

NEWS CLIPS

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Resource Conservation and Public Outreach

Organized by date

Storm causes power outage

Source: The Acorn 2/4/16

A pair of power outages Sunday affected nearly 2,000 Edison customers in Agoura Hills and Calabasas.

The incidents occurred when strong winds coupled with rain caused trees to fall on power lines.

There were two separate, major outages, said Lauren Bartlett, spokesperson for Southern California Edison.

The first began shortly before noon and affected 878 customers in the western portion of Calabasas and in southeast Agoura Hills. It was caused by a tree that fell on power lines along Agoura Road near Lost Hills Road.

The power failure affected neighborhoods north of Lost Hills Road and as far west as Defender Drive.

Service was restored in phases, and all customers had their power back on before 1 a.m. Monday.

“The power outage certainly made us grateful for modern-day conveniences,” said Calabasas resident Marcia Goldwater, whose Saratoga neighborhood near Grape Arbor Park had no electricity for nearly 12 hours.

“We made the best of it though. Fortunately, we had plenty of candles and flashlights . . . and were able to heat the house a bit with our fireplace,” she said.

Another power failure affected 940 residents in Calabasas. It began at 12:35 p.m. when a tree fell on the power lines on Greenview Road near Edenpark Drive, not far from Lupin Hill Elementary School.

That outage affected several neighborhoods between Park Sorrento and Ruthwood Drive. Service was restored within two hours.

Bartlett warned residents to take precautions around electrical wires.

“If you see a downed power line or dangling wires, even if it appears not to be live, don’t touch it or approach it or anything that is in contact with it. Call 911 immediately,” she said.

Storm assistance

Source: The Acorn Letter 2/4/16

During last Sunday's storm a tree was blown down from the median onto Lindero Canyon Road in Oak Park.

The tree was lying across two lanes and was a danger to motorists who happened by.

I was driving home from church going the opposite direction, when I see a lady picking up the fallen tree and piling it back onto the median. It was very windy and cold at the time.

I had to travel back up Lindero Canyon Road two hours later and saw that the entire tree and branches had been neatly piled in place.

Thank you, kind lady, for helping others.

Jennifer Polk
Westlake Village

Water officials vote to extend California drought emergency

Source: LA Times 2/3/16



FRESNO, Calif. (AP) - State water regulators voted to extend emergency conservation measures because of a drought, even though an increase in rain and snow this winter has improved California's snowpack.

But with the drought still severe, conservation efforts fell off in December. Officials said Tuesday that residents used 18 percent less water than in December 2013, but that was the worst showing in seven months of tracking and fell well short of Gov. Jerry Brown's goal of 25 percent.

It's also the third straight month that the state missed its target.

California, however, will likely beat its long-term conservation goal, saving a combined 25.5 percent since Brown issued the mandate in June calling for savings from 2013 use rates, the State Water Resources Control Board reported.

State water managers are looking ahead to April 1 - when the Sierra Nevada snowpack is historically at its deepest before melting and feeding rivers and streams and replenishing depleted reservoirs.

The snowpack's depth then will signal whether drought conditions are easing after the state's driest four-year period on record.

"We're at halftime," water board chair Felicia Marcus said in an interview. "We're not doing too badly, but we certainly haven't won the game yet."

The water content of the snowpack on Tuesday measured 130 percent of its historical average for this time of year.

Under a light snowfall, snowpack survey chief Frank Gehrke plunged a measuring pole into 76 inches of snow near Echo Summit in the Central Sierra region that includes Lake Tahoe.

"It's certainly a very encouraging start to the winter," said Gehrke, chief of the California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program for the Department of Water Resources.

Still, he said, the state needs to see storms each week to ease the drought. The snowpack provides nearly one-third of California's water supply.

An electronic measurement collected by more than 100 sensors throughout the Sierra has shown the snowpack at 114 percent.

Officials say that despite the El Nino rain storms, California's major reservoirs remain critically low, requiring continued conservation.

Under the extended drought regulation, cities that are especially hot, dry or crowded or that have managed to come up with new sources of water would get a slight break. The statewide conservation is expected to net a savings of at least 20 percent instead of last year's goal of 25 percent, officials said.

