

# WESTERN WATER ASSESSMENT

## 2025 INTERMOUNTAIN WEST HAZARD SUMMARY



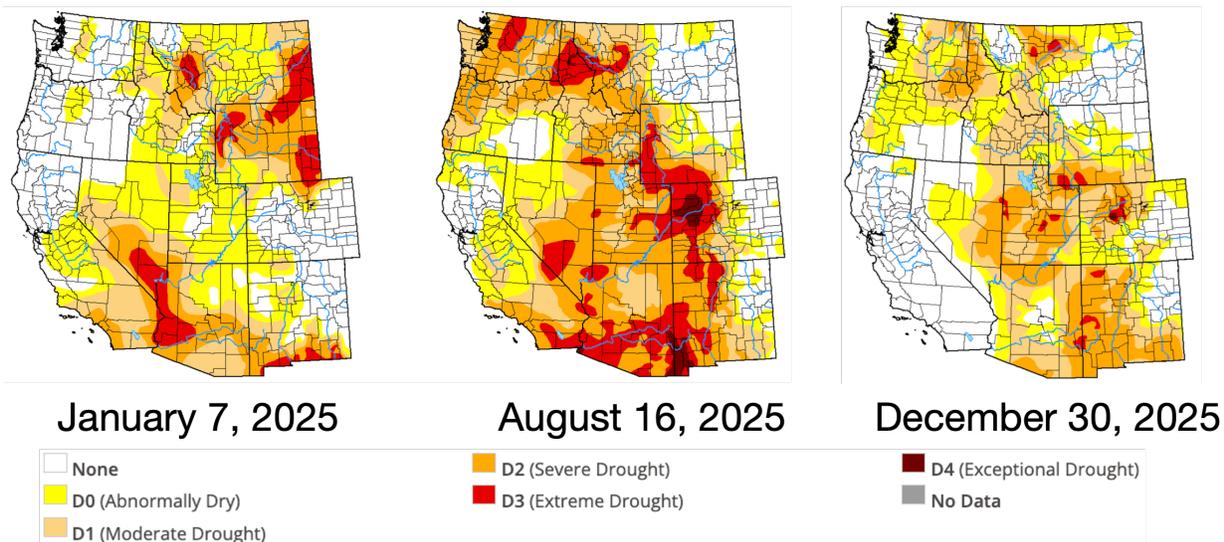


This report summarizes significant hazards that occurred in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming during 2025 and the impacts those hazards caused. Drought, wildfire, flooding, severe storms, and high wind hazards all caused damages or impacts to communities during 2025. Rather than providing an exhaustive list of hazards that occurred in the region in 2025, we have assembled a curated list of hazards that were deemed to be significant because they damaged infrastructure, led to a loss of life, caused significant economic loss, affected a significant portion of the region, or were exceptional in some manner. Other general criteria for event inclusion in the report include local all-time weather records that contributed to a hazard, the five largest wildfires in each state, tornado and hail events that caused damage, and wind events that caused societal or economic disruption. Finally, certain hazards were summarized on an annual basis without a discussion of specific events.

The 2025 Intermountain West Hazard Summary was developed by the Western Water Assessment (WWA), a university-based applied research program that addresses societal vulnerabilities to extreme weather and natural hazards, particularly those related to water resources. Based in Boulder, Colorado, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Laramie, Wyoming, we work across the Intermountain West—Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming. The WWA team is comprised of researchers and experts in multiple physical and social science disciplines, including hydrology, atmospheric sciences, usable science, and hazard impacts. Learn more about the work we do and explore our online tools, including the High Impact Events Database and the Intermountain West Dashboard, at <http://wwa.colorado.edu/>.

