfall, while some stations saw slightly above normal rainfall for the month. Portions of Holmes, Jackson and Washington counties in the Panhandle saw rainfall totals approximately 3.00" above normal. Heavy rains impacted The Keys and coastal Dade County at the beginning of the month, and the middle of the month brought heavy rains to portions of the Panhandle (Table 3). Areal patterns of monthly rainfall relative to normal are depicted in Figure 1.

**Table 2.** February precipitation totals and departures from normal (inches) for selected cities.

Station	Total Rainfall	Departure from Normal
Pensacola	5.75	0.69
Tallahassee	3.30	-1.55
Jacksonville	1.14	-2.05
Orlando	3.14	0.76
Tampa	1.89	-0.92
Miami	3.38	1.13
Key West	5.22	3.73

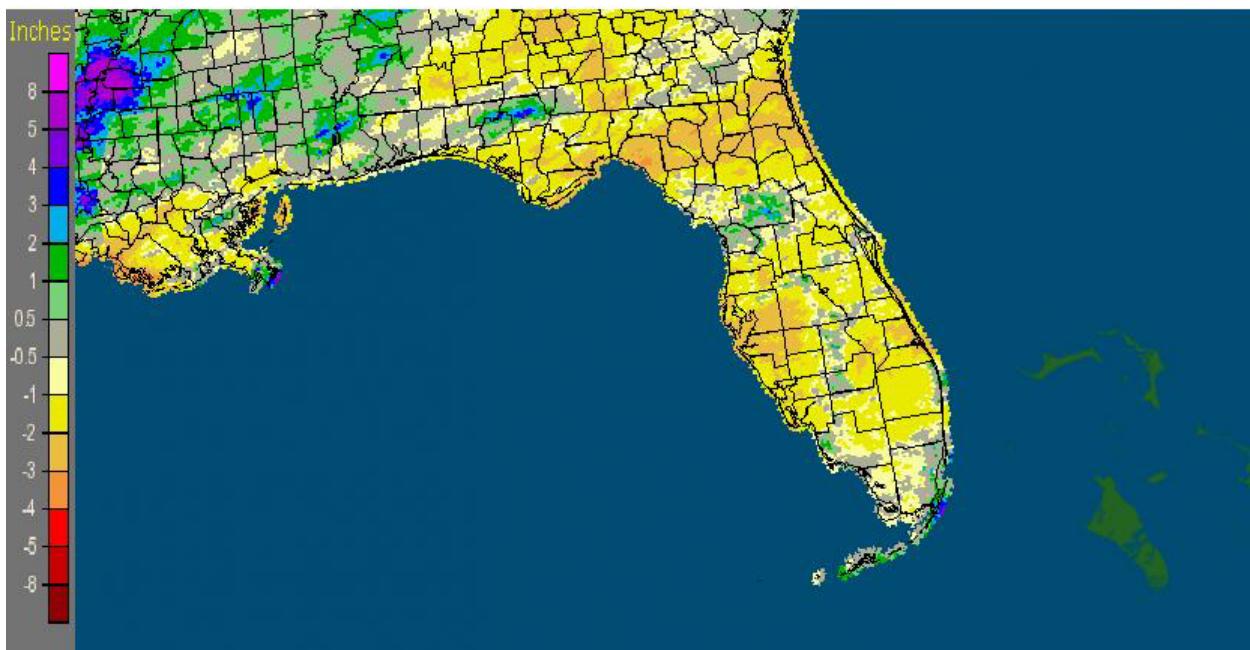


**Table 3.** Select daily rainfall records (inches) broken during February. (Compiled from NOAA, NWS)

Date	Location	Record	Last
5	Key West	4.34	0.63 in 1960
7	Miami	1.71	0.95 in 1958
18	Crestview	2.51	0.97 in 1992
19	Tallahassee	1.48	1.19 in 1961
22	Orlando	0.88	0.86 in 1990
27	Orlando	1.27	1.07 in 2005

**Figure 1.** A graphical depiction of the monthly rainfall departure from normal (inches) for February is given in the figure below (courtesy of NOAA, NWS).