But water districts say the breaks don't go far enough and leaders lined up at a Sacramento meeting Tuesday to tell the water board that the breaks don't go far enough.

They wanted more credit for investing millions in drought resilient projects and those built before 2013, a cutoff date set by the state for local districts to qualify for cuts up to 8 percent from their individual targets.

They urged state officials to replace the emergency regulations with long-term water policy.

The Sacramento Suburban Water District invested \$120 million in groundwater storage a decade ago, making it drought proof, said the district's general manager Robert Roscoe. Yet, he said the district is held to high conservation standards.

"We did precisely what we were supposed to do," Roscoe said before the water board voted. "We anticipated a drought, were proactive and we made a huge investment."

The new regulation would extend through October. But water officials said they would review it again in the spring. By then, they say it will be clearer whether California is still in drought.

California cut water use 18.3% in December, still barely meeting Gov. Brown's mandate

Source: LA Times 2/2/16

As state water regulators consider extending drought restrictions through the fall, officials reported Tuesday that urban Californians had reduced their water use by 18.3% during December.

The savings, which are compared with December 2013 water usage levels, were the smallest in seven months of reporting and put California's cumulative savings at 25.5%, down from 26.3% in November.

Gov. [Jerry Brown](#) has called for a 25% statewide reduction in urban water use between June and February to help the state cope with a years-long drought.

With about a month and a half of reporting still to come, the state finds itself just squeaking by.

California is entering its fourth consecutive year of drought, and for the second consecutive year the Legislature will consider emergency drought relief.

State Water Resources Control Board Chairwoman Felicia Marcus asked staff members whether they believed the state would meet the 25% mandate or whether it would be a "nail-biter."

Katheryn Landau, who presented the December data, responded that she was "cautiously optimistic."

"We're in field goal range, but you want a touchdown," Marcus said.

She added later: "The fact that we're focused on those percentages is, I think, less important than that people have really stepped up ... sometimes at extraordinary cost."

Marcus and other water officials have said they expected savings to be lower during the colder, wetter months, when people typically use less water anyway and there is less room to cut back.

Still, the December savings effort marked the third consecutive month that Californians collectively failed to meet Brown's goal of a 25% cutback.

To hit that target, the water board assigned conservation standards to each of the state's 411 urban suppliers last year.

Suppliers with a history of high per capita water use were ordered to cut as much as 36% from 2013 totals. Suppliers with a history of lower consumption were told to cut as little as 4%.

Some have struggled to meet their targets, repeatedly falling five, 10 or even 15 percentage points short. In October, regulators fined four suppliers \$61,000 for noncompliance, and they have said that more penalties could be forthcoming for suppliers that don't shape up.

Many of the hardest-hit districts have complained for months that their individual targets failed to take into account local conditions. So last month, state water board staff unveiled a modified set of drought rules that would provide suppliers with some relief.

The proposed changes to California's emergency drought regulation reward water districts for investing in new local supplies and allow for adjustments to savings goals based on a district's climate and population growth. The proposal allows water providers to have the so-called conservation standards reduced by as much as eight percentage points.

Collectively, officials said the adjustments and credits could drive statewide water savings below the 25% target.

Water board staff members have characterized the changes as "modest" and an attempt to be flexible in responding to water suppliers' concerns.

But environmental groups have criticized the credits and adjustments, saying they seem to have been created to satisfy a small number of water suppliers who wanted some slack.

"I just think they're inappropriate in the middle of an emergency," said Sara Aminzadeh, executive director of the California Coastkeeper Alliance, which advocates for clean water. "It just sends the wrong message."

"Californians have been asked to reduce and they stepped up to the plate," she said. "Then nine months later ... to offer these adjustments and credits is potentially confusing and undermines what we've done over the past year."

Depending on how much rain and snow the state gets this winter, officials have said they could revisit the rules in March or April. They could adjust or even eliminate the restrictions at that time. A strong El Niño has already delivered some rain to California, and meteorologists say they believe more will come in February and March.

Later Tuesday, officials from the California Department of Water Resources are scheduled to take measurements of the snowpack at a station about 90 miles east of Sacramento.

Electronic readings of the statewide snowpack on Tuesday morning showed water content was 20 inches, or 114% of the historical average for that date, according to the California Department of Water Resources.