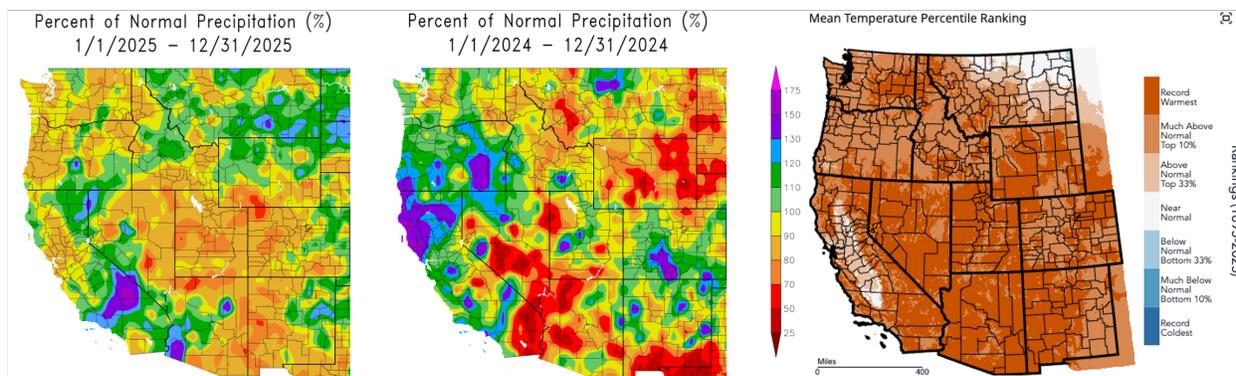
## **DROUGHT**

Drought conditions covered 39% of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming at the start of 2025 with Wyoming experiencing the most expansive and severe drought conditions. The severity and extent of regional drought peaked in August when drought covered 64% of the region, including all of Utah, western Colorado, and western Wyoming, with a large area of exceptional drought in northwestern Colorado (Figure 1). The entirety of the Upper Colorado River Basin was in drought during August and September. By the end of the year, drought conditions persisted across 55% of Colorado, Utah and Wyoming, 82% of the Upper Colorado River Basin, and exceptional drought developed in the Colorado River Headwaters.



**Figure 1.** Drought conditions across the western US during 2025. (Data from the U.S. Drought Monitor, <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>)

The drought during 2025 in Colorado and Wyoming began in fall 2023, while drought conditions in Utah did not emerge until summer 2024. Drought during 2025 was primarily caused by the combined impact of below average precipitation during 2024 and 2025 and anomalously high temperatures during 2025 (Figure 2). Much of the region, particularly Utah and southwestern Wyoming, experienced record high annual average temperatures during 2025.



**Figure 2.** Percent normal precipitation during 2025 (left) , 2024 (center), and average temperature percentile ranking in 2025 (right). (Data from HPRCC ACIS Climate maps, <https://hprcc.unl.edu/maps.php?map=ACISClimateMaps> and WestWide Drought Tracker, <https://wrcc.dri.edu/my/climate/wwdt/maps>)

In April 2025, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated twelve counties in Colorado (Archuleta, Boulder, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Conejos, Gilpin, Grand, Jackson, Larimer, Logan, Rio Grande and Weld) and ten counties in Wyoming (Big Horn, Carbon, Fremont, Hot Springs, Lincoln, Natrona, Park, Sublette and Washakie) as primary natural disaster areas for drought. Also in April, Utah declared a state of emergency for drought in 17 counties (Beaver, Carbon, Emery, Garfield, Iron, Juab, Kane, Millard, Piute, San Juan, Sanpete, Sevier, Tooele and Washington) and the governor issued an executive order to bolster wildfire preparedness.