Florida: February, 2012 Monthly Departure from Normal Precipitation  
Valid at 3/1/2012 1200 UTC- Created 3/1/12 13:44 UTC



**La Niña losing steam in the Pacific Ocean.**

La Niña conditions have peaked across the equatorial Pacific. Equatorial sea surface temperatures (SST) were at least 0.5°C below average in the central Pacific, but have warmed considerably across the east-central and eastern Pacific Ocean in the last couple of weeks. The atmospheric circulation anomalies and winds are still consistent with La Niña, but the La Niña is expected to transition to neutral conditions during March-May 2012. The Climate Prediction Center continues to predict warmer than normal temperatures and below normal precipitation through May.

**Hazardous weather.**

A few significant weather events took place in the month of February. On February 18 and 19, a line of strong thunderstorms pushed through the Panhandle and portions of North Florida. Heavy rain was reported in many locations, with some storm spotters across the Panhandle reporting up to 7.00” in localized areas and flood conditions in portions of Holmes and Walton Counties. High winds accompanied the line of storms with wind gusts ranging from 45 mph to 60 mph from a variety of locales, such as Jacksonville, Daytona Beach, Gainesville, Orlando and DeFuniak Springs, while trees were reported down in Marianna and Flagler Beach. A rapidly moving cold front brought high winds to central Florida on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, with wind gusts up to 50 mph reported in Orlando and Tampa. Another cold front moved

through Florida on the 24<sup>th</sup>, causing downed trees in Tallahassee and Marianna, while the Jacksonville International Airport reported a 40 mph wind gusts as the front passed.

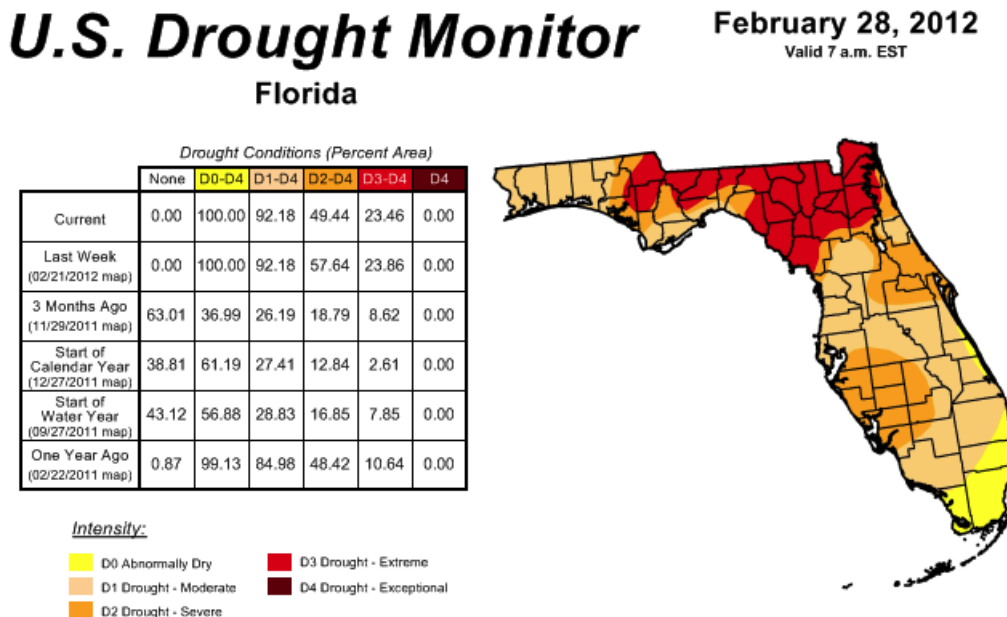
There were a few fires reported during February. A small wildfire in Pasco County forced some homes to be evacuated on the 8<sup>th</sup>. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, a wildfire in Hillsborough County caused parts of I-75 to be closed due to low visibility caused by smoke. The No-Go Fire in Brevard County grew to engulf 1800 acres of the St. John's Wildlife Refuge on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**Agricultural and other impacts.**