Officials have cautioned, though, that while a healthy snowpack can make a dent in [the drought](#), it would need to be about 150% of average by April 1 to have a shot at ending the drought.

The state's current drought regulations are scheduled to expire next week and the water board is to consider the proposed rule changes later Tuesday afternoon. If approved, the updated regulations would be in effect until October.

DWP defends security practices after leadership shake-up

Source: LA Times 2/2/16

Leaders of the [Los Angeles Department of Water and Power](#) defended the utility's security practices Tuesday following the release of a confidential report that identified vulnerabilities at three of the city's power stations.

The defense also followed a leadership shake-up at the DWP. Patrick Findley, who oversaw security and emergency management, was let go last Thursday, according to city government sources who spoke on condition of anonymity because of confidentiality rules on personnel matters.

Utility spokesman Joseph Ramallo said he could not comment on the matter. Ramallo said that security services were currently being overseen by Gary Wong, the assistant general manager of joint system services.

Calls to Findley were not immediately returned.

A report from Navigant Consulting concluded that the department had failed to follow up on recommendations made more than a decade ago to improve the security of its power facilities. Power officials "ignored most of the recommendations" made in 2001 by R.S. Hahn Co., the consultants wrote in their report first released in December.

One facility lacked alarms at its exterior doors to catch intruders, according to a previously redacted section of the report. At another, delivery vehicles were not inspected. And at a third, weeds and trees were so overgrown that trespassers could hide without being detected, the report said.

The Navigant consultants said that, beyond such specific problems, they were worried that the utility lacked processes to ensure that such security improvements were addressed.

"It's an order of priority for me. To me, it seems there is no more important item to contemplate at the utility today than the security of the assets," said L.A. City Councilman [Felipe Fuentes](#), who introduced a proposal last month that would overhaul the governance structure of the DWP.

The department has left it up to managers at each facility to act on recommendations, which often results in "significant delays in fixing the security issue or no action at all," the consultants wrote.

The security concerns laid out in the unredacted version of the report were first published by the L.A. Daily News. The Times also obtained an unredacted copy of the report.

DWP officials defended their work before the [City Council](#) at a hearing Tuesday, arguing the Navigant report failed to include its recent efforts to enhance security. Officials who spoke at the hearing included DWP Chief Operating Officer David Wright.

Studies were performed by Magallanes Associates International from 2006 to 2008, and the Los Angeles Police Department's anti-terrorism team evaluated the utility's sites in 2009, according to DWP officials.

At the sites identified in the Navigant report, crews have since installed additional security gates, razor wire, surveillance cameras and key card access, DWP officials said. Officials have also implemented new procedures to inspect deliveries, they said.

The utility operates 1,000 surveillance cameras with plans to expand to 2,500, according to the DWP. Additionally, the failure rate of the cameras has dropped from 40% in 2014 to 6% now, officials said.

Concerns over security come as Fuentes pushes an initiative that would strengthen the power of the Board of Water and Power Commissioners and actually weaken the influence of City Hall politicians.

The ballot measure, which could be put to voters as soon as June, would replace the volunteer commission with a panel of paid experts. It would also remove the requirement that the appointment of the DWP's general manager be approved by the City Council and mayor.

"We have the opportunity to move forward and have a conversation as to whether we should reform this charter. If there is one reason to consider that, it is the security and reliability of this utility," Fuentes said.

FBI joins investigation into Flint drinking water crisis

Source: LA Times 2/2/16



The [FBI](#) is working with a multi-agency team investigating the [lead contamination](#) of Flint's drinking water, alongside [Environmental Protection Agency](#) investigators who can tackle criminal violations of federal environmental law, officials said Tuesday.

A slew of local, state and federal officials have resigned since doctors revealed last year that using the Flint River for the city's drinking water supply caused elevated levels of lead in some children's blood. Lead contamination has been linked to learning disabilities and other problems. Michigan's governor has apologized repeatedly for the state's role.

FBI spokeswoman Jill Washburn said in an email that the agency is "investigating the matter to determine if there have been any federal violations." She declined to say when the FBI got involved.

Officials haven't said whether criminal or civil charges might follow the investigation.