### *Colorado drought impacts<sup>1</sup>*

- 40% reduction in water deliveries by Dolores River Water Conservancy District
- Thousands of acres of farmland fallowed
- Farm workers laid off
- City of Aspen issues mandatory water cuts of 10-15% in September
- Fishing closure on Yampa River downstream of Stagecoach Reservoir due to low streamflow and high water temperatures
- Public land closure due to drought and high fire danger in Delta, Mesa and Montrose Counties and Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park
- Large fires in northwest Colorado ignited during a short period of exceptional drought conditions
- An outbreak of mountain pine beetle and extensive Ponderosa pine tree mortality led to an executive order from the Governor warning that all mature Ponderosa pines would likely die within a few years

### *Utah drought impacts<sup>1</sup>*

- Water shortages impacted agriculture in Kane, Iron and Washington Counties, the Uinta Basin, and the Navajo Nation
- In the Uinta Basin, water shortages caused ranchers to reduce herd size, purchase additional feed, haul water and increase production costs
- In Iron County, ranchers moved herds to higher elevation pastures one month early
- In Kane County, ranchers reduced herd sizes and hauled water
- In Washington County, water deliveries reduced by 50% and dry winter conditions delayed crop planting
- On the Navajo Nation, drying stock ponds and wells contributed to the June declaration of a drought emergency
- Mandatory water cuts for agriculture and outdoor watering were issued in Beaver, Coalville, Heber and Hooper

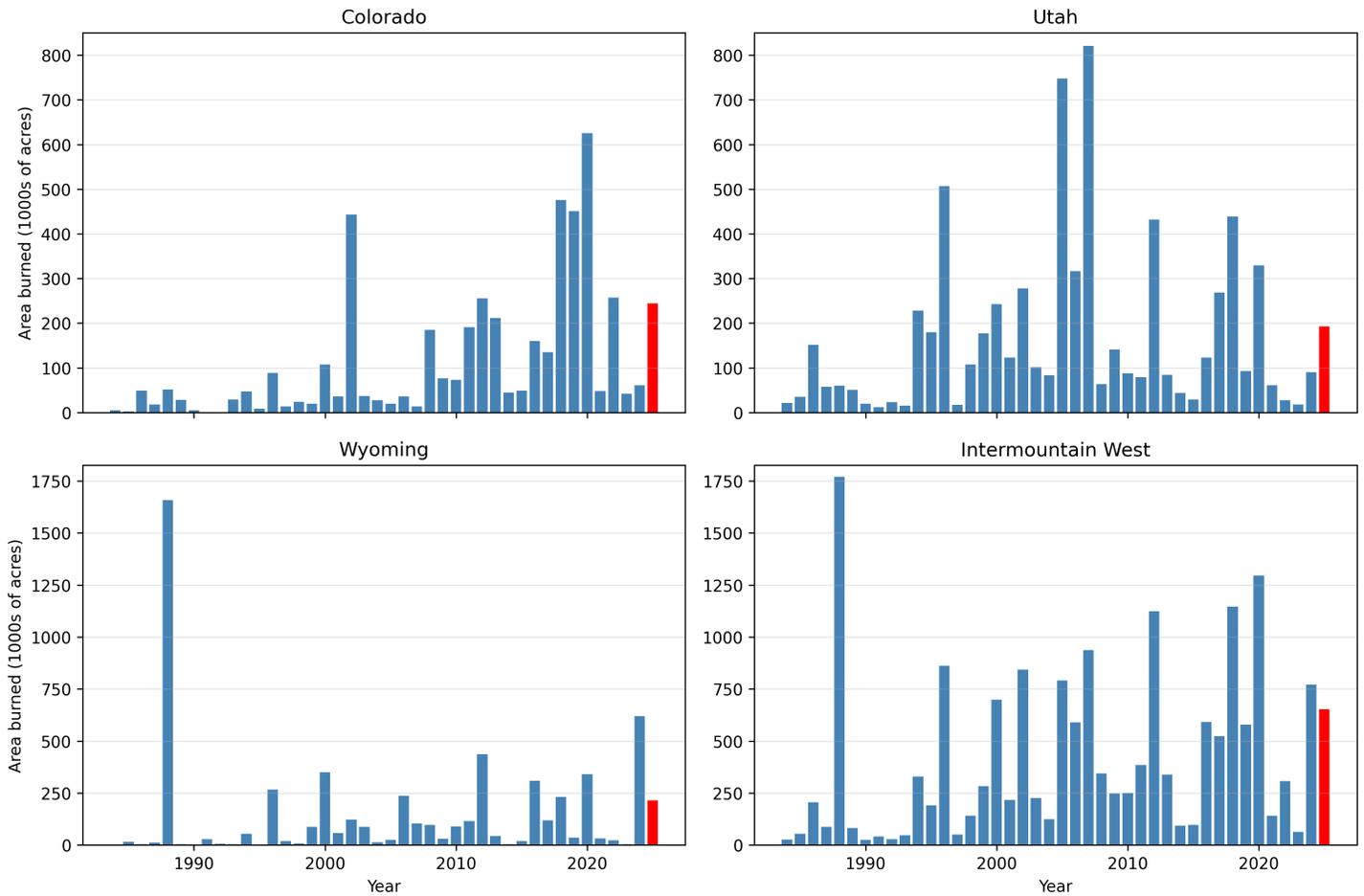
### *Wyoming drought impacts<sup>1</sup>*

