



ReadyWisconsin

Be Informed. Plan Ahead. Take Action.

For more information contact: dmawempio@widma.gov

Wisconsin Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week is April 8-12 *Statewide Tornado Drill April 11*

For Immediate Release

April 1, 2024

MADISON, Wis. – Storms can develop quickly in Wisconsin, and knowing what to do when a severe weather warning is issued can help keep you and others safe. To help encourage everyone to be prepared for tornadoes, thunderstorms and flooding, Wisconsin observes April 8-12 as Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week, along with holding statewide tornado drills on April 11.

“Wisconsin made history this year when two tornadoes touched down in early February, which were the first confirmed tornadoes in the state during that month since record keeping began,” said Wisconsin Emergency Management Administrator Greg Engle. “Tornadoes and severe weather can develop at any time, which is why we are asking everyone to take a few minutes during Tornado and Severe Weather Awareness Week to review their emergency plans and identify where the nearest safe place to take shelter is located.”

Wisconsin averages 23 tornadoes annually. In 2023, the National Weather Service (NWS) confirmed 21 tornadoes in the state. That includes 15 tornadoes that touched down in a single day, when storms moved across southern Wisconsin on March 31 of last year.

To stay safe during severe weather, ReadyWisconsin encourages people to do the following:

- Create an emergency plan and practice it.
- Know where designated shelters are located at home, work, and school. Be ready to go there when a tornado warning is issued.
- Have multiple ways to receive alerts about approaching severe weather. Outdoor warning sirens, NOAA Weather Radios, local media, and mobile devices are all important tools. Don't rely on any single source for important life-saving information.
- If you have a mobile device, make sure it is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). On many devices, that option is available in the settings menu. Find out more about WEA at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/be-informed/be-alert/>.
- Stay weather aware by checking the daily forecast for your area.
- Create an emergency kit for your home. Find tips for making a kit at <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>.

Wisconsin's annual statewide tornado drills will take place on April 11 at 1:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m., offering an opportunity to practice your tornado sheltering plans. Schools, businesses, and homes are encouraged to practice going to their nearest tornado shelter during the drills, as if there were an actual tornado warning in effect. Ideal tornado shelters can include a basement, a ground floor interior room of a building, or a specially constructed safe room designed to withstand high winds and falling debris.

During the drill times, Wisconsin's NWS offices will conduct NOAA Weather Radio tests that can be heard if you are actively listening to those devices or have one programmed to activate on test alerts. Local media outlets may also participate on the air or over social media. Some communities may also choose to test their outdoor warning sirens during the drill times. Check with local emergency management offices for information on siren testing schedules.

If there is a threat of severe weather in Wisconsin on April 11, the statewide drills will be postponed until Friday, April 12. The drills will go on in all other conditions, including non-severe weather (clouds, rain, dark sky, scattered thunderstorms, etc.). If severe weather is also expected on Friday, the drills will be cancelled. Notification of the drill status will be posted at <http://readywisconsin.wi.gov> by 10 a.m. on the morning of April 11.

“Staying safe from severe weather is everyone’s responsibility,” Engle said. “Spending just a few minutes this week participating in tornado drills could save your life by helping you know how get to safety faster if a real warning is issued later on.”

For more information on severe weather preparedness and advice on creating your own emergency plan, visit <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>. You can also follow ReadyWisconsin on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Threads](#), and [Instagram](#) for tips on emergency preparedness throughout the year!

###

2024 Wisconsin Statewide Tornado Drill

Thursday, April 11th, 2024

1:45pm and 6:45pm

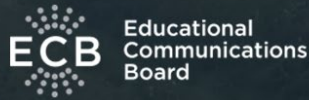
Please reserve these times to discuss and practice your tornado and severe weather safety and sheltering plans.

What will happen:

- NOAA Weather Radio Weekly Test
- Some municipalities will sound sirens.
- Some TV/radio stations will briefly cut into programming
- Social Media Posts

What will NOT happen:

- ❑ Wireless Emergency Alerts
- ❑ Push notifications on phones
- ❑ Test Watch/Warning



Severe Weather Watches and Warnings

When conditions are favorable for severe weather to develop, the National Weather Service (NWS) will issue a WATCH. When a Watch is issued, make sure you have a source of weather information in the event storms begin to form.

When severe weather has formed, NWS meteorologists will issue a WARNING to immediately alert the public and to advise them to seek appropriate shelter. **A warning indicates there is an imminent danger to life and property to those in the path of the storm.**

Watches and Warnings are relayed to local radio and television stations and are broadcast on NOAA Weather Radios. Public safety officials also receive warnings and can activate local warning systems, like outdoor sirens, to alert communities. You may also receive warning information on mobile devices through Wireless Emergency Alerts.

Tornado Watch: Severe thunderstorms with tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms. Be prepared to move to safety if a **warning** is issued. Know what counties are in the watch area by listening to NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards or local radio/television stations.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch: Thunderstorms with large hail and damaging winds are possible. Be prepared to move to safety if a **warning** is issued.

Tornado Warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Move to a place of safety now.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning: A thunderstorm with large hail or damaging winds has been reported or indicated by weather radar.

Tornado Safety Before the Storm

Being ready for severe weather starts before there are even storms in the forecast. Make sure you are taking several precautions at home, work, and school to ensure everyone remains safe when severe weather threatens.

