

Attention: USDA Rural Development is notifying rural communities and the water and waste systems that serve them about potential weather-related events caused by El Niño effect.

According to the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA), “El Niño is a disruption of the ocean-atmosphere system in the Tropical Pacific having important consequences for weather and climate around the globe. Across the United States, precipitation impacts from El Niño are likely to be seen during the upcoming months.”

What are the risks of weather related events due to El Niño effects?

Increased precipitation and flooding in high-risk areas of the country, especially areas that have suffered recent droughts and wild fires, may impact your community. Drought conditions have led to several extensive wildfires in western states. These fires have destroyed vegetation that would reduce peak runoff from heavy precipitation events, increasing the risks of flash floods or severe flooding.

What can you do to prepare?

- ✓ Review and update your Vulnerability Assessment (VA) and Emergency Response Plan (ERP).
- ✓ Make sure that the contact information in your plan is current and lists all assets that would be vulnerable to a flash flood.
- ✓ Exercise your plan by having a practice flash flood event with all participants that would normally respond to a real event.
- ✓ Connect with your state and local emergency managers.
- ✓ Ensure that essential emergency equipment (generators, etc.) is stored outside potential flood areas and on high ground. Test the equipment to make sure it is in good working order.

What assistance is available?

Preparing for Emergencies: USDA funds several non-profit organizations that can help rural water and waste disposal facilities update a VA and ERP.

Restoring Services: In addition, USDA funds state Rural Water Association water and wastewater circuit riders that can assist rural systems in preparing for, and restoring services, should a disaster strike your community. These services are available at no cost to rural water and waste systems serving rural communities and areas of 10,000 or fewer residents. Nationwide and state organizations are listed below.

National Rural Water Association
 Rural Community Assistance Partnership
 Listing for State Rural Water Associations

www.nrwa.org

www.rcap.org

www.nrwa.org (click the State Associations tab)

Weather Information: Up-to-date precipitation forecasts for your area are available at www.weather.gov.

What assistance is available? (Cont'd)

Other Resources/Contacts:

General template for creating an Emergency Response Plan	http://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/EmergencyResponsePlan.pdf Or contact your state Rural Water Association
Get help after a disaster (FEMA Disaster Assistance)	http://www.disasterassistance.gov/
FEMA guidance on preparing for a flood	http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1409002852888-3c5d1f64f12df02aa801901cc7c311ca/how_to_prepare_flood_033014_508.pdf
EPA Flood Resiliency Guide	http://www2.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse/flood-resilience-basic-guide-water-and-wastewater-utilities
EPA Emergency Response Guides	http://www2.epa.gov/waterutilityresponse

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