

# National Wildland Significant Fire Potential Outlook



National Interagency Fire Center  
Predictive Services



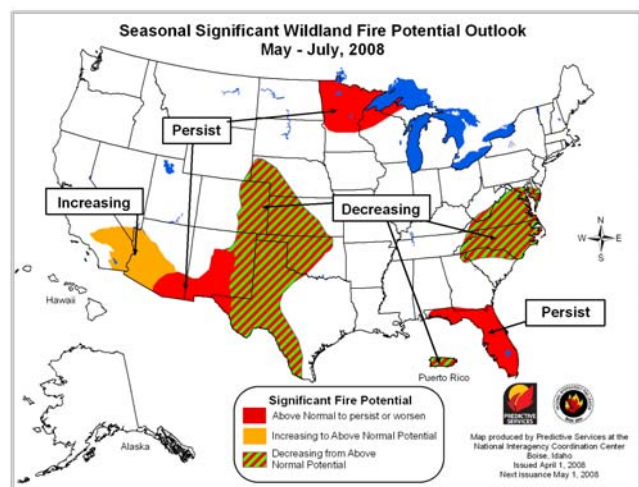
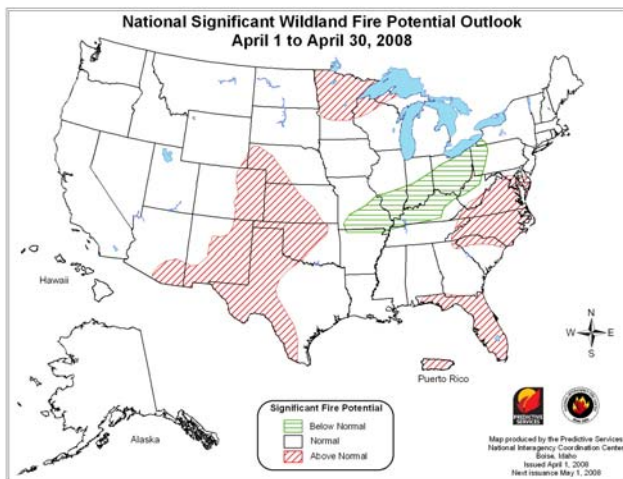
Issued: April 1, 2008

Next Issue: May 1, 2008

## Wildland Fire Outlook – April 2008 through July 2008

**Above normal significant fire potential is expected across portions of the Southwest, Rocky Mountain, Southern and Eastern Areas in April.** Below normal significant fire potential is expected over the Ohio River Valley. For the May through July period, significant fire potential will persist or increase over Florida, the western Great Lakes and from the southern California deserts to southeast New Mexico. Fire potential will decrease later during this period over the central and southern Plains, Puerto Rico, Virginia and the Carolinas. The main factors influencing fire potential this outlook period are:

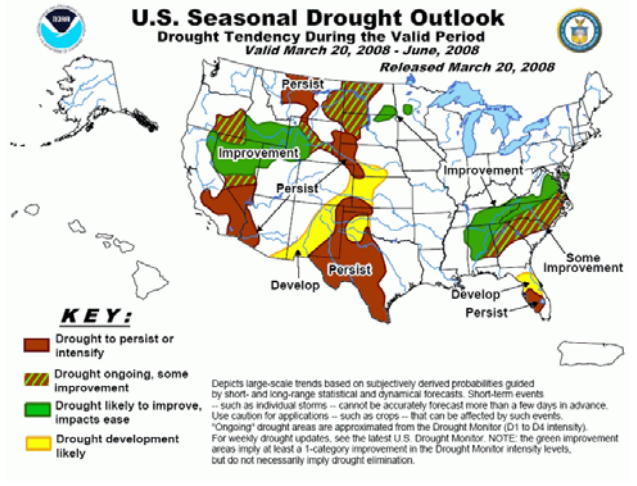
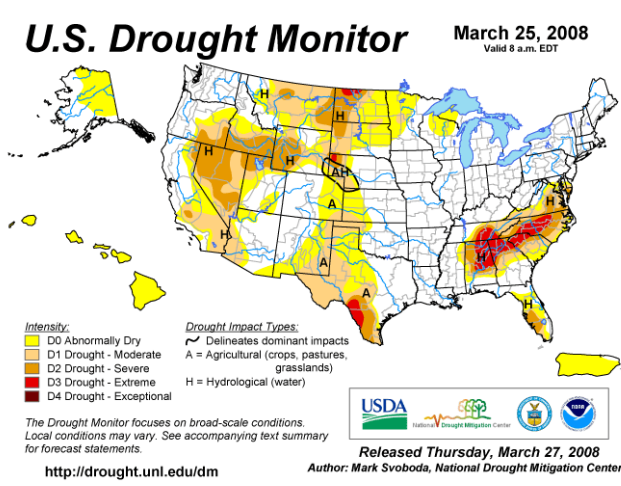
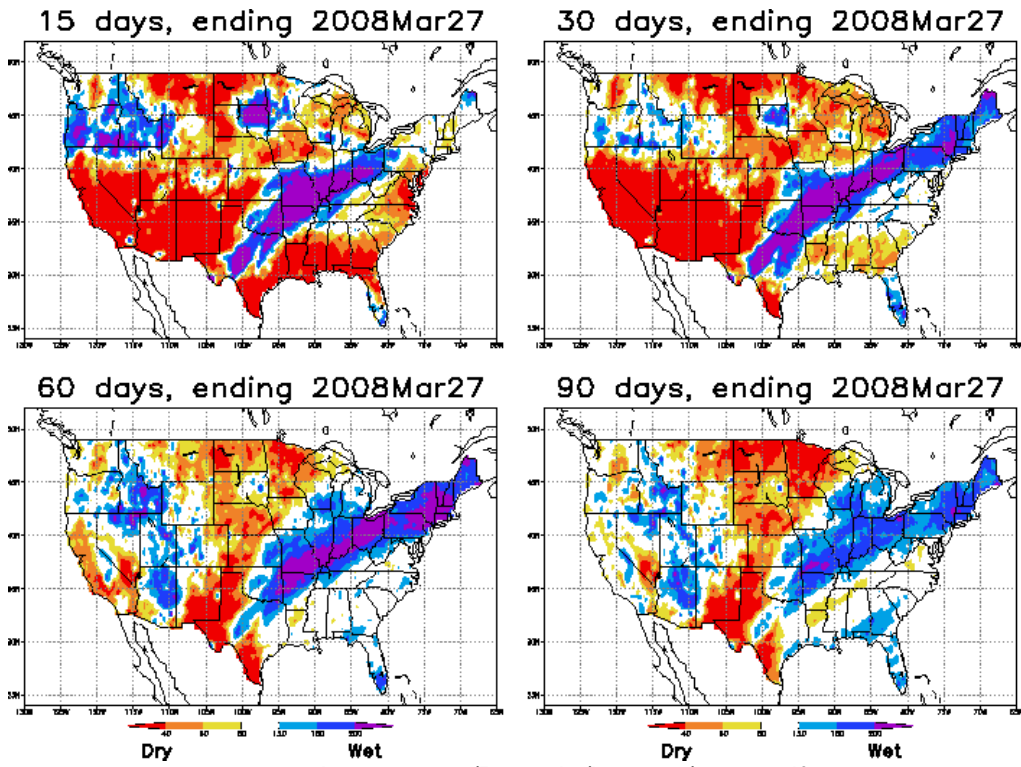
- The combined effects of La Niña and an extended dry period along with an outlook of warmer/drier than normal weather all point to above normal potential in April over portions of the Southwest and Southeast.
- Heavy fine fuel loadings at lower elevations from the southern California deserts, along the southern plains, and into western Texas along with wind events this spring will elevate fire potential in these areas.
- Summer thunderstorm activity and green up will help diminish significant fire potential in the Plains and Mid-Atlantic states.
- Persistent winter and spring dryness will lead to above normal fire potential in Minnesota, northern Wisconsin, and portions of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for the next few months.



Note: Significant fire potential is defined as the likelihood that a wildland fire event will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates.