- Develop a plan for you and your family for home, work, school and outdoors.
- Know the safest shelter areas in multiple locations and regularly practice your plan. Shelters can include a basement, ground-floor interior room with shared walls with the outside, or a safe room built to withstand strong winds and falling debris.
- Keep a disaster supply kit in your home including water, food that won't spoil and needs no heat to serve, first-aid kit, NOAA Weather Radio (also known as an emergency weather radio), a flashlight and special items for children, pets and elderly family members.
- Make sure you have multiple ways to receive weather information. A NOAA Weather Radio, local TV and radio stations, and smart phone apps can keep you informed when severe weather threatens.
- If you have a smart phone, make sure your device is enabled to receive Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). These life-saving messages can provide critical early warnings about approaching dangerous weather conditions.

Tornado Safety During the Storm

Whether at home, work, or school, it's important to have a plan in place for what to do when severe weather is approaching.

- In a home or building, move to a pre-designated shelter, such as a basement, and get under a sturdy table or the stairs. A specially constructed "safe room" within a building offers the best protection.
- If a basement is not available, move to a small interior room on the lowest floor and cover yourself with anything close at hand: towels, blankets, pillows. If possible, get under a sturdy table, desk, or counter. Put as many walls as possible between you and the storm. Stay away from windows.
- If caught outdoors, seek shelter in a sturdy building. If you cannot quickly walk to shelter, get into a vehicle, buckle your seatbelt and drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. Now you have two options as a last resort:
 - Stay in the vehicle with the seatbelt on and place your head below the windows.
 - If you can safely get noticeably lower than the roadway, exit the vehicle and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. Do not seek shelter under an overpass.
- Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes. You should leave a mobile home and go to the designated storm shelter or the lowest floor of a sturdy nearby building.

Lightning Safety Tips

Lightning can be a major safety concern during storms. Know the risks and how to protect yourself from lightning strikes.

- All thunderstorms produce lightning and are dangerous. Since 2006, lightning has killed an average of 28 people in the U.S. each year. During that time period, it also has killed ten people and injured at least 41 in Wisconsin.
- Lightning often strikes outside the area of heavy rain and may strike as far as 10 miles from any rainfall.
- If you hear thunder, you are in danger! Anytime thunder is heard, the storm is close enough to pose an immediate threat to your location.
- Have a lightning safety plan. Designate a safe location before the event starts. Have specific guidelines for suspending the activity so that everyone has time to reach safety.
- Prior to a practice or outdoor event, check the latest forecast. If thunderstorms are expected, consider postponing activities early to avoid being caught in a dangerous situation.
- If you hear thunder, suspend your activity immediately and instruct everyone to get to a safe place. Substantial buildings provide the best protection. Avoid sheds, open shelters, dugouts, bleachers, and grandstands. If a sturdy building is not nearby, a hard-topped metal vehicle with windows closed will offer good protection. Do not crouch or lie down—continue moving toward shelter.
- If boating or swimming, get to land and find shelter.
- Do not resume activities until 30 minutes have passed since the last thunder was heard.

Flooding Safety Tips

Flooding is one of Wisconsin's most common natural disasters, causing millions of dollars in property damage each year. Know the facts and keep yourself safe when floodwaters rise!

- There were 76 deaths nationwide in 2023 due to flooding. There were no flooding-related deaths in Wisconsin last year.
- Many floods occur along streams and rivers. You can determine your risk by knowing your proximity to the water and looking at flood plain maps.
- Urban areas have a risk for flash floods due to increased runoff from buildings, roads, and parking lots. Low spots, such as underpasses and basements, can be extremely dangerous.
- Dam failures have played a deadly role in the history of flash flooding. Be aware of dams upstream from your location. Earthen dams and associated embankments are more easily compromised by heavy rainfall.
- When camping or hiking near a stream or river, listen to the latest weather forecasts and keep away from the water if thunderstorms are expected. If a warning is issued or flooding is observed, move to higher ground.
- Do not attempt to walk or drive through a flooded roadway or intersection. Damage to the roadway may not be visible. Just six inches of fast-flowing water can knock an adult off their feet. Most small vehicles can be moved by just 12 inches of water and 18-24 inches can float larger SUVs, vans, and trucks. Turn around, don't drown!
- During times of heavy rain, those near areas with steep terrain should watch for rock or mudslides.

Stay informed with an All-Hazards NOAA Weather Radio

Many people believe outdoor sirens will notify them when a tornado is approaching, however those devices are only designed to be heard by people who are outside. Make sure you have a way to receive notifications inside your home, school, or office by getting a NOAA Weather Radio. These devices act like a “smoke alarm” for severe weather!

- NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) is a public warning system that broadcasts forecasts, warnings, and emergency information 24 hours a day.
- Radio receivers can quietly monitor these broadcasts and will alert when important and life-threatening messages are issued for your area.
- “All Hazards” messages include:
 - Natural disasters (e.g., tornado, floods, blizzards)
 - Accidents, such as chemical release, train derailments, nuclear power emergencies)
 - Terrorist Attacks
- During an emergency, seconds count! These radios are a valuable alerting device, easy to use, and can also be used to check on everyday weather, including wind chill information during the winter. If your school doesn’t have a weather radio, make sure to purchase one before severe weather season starts.
- Weather radios are tested weekly. Make sure yours works!

