**Super Outbreak of 2011,** also called Tornado Super Outbreak of 2011,  series of [tornadoes](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/599941/tornado) on April 25–28, 2011, that affected parts of the southern, eastern, and central United States and produced particularly severe damage in the state of [Alabama](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/11958/Alabama). It was the largest outbreak of tornadoes ever recorded; preliminary estimates suggested that more than 300 tornadoes occurred across 15 states. The number of deaths caused by the outbreak was, according to initial estimates, at least 340. The states affected were Mississippi, [Alabama](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/11958/Alabama), [Florida](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/210799/Florida), [Georgia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/230228/Georgia), [South Carolina](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/556096/South-Carolina), [North Carolina](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/419058/North-Carolina), Tennessee, [Arkansas](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/34888/Arkansas), [Missouri](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/385713/Missouri), [Virginia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/629964/Virginia), [West Virginia](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/640396/West-Virginia), Maryland, [Indiana](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/286017/Indiana), [Ohio](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/425969/Ohio), and [New York](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/412293/New-York)

The majority of the tornadoes occurred on April 27. Cold [air](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/10582/air) sitting above Canada and the midwestern states met warm moist air pushing up from the Gulf of Mexico and dry air moving in from Mexico and the southwestern United States to create a strong temperature gradient that increased the [wind](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/644958/wind) velocity in the [jet stream](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303269/jet-stream). As the jet stream curved southward and then bent northward along the warm-air boundary, it generated shear lines (zones where there is a rapid change in wind velocity or direction). The lines of wind shear helped to create swirling winds at ground level, which later developed into hundreds of tornadic vortices across the eastern United States.

Of the states affected by the storms, Alabama fared the worst, with more than 230 fatalities and roughly 2,200 injured. Several reports noted that multiple tornadoes measuring 0.5 mile (0.8 km) wide struck the state and tracked through populated areas, flattening whole towns. One of the hardest-hit areas was the city of [Tuscaloosa](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/610505/Tuscaloosa), where a large tornado with a diameter measuring nearly 1 mile (1.6 km) and wind speeds of approximately 200 miles (320 km) per hour passed though residential areas of the city.

The April 26–28 tornado outbreak followed a similar episode on April 14–16 that spawned approximately 155 confirmed tornadoes across the southern United States and killed some 40 people.

**Fast Tornado Facts**

**1** Although tornadoes can occur at any time, they are most commonly seen between 3 and 9 P. M.

**2** Tornadoes have occurred in every State in the U. S.

**3** Each year there are roughly 1,200 tornadoes in the United States.

**4** Less than one percent of all tornadoes are rated F4 or stronger, but those twisters account for 70+ percent of tornado-related fatalities.

**5** The average tornado moves from Southwest to Northeast, but tornadoes can be unpredictable and can move in any direction.

**6** On average, the month of May sees the most tornadic activity.

**7** Australia ranks second to the United States in total yearly tornadoes.