In addition to the FBI and the EPA, the team includes the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Gina Balaya, a U.S. attorney's spokeswoman in Detroit, told the Associated Press in an email. The Detroit Free Press first reported the FBI's involvement Tuesday.

In November, the EPA announced it was auditing how Michigan enforces drinking water rules and said it would identify how to strengthen state oversight. The U.S. attorney's office in Detroit said in January that it was investigating the water crisis with the EPA.

Flint's water source was switched from Detroit's water system to the Flint River in 2014 to save money while under state financial management. The river water was not treated properly, and lead from pipes leached into Flint homes. The city returned to Detroit's system in October while it awaits the completion of a separate pipeline to Lake Huron this summer.

The federal investigation is one of several taking place into Flint's water supply. Last month, Michigan Atty. Gen. Bill Schuette announced the appointment of a special counsel to help his office investigate whether laws were broken.

An independent panel appointed by Republican Gov. [Rick Snyder](#) has determined that the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality was primarily responsible for the water contamination. The Michigan Civil Rights Commission also plans to hold hearings to explore whether the civil rights of Flint residents were violated.

El Niño rainstorms improving wildfire conditions throughout California, fire agency says

Source: LA Times 2/2/16

Higher-than-normal rainfall associated with El Niño has diminished the risk of wildfires in California for the next four months, according to a national fire agency report.

However, those same rains ultimately could trigger an uptick in grass fires at lower elevations because of a heavy grass crop expected in late spring, according to the National Interagency Coordination Center. The NICC helps oversee wildfire response efforts.

Heavy rainfall and increasing snow accumulations brought on by widespread storms in January have resulted in above-normal precipitation for Northern and Central California, allowing vegetation to grow and “green-up,” the report said.

Southern California hasn’t been so lucky however, and precipitation there has reached only near-normal levels.

Although models predict that El Niño will dump more rain in the lower part of the state, the report notes that some people are growing skeptical.

“While the two storms of early January were enough to bring the monthly precipitation totals to within close proximity of normal for southern Orange County and San Diego county, an extended stretch of dry weather in late January has led to some in the general public to question whether the current El Niño would end up bringing significant rainfall to Southern California,” the report said.

Five years of [California drought](#) and above-normal temperatures have caused firefighters to rethink their approach to battling wildfires in the winter and spring.

Traditionally, the threat of wildfire has been low from January to May. In the past few years, however, wildfire activity has increased during this period. Wildfires also have grown much more destructive during the normal fire season.

In 2015, two massive wildfires in Northern California — the Butte and Valley blazes — killed six people and racked up at least \$1 billion in insured losses. Together, the fires covered 150,000 acres and destroyed thousands of structures.

Although the fire agency is anticipating above-normal precipitation over the next few months, it cautioned that the benefits are likely to be temporary.

“Above-normal precipitation is certainly a welcome change to the dry winters of the past few years,” the report said. “But one wet year is unlikely to bring an end to the drought.”

Roads, highways affected by storm now open

Source: Ventura County Star 2/1/16



Roads in Oxnard and highways affected by flooding during Sunday's storm are now open, officials said Monday morning.

In Oxnard, strong winds downed trees and electrical lines and officials closed streets during repairs.

Second Street at Roosevelt Avenue and E Street is now open, along with Ventura Road at Doris Avenue, the 2500 block of Jamestown Court, the 3600 block of South Victoria Avenue and 2000 block of Camino Del Sol, officials said.

Water and mud flooded several lanes on Highway 101 and Pacific Coast Highway near Solimar Beach north of Ventura.

Both highways were reopened Sunday.

The Ventura Pier remains closed after it was damaged during a high surf event in December. No major damage was reported during Sunday's storm, but high surf and strong winds are expected Sunday.

A coastal town's long and stormy relationship with El Niño

Source: LA Times 2/1/16

In an old shingled house on Beach Boulevard, salt water sprays the living room windows above the garage. Pam Raymond looks out to see 20-foot gray waves cannonading the underside of the town's fishing pier. When a bigger one thumps a quarter-mile out, she can feel a faint rumble in her floorboards.

Whitewash hits the sea wall across her street and spews sand, rocks and bits of seaweed into her neighborhood. In her front garden, only succulents can survive these deluges of brine.