NOAA Weather Radio Home Page - www.weather.gov/nwr

NWR coverage in Wisconsin - www.weather.gov/mkx/nwr

Educational Communications Board map - <https://ecb.org/NOAA.html>

Wireless Emergency Alerts

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) are weather and non-weather messages sent directly to cell phones in areas affected by an emergency. You can ensure these alerts are enabled on your device by checking under the “notifications” section of the settings menu on most smart devices.

These short messages may look like text messages, but they are broadcast to all phones within range of cell towers in the alerted area. The alerts will tell you the type of warning, the affected area, and the duration of the event. Weather alerts sent as a WEA in Wisconsin include Tornado Warnings and Flash Flood Warnings.

For more information on WEAs and a list of participating carriers, visit FEMA’s Wireless Emergency Alert web site: <http://fema.gov/wireless-emergency-alerts>.

For more information

Check out these web sites for more safety tips, the latest weather forecast, and other weather awareness information.

NOAA National Weather Service

<https://weather.gov>

Click on your part of the state for local weather information. Wisconsin has five NWS offices that cover different regions of the state. Find the NWS on Facebook and Twitter by searching for your local office name.

ReadyWisconsin

Web - <https://readywisconsin.wi.gov>

Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/ReadyWisconsin>

Twitter – <https://www.twitter.com/ReadyWisconsin>

Instagram - <http://www.instagram.com/ReadyWisconsin>

STEP (Student Tools for Emergency Planning)

<https://readywisconsin.wi.gov/STEP>

Wisconsin Emergency Management

<https://wem.wi.gov>

For Kids: Be a Force of Nature!

<http://weather.gov/grb/prep>

Tornado Preparedness Plan for Schools

<https://www.weather.gov/arx/schoolprep>

FEMA for Kids

<https://www.ready.gov/kids>

Wisconsin Tornado Weather Facts

- There were 21 tornadoes in Wisconsin in 2023, which is below average. In the last 15 years we've had as many as 62 tornadoes and as few as four.
- The peak tornado season in Wisconsin is April to August, but they can occur any time of year. In 2024, Wisconsin had its first February tornadoes since record keeping began.
- Tornadoes can occur any time during the day or night, but are most frequent between 4 p.m. and 9 p.m.
- About 80% of tornadoes that hit Wisconsin are relatively weak, with winds under 110 mph. Only 1% are violent with winds over 165 mph.

Other Weather Awareness Dates in Wisconsin

NOAA Weather Radio
Awareness Day
May 1, 2024

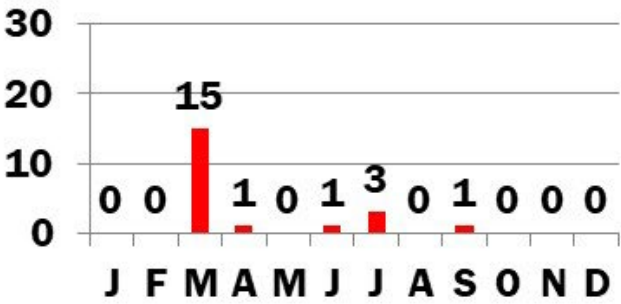
Heat Awareness Day
June 5, 2024

Lightning Safety
Awareness Day
June 18, 2024

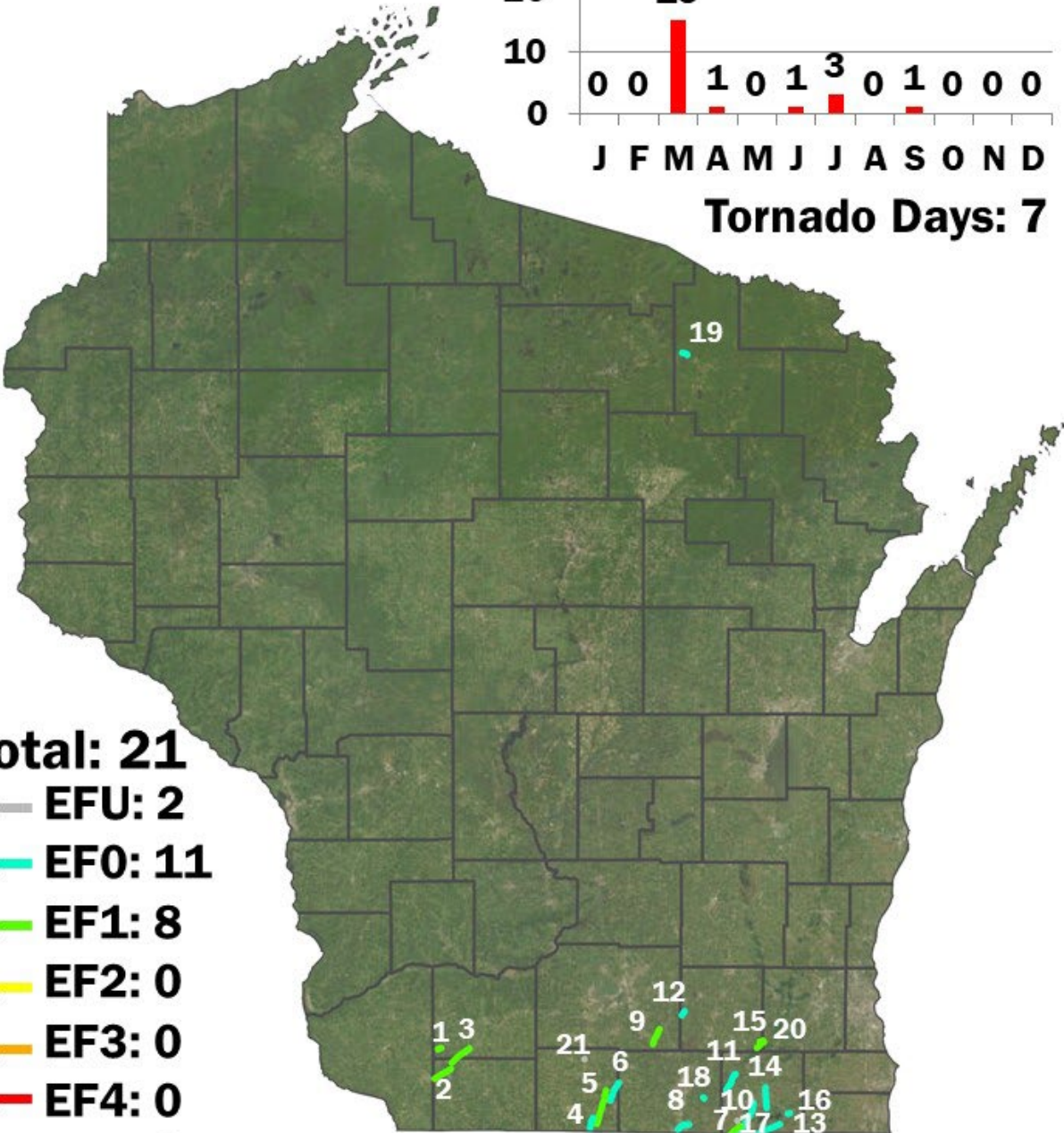
Winter Weather
Awareness Week
Nov.18-22, 2024

