

Are you prepared for El Nino?

El Nino is a climate cycle in the Pacific Ocean with a global impact on weather patterns. With El Nino storms estimated to be their strongest in years, agencies throughout Los Angeles County are already getting ready. Here are 10 ways for you to prepare:

1. Clean out your rain gutters and downspouts. Clean all of them before it rains, then check and clean them after the first rain. Leaves and debris from your roof may have accumulated in rain gutters after the rain. Make sure your rain gutters aren't damaged.
2. Fix any leaks before it starts to rain. Check your roof for any trouble areas. Check any decks and balconies. Make sure water flows away from your walls and foundation.
3. Invest in an emergency generator. Think about a portable generator or permanent standby generator that comes on automatically when the power goes out.
4. If your crawl space, garage or basement could be flooded, think of installing a sump pump. El Nino rains can cause water to gather where you normally don't find it.
5. Have an arborist check your trees. Trees may look fine, but can be weak. Wet branches weigh more and they can break.
6. If you live on a hill or below a hill, talk to your neighbors. Drainage from your yard may cause water to damage your neighbor's house. Your neighbor's drainage may flood your home.
7. Know where your sprinkler controller is located. Learn how to turn off your automatic sprinklers. You may not need to water for weeks or months.
8. Talk to your insurance agent about purchasing flood insurance. Even though you may not live in a flood area, flood insurance may protect you from mud and water damage losses. Flood damages are not usually covered by homeowner's insurance. Click here to learn more about flood insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program.
9. Plan what you will do if water starts to infiltrate your home. Have sandbags and plywood on hand to divert water away from your home.
10. YOUR CAR: Check the lights in your car, headlights, brake lights, turn signals and emergency flashers. Replace your windshield wipers. You don't need wait until it's raining to realize you should have changed the wipers. Have your mechanic check your car's tires. Check for tread wear and proper inflation. Both can be the cause of serious accidents in the rain. How old is your car battery? Ask your mechanic to check it as it may be better to replace it before it fails in the rain.

For more information about El Nino and ways that you can prepare, visit www.lacounty.gov/elnino.