- Mandatory water restrictions in Jackson to reduce water use by 20-30%
- Mandatory water restrictions in Douglas during July
- Record number of grizzly bear deaths (73) in Yellowstone National Park, likely due to reduced food availability caused by drought<sup>2</sup>

## **WILDFIRE**

Drought conditions across much of the Intermountain West led to an average area burned by wildfire. An estimated 631,231 acres burned (considering fires > 1,000 acres) in Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming during 2025 (Figure 3).<sup>3</sup> Since 2000, an average of 513,000 acres burned each year in the three-state region,

making 2025 a slightly above average wildfire year. Since 1984, 2025 ranked as the 11<sup>th</sup> most area burned by wildfire. Two large wildfires in Colorado (Lee Fire) and Wyoming (Red Canyon Fire) accounted for nearly 60% of the area burned in each state.



**Figure 3.** Area burned by wildfire in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming and the Intermountain West (3 state region) since 1984. Red bars indicate the 2025 fire season. (Data from Monitoring Trends in Burned Severity; <https://www.mtbs.gov/>)

### Colorado wildfires

During the 2025 wildfire season in Colorado, 239,274 acres burned from 17 large (>1,000 acres) wildfires<sup>2</sup>. Since 2000, an average of 162,000 acres burned in Colorado each year, making 2025 an above average fire year with the most acres burned since 2022. The Lee Fire became the fourth largest in Colorado history, burning 137,758 acres of grass and brush lands in northwest Colorado, destroying 3 homes (21 total structures), threatening Meeker and causing the evacuation of 179 inmates from a state prison<sup>4</sup>. The Elk Fire, which was the state’s third largest 2025 fire at 14,518 acres, destroyed 2 homes (7 total structures) and burned near the Lee Fire. Both the Lee and Elk Fires started in early August in northwestern Colorado when the region was experiencing exceptional (D4) drought conditions. The Turner Gulch Fire, the state’s second largest 2025 fire at 31,695 acres threatened Gateway along the Dolores River in western Colorado and burned three structures but no homes. The 33 Fire in Yuma County was notable because it started during the December 17<sup>th</sup> Front Range high wind event that

caused widespread electrical power disruption in Front Range communities. The 33 Fire burned 12,000 acres of grasslands but caused no significant damage. The South Rim Fire burned 4,232 acres in Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park and burned 13 structures, including at least 6 Park Service buildings.<sup>5</sup> The five largest Colorado wildfires in 2025 cost \$102 million in fire suppression. A total of 13 fires during 2025 threatened structures near Delta, Dotsero, Gateway, Hotchkiss, Mancos, Meeker, Montrose, Twin Lakes, and Yampa, CO.