Wisconsin Tornadoes 2023

Updated: 1/3/24



Tornado Days: 7



- Total: 21**
- EFU: 2
- EF0: 11
- EF1: 8
- EF2: 0
- EF3: 0
- EF4: 0
- EF5: 0





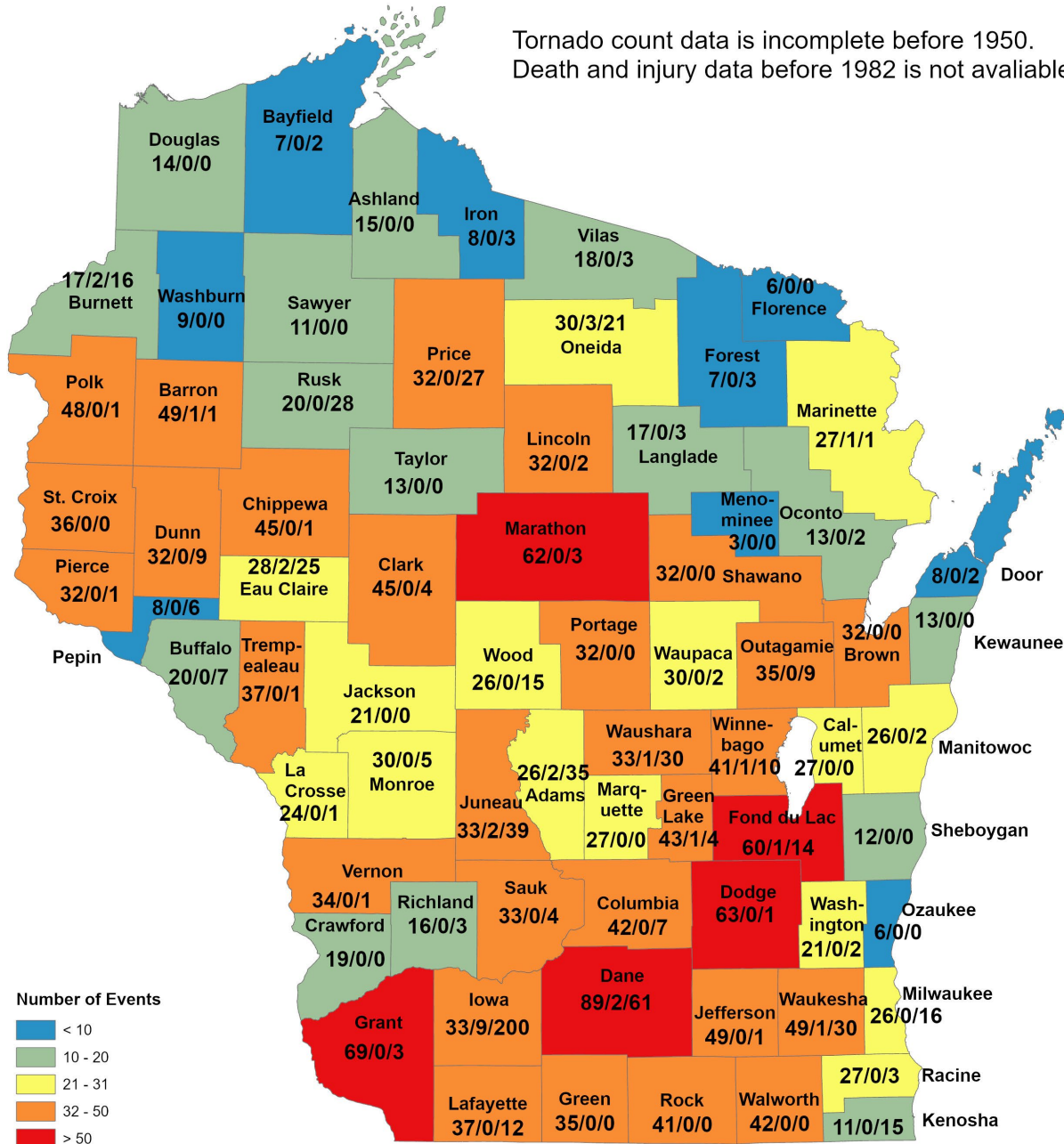
Wisconsin Tornado Events

1844 - 2023

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Tornado count data is incomplete before 1950.
Death and injury data before 1982 is not available.