Raymond's house is not far from a Safeway and a Taco Bell, but on winter days like this, the town feels like a remote outpost against the ocean.

Waves gnashed out a section of the sea wall last week and are threatening to eat parts of the street it protects. Since December, storm surf has damaged the end of the concrete pier and carved away sandy cliffs. Officials condemned one apartment building — next to two others that had been evacuated in 2010 — and at least two homes.

El Niño is an abstruse phenomenon far easier to predict on a global scale than a local one.

But just south of San Francisco, Pacifica has come to know it intimately — with both awe and dread.

"I worry about it all the time," said Raymond, 51. "It's been rumbling at night. A real loud rumbling that keeps you up."

These bluffs have been hammered by the ocean for millennia. What makes Pacifica — a string of seaside hamlets along six miles of coast — so vulnerable is that the land is loose.

Tectonic stresses in this northern spur of the Santa Cruz Mountains have fractured and ground down granite, shale and sandstone into rock fragments that don't compact as well as soil. And some of the coastal bluffs are composed of little more than sand.

The Italians who settled here a century ago liked the sandy soil to grow artichokes. But the loose sediment has bedeviled nearly everyone else.

At the infamous Devil's Slide on the south end of town, a harrowing stretch of Pacific Coast Highway collapsed into the sea in 1940, just three years after it was built, and did so again seven more times before the state finally replaced it with twin-bore tunnels in 2013.

In wet winters, rain sets off debris flows and floods the valleys, as waves tear away at the coast.

The beach used to go way out there. I feel like we're living on borrowed time.- Pam Raymond, a resident of Pacifica

The two biggest El Niños on record hit hard. On Jan. 4, 1983, more than 5 inches of rain fell in one day. Residents in canoes paddled out of flooded homes in the San Pedro Valley. A mudslide at the top of the valley plowed into three homes, killing three children sleeping in their beds.

The 1997-98 El Niño saw seven homes on Esplanade Avenue lose the last 10 feet of their backyards, and the residents had to evacuate.

Storms in the 2009-10 winter, a moderate El Niño, forced officials to red-tag two apartment buildings on Esplanade at the edge of a 70-foot cliff. According to the California Coastal Commission manager for the district, Nancy Cave, the owners of the buildings obtained emergency permits in 2003 to drop boulders at the base of the cliff to keep the waves from eating it away. They were required to come back with plans for a permanent fix but never did.

Geological maps indicate that the apartments, built in 1962, are sitting on "dune soil." A photo of them taken in 1972 shows the bluff extending much farther out, sloping down, with only a band of vertical sandstone in the middle. Over the next 40 years, the water ate at the base until parts of the cliff were plumb-line-straight, from back patio to the high-tide line.

One building retained enough of a setback to remain occupied for a spell, even as the dicey situation kept rents low. For taking the risk, [Section 8](#) and other low-income residents got phenomenal ocean views.

But last week a drone video showed huge chunks of sand sloughing off beneath them, creating cavities in the cliff. On Jan. 25, city officials told the 26 residents of 310 Esplanade they had to move.

Some were still clearing out Friday as the waves pounded below.

Down the street, John Entwistle, 51, roamed the high dunes with his dogs in a light rain.

Hearing that waves might reach 30 feet, he and his two housemates drove down from the Castro District in San Francisco to see the spectacle.

The big pewter waves and misty sky reminded Entwistle of a William Turner seascape.

They watched work crews unload boulders, to be used to shore up the cliff below different properties.

"It's hard to believe the impact on these cliffs," he said.

Raymond and her husband, John, think about moving out of the home they've lived in for 25 years. Built in the 1930s, it has the feel of a whaling station, and it has weathered plenty of storms. She loves the view, loves when the whales surface and blow. Watching the storms roll in while she sips coffee or wine by the fire is an epic feeling: an element so outside of human scale, bellowing right outside her window. "We're definitely on the edge here."

But she would like to garden someday, planting something other than succulents. She dabs at salt crystals clustered in the corner of her window and says she's sick of replacing the windows. Everything rusts and rots like an old fishing boat. John had to put up sandbags to keep the water out of the garage, but it only slows the flooding. Waves that have already blown over a 10-foot sea wall and across the street are bound to get over sandbags. She's seen waves shove cars into the curb and knock countless people over. Once they whipped her mother's glasses off.