**Table 1.** The five largest wildfires in Colorado during 2025. (Data from the National Interagency Coordination Center, <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/incident-information/imsr>)

<b>Fire</b>	<b>Acres burned</b>	<b>Structures lost</b>	<b>Suppression cost (millions)</b>	<b>Damages/Impacts</b>
Lee	137,758	21	\$30.1	3 homes burned; prison evacuated; Meeker, CO and energy infrastructure threatened; road closures; heavy smoke
Turner Gulch	31,695	3	\$36.9	Gateway, CO threatened; road closures
Elk	14,518	7	\$9.9	2 homes burned; structures and communication infrastructure threatened; road closures
33	12,000	0	\$0.03	Started during 12/17 high wind event; grassland fire
Stoner Mesa Fire	10,249	0	\$24.9	Threatened structures; road closures

### *Utah wildfires*

In Utah, wildfires burned 181,332 acres during 2025, slightly below the 2000-2024 average of 205,000 acres burned each year but the worst fire season since 2020.<sup>2</sup> Three fires caused significant damage and burned Utah homes in 2025. The Monroe Canyon Fire burned 73,721 acres in the mountains of central Utah, threatening the town of Monroe and burning 10 homes, which were likely second homes or cabins. A total of 14 structures were destroyed by the Monroe Canyon Fire.<sup>2,6</sup> The Deer Creek Fire burned 17,724 acres southeast of Moab in the La Sal Mountains and destroyed 11 homes, a communications site, and a U.S. Forest Service guard station. Perhaps most notably, extreme fire weather on July 12 caused a rare fire tornado. The fire tornado reached a size of EF-2 with winds peaking at 122 miles per hour and caused significant damage to several structures in its 0.1-mile path.<sup>7</sup> The third fire to burn residential structures was the Forsyth Fire which burned 15,662 acres in the Pine Valley Mountains of southern Utah and destroyed 14 homes (18 structures destroyed) in Pine Valley.<sup>8</sup> While no structures were damaged or destroyed, the 38,000-acre France Canyon Fire threatened Hatch and caused evacuations.<sup>2</sup> Damage from the Forsyth Fire was estimated at \$35.7 million, and firefighting costs of the states five largest 2025 fires were \$189 million. A total of seven fires threatened structures near Hatch, Kamas, La Sal, Monroe, North Ogden, Pine Valley and Provo.

**Table 2.** The five largest wildfires in Utah during 2025. (Data from the National Interagency Coordination Center, <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/incident-information/imsr>)

<b>Fire</b>	<b>Acres burned</b>	<b>Structures lost</b>	<b>Suppression cost (millions)</b>	<b>Damages/Impacts</b>
Monroe Canyon	73,721	14	\$101	10 homes burned; Monroe, UT and communication infrastructure threatened, post-fire flooding
France Canyon	37,943	0	\$26.6	Evacuations; Hatch, UT and communications infrastructure threatened; fencing, BLM improvements
Deer Creek	17,724	13	\$24	11 homes and communications site burned; recreation impacts to campgrounds, roads, heavy smoke, EF2 fire tornado
Forsyth	15,662	18	\$37.7	14 homes burned; road closures; estimated \$35.7 M in damages
Salina Cyn East	6,165	0	unknown	Prescribed fire

### *Wyoming wildfires*

Wyoming wildfires burned 210,625 acres in 2025 which was well above the 2000-2024 annual average area burned of 141,000 acres.<sup>2</sup> Despite the above average Wyoming wildfire year, no structures were burned during 2025. Area burned by wildfire was dominated by the Red Canyon Fire, which burned 124,709 acres of grass and brush lands east of Thermopolis. The fire threatened structures and led to evacuations in Hot Springs and Fremont Counties. The primary impacts of the fire were damage to ranching infrastructure, rangeland, and wildfire smoke.<sup>9</sup> The nearly 20,000-acre Dollar Lake Fire caused evacuations of rural residents outside Pinedale, threatening structures and closing access to recreation near Green River Lakes. The Willow Creek Fire caused evacuations and threatened structures in Alpine, burning just over 4,000 acres of timber.<sup>2</sup> The five largest fires in Wyoming during 2025 cost an estimated \$51 million in fire suppression costs.