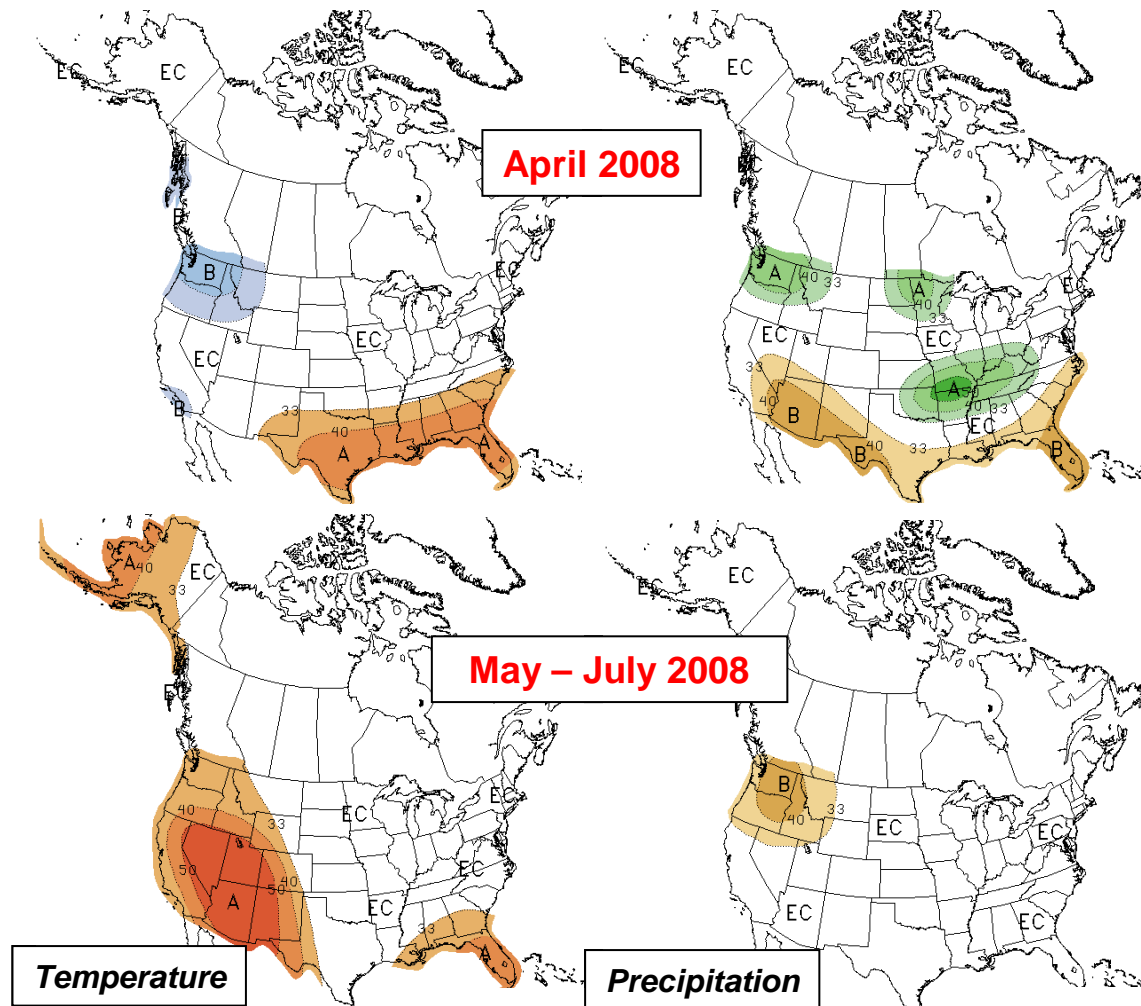
# Past Weather and Drought

March was wetter than normal across a large area from central Texas northeastward to New England as well as the Pacific Northwest and most of Florida. Dryness was noted in the Southeast, Northern Plains, Great Lakes, and across a large area stretching from California to west Texas. Snowpacks remain generally above normal across most of the West except for below normal readings across southern portions of Arizona and New Mexico. March has been generally drier than normal across central and eastern Alaska. Temperatures have been near to below normal across much of country in March except warmer than usual in California, Arizona, eastern Montana, western portions of the Dakotas and along the Mid-Atlantic coast. Drought conditions are expected to persist or develop over portions of the Southwest, Plains and Southeast.