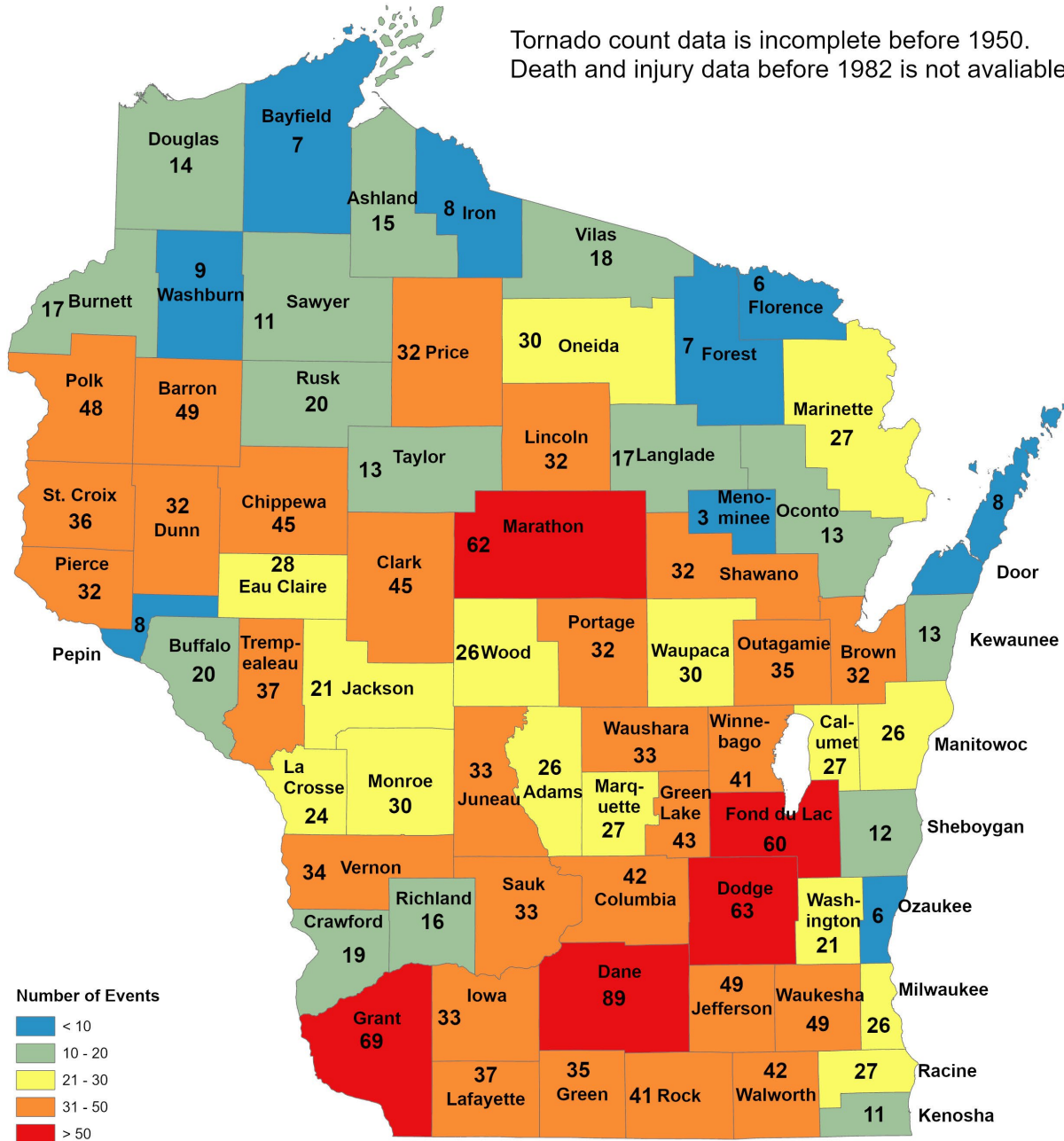




Wisconsin Tornado Events 1844 - 2023



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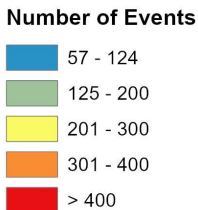
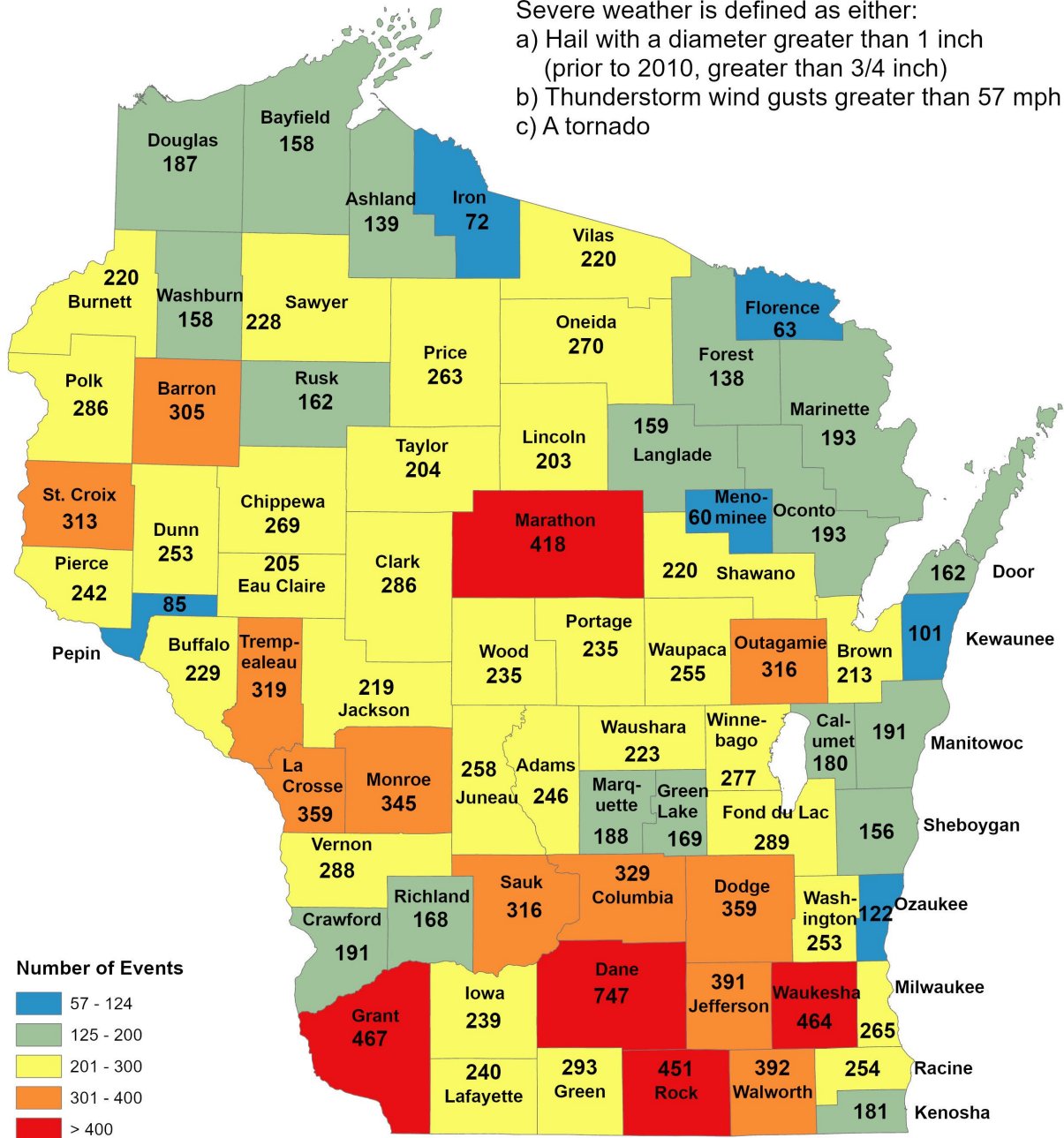




Wisconsin Total Severe Weather Events 1844 - 2023



Severe weather is defined as either:
 a) Hail with a diameter greater than 1 inch (prior to 2010, greater than 3/4 inch)
 b) Thunderstorm wind gusts greater than 57 mph
 c) A tornado





