

El Niño 2015-2016
County of San Diego Preparations

In anticipation of an El Niño, the County is taking steps to prepare for higher-than-normal levels of rain this fall/winter. These are some of the major activities underway:

Office of Emergency Services

- A Winter Weather Workshop is scheduled for 10/13/15 (including media availability) at OES to inform regional partners about the forecasted El Niño and to facilitate regional coordination.
- OES is preparing a Public Service Announcement online/radio campaign to launch 10/13/2015 which will direct the public to ReadySanDiego.org for information about flood protection. The Dept. of Public Works is partnering with OES on the campaign.
- An El Niño flood preparation page will be added to ReadySanDiego.org by 10/13/15.
- OES is working with County departments to prepare Damage Assessment Teams for deployment in case heavy rainfall produces significant flood damage to properties.
- OES is able to provide sandbags (for purchase) to cities as requested.
- OES continues to explore streamlined recovery options for county residents after storms, including revision of the online Initial Damage Assessment form.

Department of Public Works

- DPW Field crews are inspecting County road and drainage facilities and removing sedimentation, vegetation, and debris that could block storm flows.
- DPW has a pre-approved list of emergency contractors and vendors that are ready to provide emergency labor, equipment and materials after major events.
- DPW Crews can instantly transition to 12-hour shifts to operate 24/7 in an emergency.
- DPW is assisting private property owners by making free sand and sandbags available at fire stations in these nine unincorporated communities across the County to assist residents and businesses in protecting property:
 - Alpine Fire Protection District, Station 17 (bags only due to space limits)
 - Bonita, Bonita/Sunnyside Fire Department
 - Boulevard Fire & Rescue Station
 - Dulzura, CAL FIRE Station 30
 - Fallbrook, North County Fire Protection District, Station 4
 - Julian, CAL FIRE Station 50
 - Pauma Valley-Rincon, CAL FIRE Station 70
 - Ramona, Ramona Fire Station
 - Valley Center, CAL FIRE Station 73

Planning and Development Services

- Reviewing and updating Damage Assessment procedures.

Department of Parks and Recreation

- Stockpiling Best Management Practices (BMPs).
- Practicing rain collection and re-use.
- Clearing drainage areas to prevent backup and flooding.

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Background/History

(Source: National Weather Service)

- Strong El Niño years are correlated with above normal precipitation for So. Calif.
- So. Calif. lacks the equivalent of 1.5-2.5 seasons of precipitation since Jan. 2011. California's last wet year was 2010-11, during La Niña conditions. We need 24-45 inches of precipitation to reach "normal" levels by Sept. 30, 2016.
- Conditions can vary even within strong El Niño years.
- El Niño tends to alter the Jet Stream to bring more frequent storms but not necessarily stronger storm systems.
- Past strong El Niño years included: 1957/58, 65/66, 72/73, 82/83, 91/92 and 97/98.

Public Action Recommendations

- Just because you haven't experienced a flood in the past doesn't mean you won't in the future. Flood risk isn't just based on history. Risk factors include: rainfall, river-flow and tidal-surge data, topography, flood-control measures, and changes due to building and development. (Source: FloodSmart.gov)
- Know your home or property's flood risk by looking at FEMA's [flood-hazard maps](#) and other flood resources at: [msc.fema.gov](#) or [FloodSmart.gov](#).
- Remember that water flows downhill from the mountains to the oceans through an interconnected system of public and private drainage systems. Inspect your property's drainage channels and culverts routinely, and after every storm, to ensure they are clear.
- Remember: sandbags and other tools not only protect against flooding, they can prevent erosion and keep soil, mud and debris-flows from damaging your home, your neighbor's home, flooding roadways and clogging storm drains and culverts.
- If you have flood insurance, review your policy to make sure you have proper coverage. Keep your policy and insurance agent's contact information on hand in the event you need to file a claim.
- Keep copies of important documents (mortgage papers, deed, passport, bank information, etc.) in your home and a secure place outside the home such as a bank safe deposit box.
- Take and store photos of your possessions (furniture, antiques and collectibles, musical instruments, electronic equipment, etc.) with your other important documents.
- Save receipts for expensive household items (appliances, electronic equipment, etc.) as proof of the original costs.
- Make itemized lists of other possessions such as clothing, books, and small appliances. The more comprehensive your list, the better, in case you need to make a claim.
- Register your mobile phone with AlertSanDiego at [ReadySanDiego.org](#) or [ListoSanDiego.org](#) and download the County's no cost SD Emergency application on your Apple and Android mobile devices in English or Spanish to receive emergency notifications during regional disasters. Also, complete a family disaster plan so that you and your family are prepared for all hazards.