Freezing temperatures on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> caused damage to crops in the interior portions of the state. But for the most part, the above average temperatures across the state have aided the development of winter wheat. The episodes of windy conditions throughout the month have helped to deplete topsoil moisture. Fruit orchards and vegetable fields have been frequently irrigated to combat the drought conditions, while trees were also being hedged and topped. Statewide, producers were busy preparing fields for spring planting.

Since the beginning of February, the drought conditions have gotten worse in some areas. The area of extreme drought expanded from just a few counties in the Panhandle to include most of North Florida and the Big Bend region. At one point during February, the National Drought Monitor had Gadsden, Leon, Jackson, Jefferson, Washington, and Calhoun counties under D4 drought designation, signifying an exceptional drought. Rains during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> eased those areas back into an extreme drought classification. The rest of the state has seen below normal precipitation as well, leading to the expansion of severe drought along the Sun and Space Coasts. Even though La Niña is forecasted to transition to neutral conditions during the next three months, current predictions still have most of the southeastern U.S. experiencing warmer than normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

**Figure 2.** Drought conditions in Florida as of February 28, 2012 (courtesy of U.S. Drought Monitor).



*The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.*

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>

**Released Thursday, March 1, 2012**  
Mark Svoboda, National Drought Mitigation Center

**Appendix.** Select daily maximum and minimum temperature records (° F) tied or broken during February (compiled from NOAA, NWS).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Station</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Broken/Tied</b>	<b>Last</b>
4	Sarasota	Max	85	Broken	82 in 2008
4	Vero Beach	High Min	69	Tied	69 in 1956
4	Melbourne	High Min	68	Tied	68 in 1956
5	Apalachicola	Max	77	Broken	75 in 1997
5	Tampa	High Min	67	Broken	66 in 2008
6	Tampa	Max	84	Tied	84 in 1957
7	Vero Beach	High Min	68	Tied	68 in 2008
12	St Petersburg	Low Max	53	Tied	53 in 1955
12	Jacksonville	Min	24	Broken	26 in 1981
12	Daytona Beach	Min	30	Tied	30 in 1955
12	Orlando	Min	32	Broken	33 in 1955
13	Tallahassee	Min	20	Broken	21 in 1988
13	Jacksonville	Min	21	Broken	24 in 1955
19	Vero Beach	Max	87	Tied	87 in 1992
19	West Palm Beach	Max	87	Broken	86 in 1992
19	Miami	Max	87	Broken	86 in 1988
19	Jacksonville	Max	83	Tied	83 in 1991
23	Orlando	Max	86	Tied	86 in 2006
23	Tampa	High Min	69	Tied	69 in 1979
23	Tallahassee	High Min	68	Broken	65 in 1992
23	Apalachicola	High Min	68	Broken	66 in 1944
23	Pensacola	High Min	67	Tied	67 in 1962
24	Vero Beach	Max	89	Broken	86 in 1962
24	Orlando	Max	89	Broken	87 in 1962
24	Daytona Beach	Max	88	Tied	88 in 1962
24	West Palm Beach	Max	88	Tied	88 in 1975
24	Tallahassee	Max	83	Broken	82 in 1982
24	Pensacola	Max	81	Tied	81 in 1996
24	Tampa	High Min	68	Tied	68 in 1962
25	Melbourne	Max	90	Broken	85 in 2011
27	Fort Myers	Max	89	Broken	88 in 1962
27	Fort Myers	High Min	69	Tied	69 in 2007
28	Fort Myers	Max	88	Broken	87 in 1997