## Weather and Climate Outlooks

According to the National Weather Service (NWS) Climate Prediction Center, La Niña will continue through the spring and is likely to persist into the summer. La Niña and the climate trend toward warmer temperatures were major factors in the climate outlooks shown below. April is expected to continue a pattern of warm and dry conditions over much of the southern tier of states, cool and wet weather in the Northwest, and above normal precipitation over portions of the central states. The May through July outlook favors warmer than normal weather across the West, Alaska and the southeast corner of the country with drier than normal conditions in the Northwest.



**A = Above normal, B = Below normal, N = Normal, EC = Equal Chances of Above/Below/Normal.**  
[www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/multi\\_season/13\\_seasonal\\_outlooks/color/page2.gif](http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/multi_season/13_seasonal_outlooks/color/page2.gif)

## Area Discussions

**Alaska:** Normal significant fire potential is projected for April through the extended outlook period. Snow pack is below normal across portions of the eastern half of Alaska. Elsewhere, snow pack is normal to slightly above normal. The U.S. Drought Monitor has classified eastern Alaska as abnormally dry. Some fires have already been reported in the Matanuska-Susitna area near Anchorage. Long lead climate forecasts indicate warmer than normal conditions will persist from May through July, especially across eastern Alaska. This could result in an earlier than average start to the fire season across the eastern interior.

**Southwest:** Above normal significant fire potential is expected across much of eastern New Mexico, all of western Texas, and all of southern New Mexico extending into southeastern Arizona. Normal significant fire potential is expected elsewhere. The three month trend is for the area of above normal potential to gradually expand westward into most of central/western Arizona. At the same time, fire potential in western Texas and areas of eastern New Mexico is expected to decrease. This outlook is based primarily on a climate outlook calling for mainly a drier and warmer weather pattern through the extended outlook period with an expectation of normal to above normal seasonal moisture into western Texas and eastern New Mexico sometime in June. Periodic active weather patterns continuing through April into May across northwestern/northern sections will bring scattered precipitation. This anticipated pattern will lead to a continuation of semi-frequent down slope wind events combining with abundant fine fuels to sustain or increase fire potential across most of the southern and eastern sections of the Area. These conditions will persist until the arrival of seasonal moisture that will begin in the southeast and expand west-northwest beginning in June and continuing into July.

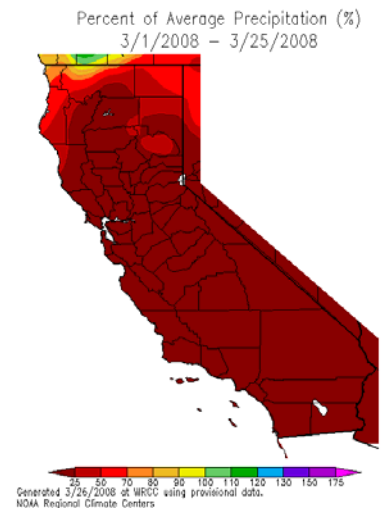
**Northern Rockies:** Normal significant fire potential is forecast for April and the extended forecast period. Currently, snow water equivalent is running normal to above normal, generally 95-120 percent, across most of the higher elevation areas. This winter has seen generally wet conditions west of the Divide and rather dry conditions across central/eastern Montana and North Dakota. These drier areas have experienced less than 50% of normal precipitation since January 1, 2008 and, in some cases, as far back as October 2007. This dryness has resulted in moderate drought conditions across central/eastern Montana and severe drought across a large portion of western North Dakota. Most climate indicators point to normal, or cooler than normal, temperatures for April with a continued wetter than normal pattern west of the Divide. A normal green up is anticipated west of the Divide, but areas east of the Divide into western North Dakota could see a less robust green up and quicker curing due to the dryness and drought conditions there.