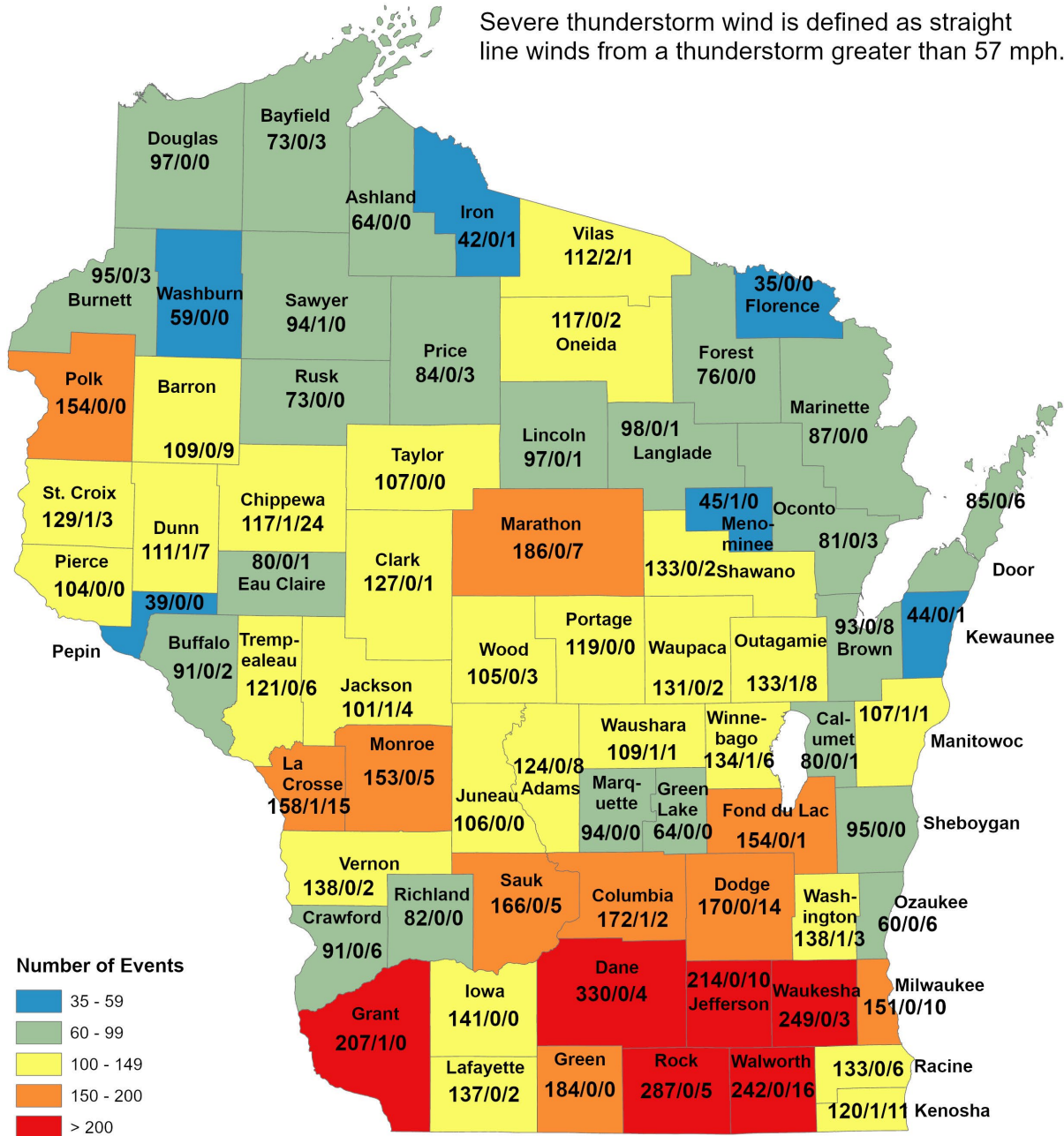
Wisconsin Severe Thunderstorm Wind Events

1844 - 2023

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Severe thunderstorm wind is defined as straight line winds from a thunderstorm greater than 57 mph.