**Table 3.** The five largest wildfires in Wyoming during 2025. (Data from the National Interagency Coordination Center, <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/incident-information/imsr>)

<b>Fire</b>	<b>Acres burned</b>	<b>Structures lost</b>	<b>Suppression cost (millions)</b>	<b>Damages/Impacts</b>
Red Canyon	124,709	0	\$15.7	Evacuations; structures threatened; damages to ranches and rangeland; smoke; mainly a grassland fire
Sleeper Ranch	20,657	0	\$0.5	Fencing; grazing infrastructure; grassland fire
Dollar Lake	19,467	0	\$23.6	Evacuations; structures threatened; trail and forest closure
Veas	5,245	0	\$2	Structures threatened; road closures; mainly a grassland fire
Willow Creek	4,066	0	\$9.1	Evacuations near Alpine; structures threatened; road closure

## FLOODING

The San Juan River in southwestern Colorado experienced its third largest flood on record during October. Remnants from Hurricane Priscilla and tropical storm Raymond dropped 4-5 inches of rain in Pagosa Springs and up to 12.5 inches in the surrounding mountains from October 10-14. Flooding on the San Juan River in Pagosa Springs came in two waves. On October 11, the San Juan River crested two feet above flood stage with a flow of 8,270 cubic feet per second (cfs). The second flood crest came on October 14, rising to 2.3 feet above flood stage and reaching 8,570 cfs. The near-by Piedra River and Vallecito Creek also experienced significant flooding, with both reaching their second-highest flow since 1962. Damage from the flood event occurred mostly in Pagosa Springs and a rural community near Vallecito Reservoir. In Pagosa Springs, nearly 400 residents were evacuated from their homes, and sewer infrastructure was damaged. Near Vallecito Reservoir, nearly 400 homes were evacuated, 90 homes were damaged and two were destroyed. For more detailed information, see WWA’s [Rapid Assessment of October 2025 Flooding in Southwest Colorado](#).

An extreme rainfall event on October 4 caused localized flooding in Salt Lake City. The storm broke the all-time daily precipitation record with 2.47 inches of rain. Flooding damaged 21 homes in the Rose Park neighborhood. Slightly less rain fell in Tooele County, west of Salt Lake City, but 30 homes were damaged, and rain on the Jacob City Fire burn scar south of Tooele triggered debris flows.<sup>10</sup>

A relatively minor rainfall event triggered debris flows on the Forsyth Fire burn scar in southern Utah. Seven homes in Pine Valley and infrastructure in the Pine Valley Recreation Area were damaged.<sup>11</sup>

## SEVERE STORMS

Tornadoes were reported in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming during 2025, with damage reported from two tornadoes in Colorado and two in Utah. Two tornado outbreaks in Colorado occurred during May. On May 18, four EF1-EF2 tornadoes occurred in Adams, Arapahoe, and Elbert Counties in northeastern Colorado; the tornadoes damaged 25 homes and downed trees.<sup>12</sup> On May 23, three EF1-2 tornadoes in Logan and Washington Counties, also in northeastern Colorado, knocked down powerlines, damaged two siloes, and destroyed one silo.<sup>13</sup> While tornadoes are much less common in Utah, two tornado events occurred in San Juan County in southeastern Utah. Two EF2 tornadoes on September 13 destroyed two homes and a hay barn near Montezuma Creek on the Navajo Nation.<sup>14</sup> The second tornado was an even rarer fire tornado that formed on July 13 during the Deer Creek Fire. The likely EF2 tornado was relatively short in duration with a path of only a tenth of a mile, but 120 mph winds severely damaged at least one home. Only one tornado was reported in Wyoming during 2025, an EF1 tornado near Alta on October 15. The tornado, with peak winds estimated at 104 mph, knocked down a 400-foot wide, one-mile-long path of forest on the west side of the Teton Mountains. The October 15<sup>th</sup> tornado was only the third tornado ever recorded in Teton County and was the latest tornado recorded in Wyoming since records began in 1950.<sup>15</sup>