**Great Basin:** Normal significant fire potential is expected for the Great Basin during April and the extended outlook period. Mountain snowpack amounts across the Area range from 100 to 130 percent of normal. March was a very dry month in Nevada; however the Great Basin is on track for continued cool and wet conditions during early April, especially in the northern sections. The wet winter pattern should foster a robust green up, however carryover fine fuels in the lower elevations are mostly well-compacted from several heavy snows this winter. An exception to this is in southern Utah and southeast Nevada where green up may be delayed. Large dead fuel moistures in the higher elevations will benefit from good winter moisture. Long range outlooks suggest a return to typical La Niña conditions of warm and dry weather later this spring through early summer. Severe drought conditions continue over much of the Great Basin, however conditions are forecast to improve across the entire Area (except for southern Nevada) this spring.

**Northwest:** Normal significant fire potential is expected through July. March was cool and wet across most of the Area with additional significant accumulation of snowpack in the Cascades and other higher terrain. However, unusually low precipitation occurred in central Oregon and Washington in the immediate lee of the Cascades, continuing a deficit trend seen all winter. Snow water

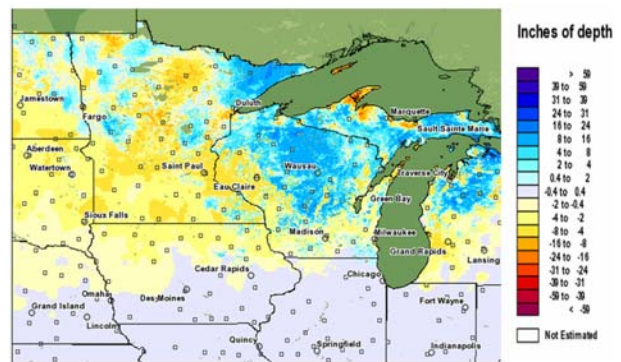
equivalent values range from near 100% to 250% of normal across the Cascades with below normal values across the Steens Mountains of southeastern Oregon and the highlands of northeastern Washington. Climate outlooks suggest that conditions will remain generally cooler and wetter than usual across much of the Area during April. Significant large wildfire occurrence is not expected in April and May, however large wildfire activity typically begins to increase by the end of the extended outlook period.

**California:** Normal significant fire potential is expected during April and then increase across the southern desert areas from May through July. March was considerably drier than normal across all of California except near the border with southwest Oregon (see image). April is expected to see a more typical La Niña precipitation distribution along the West Coast bringing at or above normal precipitation during the first part of April to northern California and below normal precipitation in southern California. Large dead downed fuels in areas not under snow had extended drying during March. Low elevation annual grasses are expected to remain green through the month in the north with slow curing in the south. New grass growth will extend into higher terrain as the snowpack recedes. Much of the mid elevation areas have lost snow cover and are drying to the point they will soon be available for prescribed burning operations, however wet weather in early April could delay this opportunity. Higher elevations and some north aspects should remain snow covered though April. Any windy and dry periods lasting three days or more could temporarily lead to elevated fire danger at lower elevations. Grass is abundant this year across most desert locations, which is expected to result in above normal fire potential later in the outlook period.



**Rocky Mountain:** Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for southeastern Colorado, western Kansas, and western Nebraska during April. This area of above normal fire potential is expected to decrease during the extended outlook period coinciding with green up, however drought conditions in western Nebraska may present lingering concerns if sufficient precipitation does not occur this spring. The combination of elevated fine fuel loading, precipitation deficits, and frequent wind events across the eastern plains the Area caused an increase in large grass fires during March. These conditions are expected to continue into early April or longer if green up is curtailed by continued dryness and drought. The Climate Prediction Center outlooks favor above normal temperatures across Colorado and southern Wyoming and below normal precipitation across the Four Corners area (including Colorado) during the April through June time period. Above average mountain snowpack is expected to curtail an early onset to fire season along, and west of, the Rocky Mountain divide.

**Eastern Area:** Above normal significant fire potential is forecast for northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and portions of West Virginia, Maryland and Delaware in April. A band of below normal fire potential is expected in western New York extending southwestward into southern Missouri. Significant fire potential is expected to persist over Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan during the May through July time period. The southern portions of West Virginia and the Del Mar Peninsula continue to experience precipitation deficits and remain in moderate to severe drought.



Snow depth across portions of northern Minnesota, northwest Wisconsin and the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan remain below average (see image). If early spring rainfall is less than normal across these areas, significant fire potential will likely increase once surface fuels are exposed this spring. Insect infestations with associated defoliation and mortality across much of the Great Lake States may contribute to large fire growth.