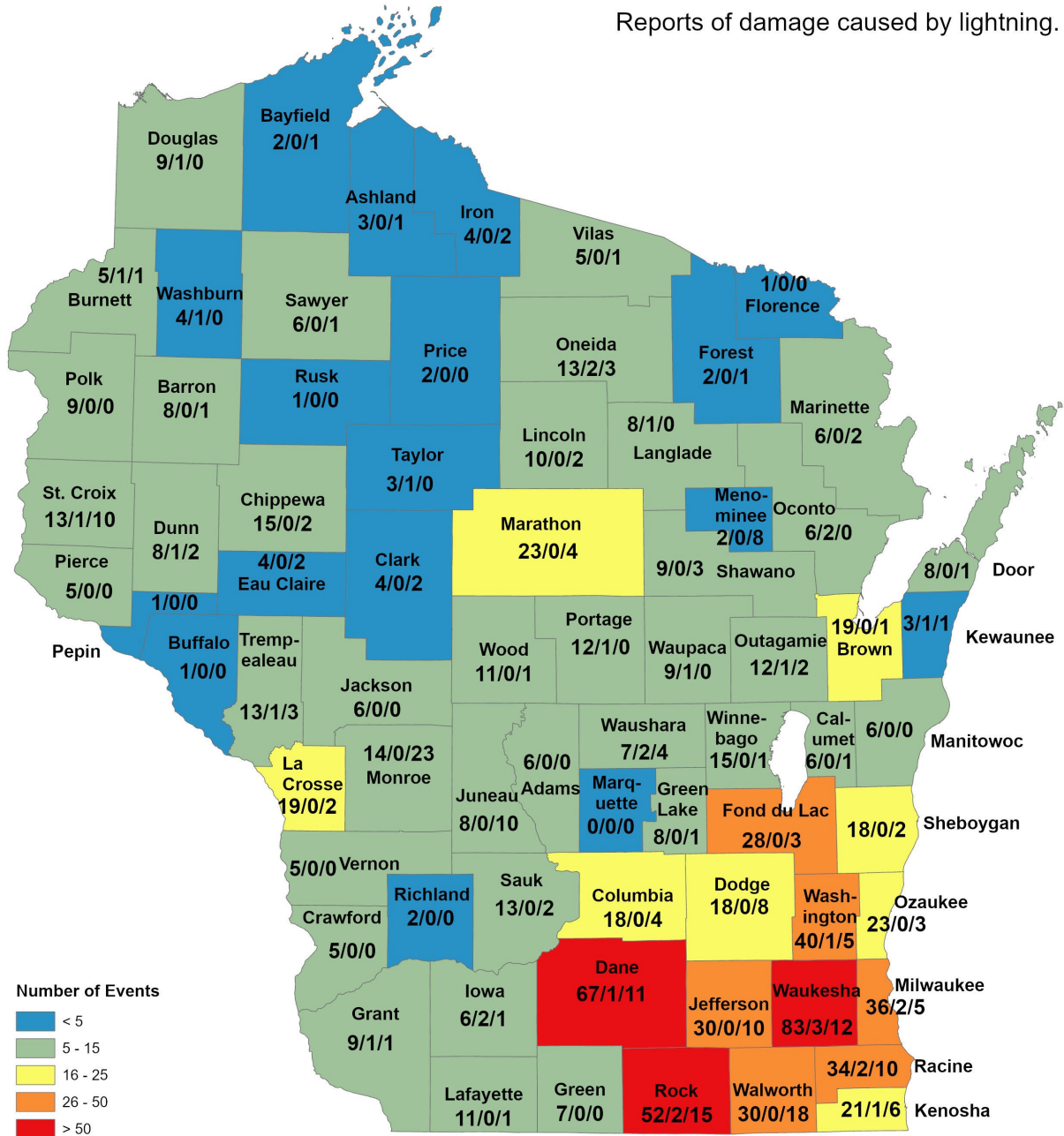
Wisconsin Lightning Events

1982 - 2023

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Reports of damage caused by lightning.





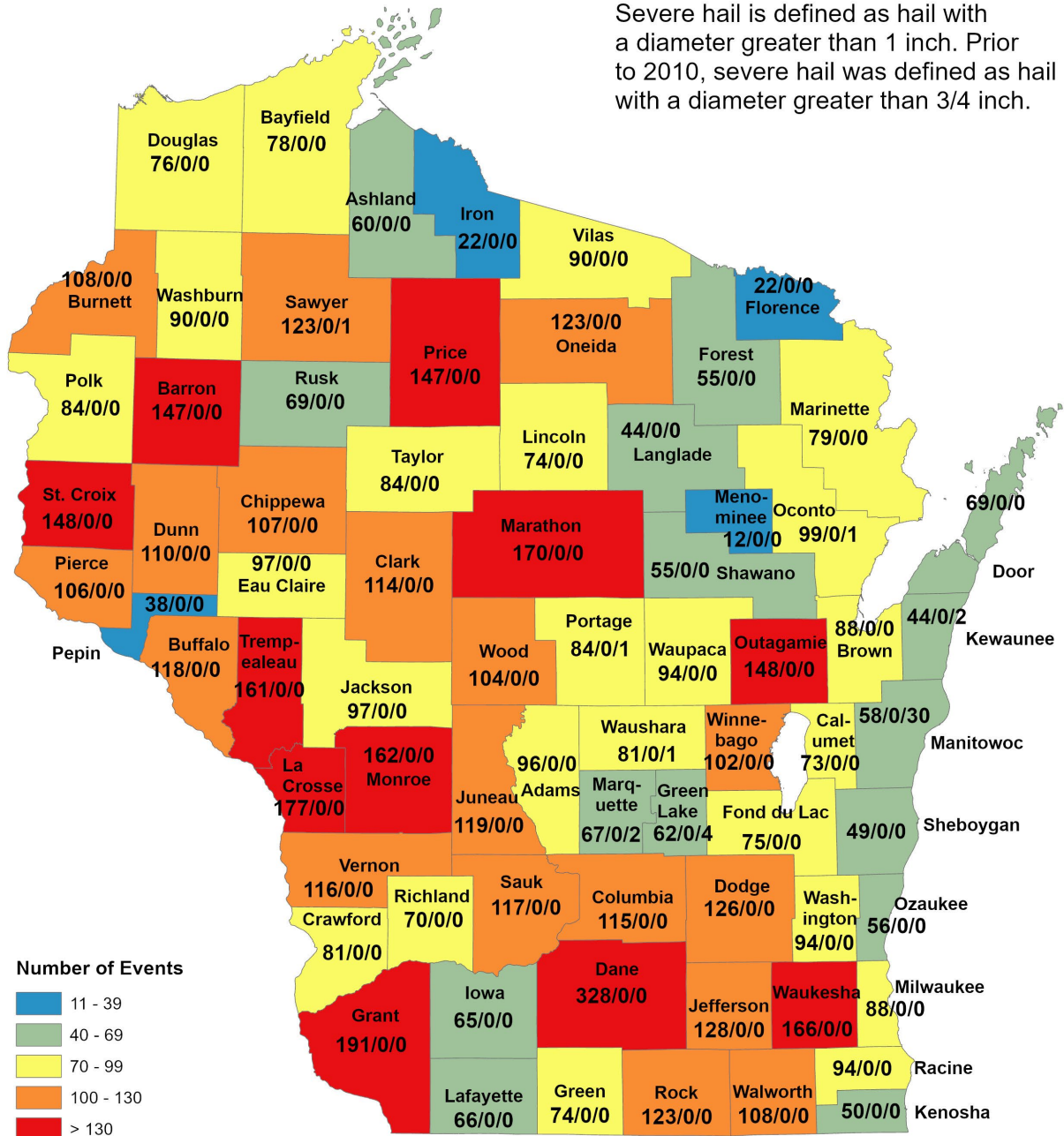
Wisconsin Severe Hail Events

1982 - 2023

Events / # Deaths / # Injuries



Severe hail is defined as hail with a diameter greater than 1 inch. Prior to 2010, severe hail was defined as hail with a diameter greater than 3/4 inch.



Number of Events

- 11 - 39
- 40 - 69
- 70 - 99
- 100 - 130
- > 130