Damaging hail was reported in Colorado and Wyoming in 2025. Notable Colorado hail events occurred on June 6 in Mesa County where fruit crops were damaged and on June 17 when golf ball- to baseball-sized hail damaged vehicles and property in the northern Front Range. In 2025, 35 hail events impacted 365,000 homes in Colorado (Figure 7). In Wyoming, large hail (2.75”) damaged vehicles and structures in Cheyenne on August 1 and 22 hail events impacted 117,000 homes. Two hail events in Utah impacted less than 7,000 homes.

**Table 4.** Hail events in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming during 2025 (Data from HailPoint, <https://www.hailpoint.com/hail-maps>)

State	Hail events	Homes impacted	City (number of events)
Colorado	35	365,000	Colorado Springs (21), Denver (21), Fort Collins (15), Grand Junction (2), Pueblo (13)
Utah	2	6,900	Logan (1), Provo (1), Salt Lake City (1), St. George (1)
Wyoming	22	117,000	Cheyenne (12), Casper (2), Gillette (5), Lovell (4), Sheridan (6)

## HIGH WIND

On December 17 and 19, the Front Range of Colorado experienced high wind events that brought widespread hurricane-force wind gusts, power outages, and extreme fire danger. Peak winds of 109 mph (12/17) and 113 mph (12/19) were observed in Boulder and widespread wind gusts exceeding 60 mph were recorded from Fort Collins south to Golden and west to the Continental Divide with extreme winds exceeding 90 mph confined to Boulder County. Wind gusts approaching 125 mph were observed near the

Continental Divide at Breckenridge and Winter Park ski areas. Prior to the first wind event, Xcel Energy, the region’s electricity provider, issued a Public Safety Power Shutoff for 50,000 residents in Boulder, Clear Creek, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld Counties as a preventive measure against downed powerlines igniting wildfires as occurred in the 2021 Marshall Fire. On December 19, a second Public Safety Power Shutoff was issued for 69,000 residents in the same region.<sup>16</sup> Damage from the wind event included downed powerlines, uprooted trees and minor damage to homes. A survey of 300 businesses in Boulder County reported an estimated \$4.5 million in economic loss due to the power disruption with nine businesses reporting losses more than \$100,000.<sup>17</sup>

Two significant wind events occurred in Wyoming during December. The first occurred on December 9 when wind gusts up to 105 mph impacted Interstate 80 from Cheyenne to Evanston and Interstate 25 from Cheyenne to Sheridan. The high winds closed interstates to high-profile vehicles weighing less than 40,000 pounds and overturned 39 vehicles, stranding some of them for several days.<sup>18</sup> The same wind event that impacted the Front Range of Colorado on December 17 also impacted portions of Wyoming. Peak wind gusts from the event were recorded at 144 mph in Smoot (western Wyoming in Star Valley) and 123 mph at South Pass between Farson and Lander. The event caused 17 vehicle blow overs across the state and closed wind-prone highways to high-profile vehicles.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Drought Mitigation Center. Drought Impacts Reporter.

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/8eb94624372e4aaca02951530bf5eeb2>

<sup>2</sup> National Parks Traveler. “Grizzly bear deaths hit record number for a second year in a row.”

<https://www.nationalparkstraveler.org/2025/12/grizzly-bear-deaths-hit-record-numbers-second-year-row>

<sup>3</sup> National Interagency Coordination Center. Incident Management Situation Report. <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/incident-information/imsr>

<sup>4</sup> Post independent. “As Colorado’s 5<sup>th</sup> largest wildfire in history grows, officials update residents in Rifle on Lee and Elk Fires.”

