



NEWS RELEASE

15-274

Date: Tuesday, November 24, 2015**District:** 8 - San Bernardino**Contact:** Terri Kasinga**Phone:** (951) 232-4268 (cell)**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CALTRANS DISTRICT 8 PREPARES FOR EL NIÑO AND WINTER WEATHER

SAN BERNARDINO – The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), District 8 partnered today with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), San Bernardino County, Riverside County, California Highway Patrol (CHP), United States Forest Service (USFS), California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal-Fire), San Bernardino County Fire Department, San Bernardino County Sheriff and San Bernardino County Public Works to provide helpful information to prepare the public for El Niño this winter.

The 2015 El Niño is projected to be one of the most powerful in recent record according to the National Weather Service. Weather experts are forecasting a wetter-than-average winter in Southern California, with weather events likely to peak in early 2016. Caltrans is preparing roadways for increased volume of rainfall.

Caltrans District 8 Director, John Bulinski states, “Caltrans is taking the El Niño forecast seriously. Caltrans crews are committed to preparing and responding to incidents that adversely affect our roadways. Ultimately, we cannot predict how our environment will respond to the magnitude of the storms that are forecasted; however, we are ready to respond.”

As a result of the strong weather predictions, Caltrans is preparing for snow and heavy rain events by repositioning equipment, materials and increasing staffing levels in regions most likely to experience extreme weather. In addition, Caltrans crews have cleaned drains and culverts, replaced signs, refreshed striping, performed mountain rock scaling and placed erosion control measures. While careful planning and evaluation is taking place across the region, the weather impact on the drought-stricken terrain cannot be predicted.

Caltrans joined San Bernardino and Riverside County officials in multiple public outreach events to educate and prepare the public for the forecasted El Niño storms. Emergency officials are urging the public to Plan, Prepare, Practice....and Ready Set Go. For more information go to <http://www.sbcounty.gov/uploads/sbcounty/content/oes/pdf/familydisasterplan.pdf> and <http://www.rvcfire.org/ourDepartment/OES/Pages/Citizen-ReadinessPreparedness.aspx>

Caltrans and CHP advise motorists to:

- **Plan ahead and check weather and road conditions before traveling.**
- **Utilize vehicle headlights during weather events, “see and be seen.”**
- **Reduce vehicle speed on wet surfaces and allow a safe following distance from other vehicles. Rain, oil, and dust equal slippery conditions and traction problems on roads.**
- **Pay attention to and follow flood warnings and barricades.**
- **Avoid driving through running or standing water, putting yourself, passengers, and your vehicle at risk. An average-sized vehicle can float in as little as 12 inches of water; deeper, moving water can carry vehicles away.**
- **Drive with caution and give plenty of space to road workers, law enforcement and emergency responders.**

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- **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN!**

Motorists traveling to the mountain regions should prepare for unforeseen events and changes in weather that can cause immediate road closures or extended periods of time on the highway. Winter weekends bring heavy mountain traffic. Motorists should maintain patience and follow all traffic laws. Please remember to keep the roadways clean by taking home snow toys and trash.

Caltrans and CHP advise the following:

- **Motorists are reminded to make sure vehicles are in good working condition before traveling in adverse weather. Check tires, brakes, wipers, antifreeze, heaters and exhaust systems.**
- **ALWAYS carry chains when traveling to mountain areas!**
 - **When chain controls are in effect, motorists must have chains or an all-wheel drive vehicle equipped with snow tires on all wheels in order to continue. Vehicles will not be permitted to proceed otherwise.**
- **Motorists should consider carrying blankets, water, food, a shovel, gloves and a flashlight.**
- **Chain installers may be available should drivers need assistance.**
- **Weather and road conditions can change rapidly causing changes in chain control locations – know before you go!**
 - **Listen to or monitor local weather and traffic reports before you get on the road.**
- **Please realize that roadways could be closed for the following reasons, among others:**
 - **High winds and blowing snow.**
 - **Spinouts and accidents.**
 - **In areas where flooding, rock fall or avalanche danger is high, Caltrans may close the highway for an extended period of time.**
 - **During major storms, CHP traffic breaks or escorts may be necessary, so be prepared for delays or extended periods of travel time.**
- **Motorists should watch for road signs providing road conditions and vehicle requirements.**
 - **Always follow directions given by law enforcement, emergency responders, and road workers.**

Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/caltrans8. For information on Caltrans projects, visit www.caltrans8.info. View traffic conditions at <http://quickmap.dot.ca.gov> or view planned lane closures at www.lcswebreports.dot.ca.gov.

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