**Southern Area:** Above normal significant fire potential is expected in central Texas, western Oklahoma, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, and portions of South Carolina during April. Below normal significant fire potential is forecast for portions of Kentucky and northern Arkansas. During May through July, above normal significant fire potential is expected to decrease over Virginia, the Carolinas, central Texas and western Oklahoma. Drought conditions continue across central and western Texas where fire activity remains above average for this time of year with abundant dry fine fuels, a delayed green up, and periods of low RH and gusty winds contributing to the situation. Large fire growth will remain a significant threat during April. In the Appalachian and Mid-Atlantic areas, drought conditions remain severe to extreme and forecasts indicate a pattern for decreasing rain activity, which will lower fuel moistures and cause initial attack and large fire activity to increase in April. In Florida, moderate rains over the last 30 days have improved KBDI values across much of the state. However, below normal precipitation is forecast for April and given the fact that fire activity in Florida usually peaks in May and June, above normal fire potential is expected through the extended outlook period. In April, Puerto Rico is expected to have above normal significant fire potential with drier than normal conditions forecast to persist through the month.

**Note:** This national outlook and some geographic area assessments are currently available at the NICC and GACC websites. The GACC websites can also be accessed through the NICC webpage at: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>

## Historic and Predicted Wildland Fires and Acres Burned Data

Based on reported data so far this year, nationally there were 80% of the average numbers of fires, burning approximately 125% of the average acres. The following table displays historical, current and predicted information pertaining to fire statistics.

	March 31, 2008 Reported Year-To-Date	Average reported for APR	Projection for April YTD+Forecast	Average Reported YTD APR 30	Historical Low YTD APR 30	Year of Low	Historical High YTD APR 30	Year of High
<b>ALASKA</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	0	29	29	34	9	2006	97	1998
<b>Acres</b>	0	274	357	347	3	2006	759	2003
<b>NORTHWEST</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	3	38	26	57	13	2003	127	2004
<b>Acres</b>	4	421	298	559	3	2003	1,992	2004
<b>NORTH OPS</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	6	70	76	104	0	many	259	2004
<b>Acres</b>	3,210	495	3,804	1,284	0	many	4,367	2000
<b>SOUTH OPS</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	262	96	358	280	21	2005	637	2002
<b>Acres</b>	952	555	1,618	4,345	0	1998	11,106	2006
<b>NORTHERN ROCKIES</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	36	281	317	298	2	1999	515	1998
<b>Acres</b>	5,946	6,515	15,068	7,113	515	2007	20,127	2003
<b>EAST BASIN</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	3	21	18	32	11	2001	86	2002
<b>Acres</b>	5	500	355	550	7	2005	1,562	1997
<b>WEST BASIN</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	10	6	17	12	0	many	59	2007
<b>Acres</b>	16	291	249	378	0	many	3,436	2007
<b>SOUTHWEST</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	219	323	607	597	183	2005	1,129	2002
<b>Acres</b>	122,452	22,344	167,141	72,195	7,690	2001	258,107	2006
<b>ROCKY MOUNTAIN</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	91	129	259	193	2	1998	406	2002
<b>Acres</b>	19,816	13,289	38,420	25,339	1,240	2001	138,474	2006
<b>EASTERN AREA</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	716	4,024	4,338	5,081	2,860	2001	7,951	2006
<b>Acres</b>	7,314	46,938	44,864	63,446	29,829	2001	138,992	2003
<b>SOUTHERN AREA</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	10,315	5,008	15,323	17,177	8,708	2003	25,328	2006
<b>Acres</b>	375,563	140,886	572,804	436,088	153,358	2003	1,759,212	2006
<b>NATIONALLY</b>								
<b>Fires</b>	11,661	10,026	21,367	23,865	14,288	1998	35,102	2006
<b>Acres</b>	535,278	232,509	844,978	611,643	249,472	1998	2,251,409	2006

The information above was obtained *primarily* from Incident Management Situation Reports from 1998-2007, however some inaccuracies and inconsistencies have been corrected. Therefore, the data may not reflect other historic records and should not be considered for official statistical purposes.