And she says it's getting worse as the seas rise.

"The beach used to go way out there," Raymond said. "I feel like we're living on borrowed time."

A block down, Paul VanWambeke, 75, chortles as three teenage boys are caught off guard by an explosion of water and flee as if a shark had lunged over the wall.

As a local since 1968, VanWambeke admits he got nailed once. He loves the ocean but lives up the hill, where he doesn't have to worry about his property getting swallowed by the Pacific.

"Down here it's like living next to a volcano," he said. "I can walk to the beach."

Fatality from falling tree in El Niño storm called 'unimaginable'

Source: LA Times 2/1/16



Southern California was cleaning up Monday after El Niño-driven winds caused damage, power outages and the death of one person.

Wind gusts of more than 100 mph were clocked in several places in Los Angeles County on Sunday, leaving thousands without power and blocking roads with debris.

The winds were strong enough to uproot an 80-foot-tall tree in San Diego's Pacific Beach neighborhood that crushed three parked cars and one passing by on Ingraham Street near Fortuna Avenue, fatally injuring a person in the moving car.

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department Capt. Joe Amador called the incident "unimaginable," noting that the car could have easily missed the falling tree.

"Even five seconds one way or the other and this wouldn't have happened," Amador said. "Our thoughts and hearts are with the family. We're in the life-saving business and it's hard when it doesn't turn out that way."

For Monday, a wind advisory remains in effect until noon for valley areas. Snow levels will drop to the 2,000-2,500 foot level, and there will be a high surf warning through Tuesday for beaches in L.A. and Orange counties, forecasters say.

Snow, high winds briefly close 5 Freeway at Grapevine

Source: LA Times 2/1/16



A portion of the 5 Freeway near Grapevine Road near Lebec was briefly closed Monday morning after wind and snow cut visibility for drivers, according to the California Highway Patrol.

Drivers were diverted from Parker Road to the southbound 5 Freeway as snow stuck to the ground. The CHP escorted about 200 vehicles at a time on the freeway in both directions. The CHP warned traffic would be slow.

Winter storm conditions were expected to continue through Monday morning in northern Ventura and Los Angeles counties, according to the [National Weather Service](#).

A rainstorm Sunday brought up to 70 mph winds and led to widespread power outages. Los Angeles Department of Water and Power restored power to 51,000 customers overnight. At least 12,000 customers remained without power Monday morning.

In San Diego, powerful winds knocked a massive tree onto a car in Pacific Beach, killing a woman inside.

Mountians in Los Angeles and Ventura counties got the most rain. Camp Hi Hill in Los Angeles County got 4.46 inches of rain and Nordhoff Ridge in Ventura County received 3.98 inches.

By Monday night, rain moved east toward Arizona, and snow flurries developed at the Grapevine.

Three to 5 inches of snow could blanket north-facing foothills in the Antelope Valley, with some mountains getting up to 8 inches.

Howling winds could reach 45 mph with gusts up to 65 mph through Monday afternoon.

Forecasters warned dangerous driving conditions would continue along mountain roads.

Along the coast, forecasters advised boaters to not venture out as strong 50 mph winds sweep over the ocean and produce hazardous conditions through Monday.

Surf could reach 10 feet along Los Angeles County west- and northwest-facing beaches, the weather service advised. The high surf may produce strong rip currents and cause beach erosion.

An Important Message for LVMWD Customers

Irrigation Restrictions Changed

Take Charge of Your Water Use

LVMWD's "Water Budget" program is now in place. That means customers have the freedom to manage their monthly water use, including which days and how frequently they water. Here are some important points to remember:

- ✓ The drought is NOT over – do not waste water
- ✓ All other drought restrictions remain in place
- ✓ Stay within your water budget to avoid paying more
- ✓ Your water budget will change each month

Find your water budget targets at: www.LVMWD.com/MyWaterBudget

Customers who stay within their monthly budgets will pay the lowest rates.

Is your billing information current?

Your indoor water budget and sewer service charges are now based on the number of persons in your household. If you did not respond to last year's customer survey, you could be paying more than necessary.



For more information on the Water Budget program and current drought conservation measures, visit www.LVMWD.com