<https://www.postindependent.com/news/as-colorados-5th-largest-wildfire-in-history-grows-officials-update-residents-in-rifle-on-lee-and-elk-fires/>

<sup>5</sup> The Daily Sentinel. “Devastation from the Black Canyon fire.” [https://www.gjsentinel.com/news/western\\_colorado/devastation-from-black-canyon-fire/article\\_600836cf-6527-4a84-8f88-c77615e8d44c.html](https://www.gjsentinel.com/news/western_colorado/devastation-from-black-canyon-fire/article_600836cf-6527-4a84-8f88-c77615e8d44c.html)

<sup>6</sup> KSL.com. “‘We are heartbroken’: 3 cabins destroyed by Monroe Canyon Fire.” <https://www.ksl.com/article/51347557/we-are-heartbroken-3-cabins-destroyed-by-monroe-canyon-fire>

<sup>7</sup> CBS News. “Deer Creek Fire over 14,000 acres, has damaged 13 structures; expected to move northeast through Colorado”

<https://www.cbsnews.com/colorado/news/deer-creek-fire-14000-acres-structure-damage-moving-northeast-colorado/>

<sup>8</sup> Salt Lake Tribune. “Forsyth Fire destroys multiple homes in Pine Valley, as other fires across southern Utah continue to grow.”

<https://www.sltrib.com/news/environment/2025/06/20/washington-county-wildfire-forces/>

<sup>9</sup> Cowboy State Daily. “Red Canyon Fire grows to nearly 85,000 acres, more evacuations ordered.”

<https://cowboystatedaily.com/2025/08/17/red-canyon-fire-grows-to-nearly-70-000-acres-more-evacuations-ordered/>

<sup>10</sup> Salt Lake Tribune. “Homes damaged in Salt Lake, Tooele counties after storms drench northern Utah.”

<https://www.sltrib.com/news/2025/10/04/utah-storms-lead-flooding-tooele/>

<sup>11</sup> KUTV. “Huge cleanup effort underway in Pine Valley after severe flash flooding from burn scar.”

<https://kutv.com/news/local/huge-cleanup-effort-underway-in-pine-valley-after-severe-flash-flooding-from-burn-scar>

<sup>12</sup> Colorado Public Radio. “Tornadoes that destroyed homes in Bennett and Elizabeth rated EF-2 by NWS.”

<https://www.cpr.org/2025/05/19/colorado-tornadoes-destroy-homes-sunday-adams-elbert-counties/>

<sup>13</sup> 9News. “Four tornadoes sweep Colorado’s Eastern Plains Friday, some causing damage.”

<https://www.9news.com/article/weather/severe-weather/national-weather-service-tornadoes-eastern-plains-colorado/73-a33735ac-df21-4d38-bb65-a51e4f37851a>

<sup>14</sup> Navajo Times. “Homes destroyed as multiple tornadoes touch down in San Juan County.”

<https://navajotimes.com/reznews/homes-destroyed-as-multiple-tornadoes-touch-down-in-san-juan-county/>

<sup>15</sup> East Idaho News. “Third documented tornado confirmed in Teton County.” <https://www.eastidahonews.com/2025/10/third-documented-tornado-confirmed-in-teton-county/>

<sup>16</sup> Western Water Assessment. “Intermountain West Dashboard Latest briefing: January 13, 2026 – CO, UT, WY”

<https://www.colorado.edu/resources/intermountain-west-dashboard>

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<sup>17</sup> Denver7. “Some Boulder businesses lost over \$100k in December public safety power outage, survey says.”  
<https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/some-boulder-businesses-lost-over-100k-in-december-public-safety-power-outage-survey-says>

<sup>18</sup> Wyoming Department of Transportation. “Windstorms cause almost 40 blow over crashes in 3 days.”  
<https://www.dot.state.wy.us/news/windstorms-cause-almost-40-blow-over-crashes-in-three-days>

<sup>19</sup> Cowboy State Daily. “Wyoming blasted by 123 mph winds on Wednesday and more wind to come.”  
<https://cowboystatedaily.com/2025/12/17/wyoming-blasted-by-123-mph-winds-and-fierce-mountain-snowstorm/>