

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #57



EL NINO WEATHER WATCH

Part 2: Meteorological Musings Or Misses For Monterey's Masses

By Wanda Sue Parrott

(Weather forecasts predict the Monterey Peninsula will be hard hit by El Niño conditions this winter, with potential flooding and frigid temperatures that could be deadly for unsheltered persons. What is being done to provide shelter and service if dire predictions materialize? This series explores foul-weather aid for everyone.)

Will A “Godzilla” Condition Catch You Off Guard?

PREDICTING the future is the oldest guessing game on earth. If weather forecasting were an exact science, meteorologists would score perfectly. For instance, there would be no doubt about veracity of the Aug. 13, 2015 Los Angeles Times story by contact reporter Rong-Gong Lin II headlined “Latest forecast suggests ‘Godzilla El Niño’ may be coming to California.”

According to the report, “The strengthening El Niño in the Pacific Ocean has the potential to become one of the most powerful on record, as warming ocean waters surge toward the Americas, setting up a pattern that could bring once-in-a-generation storms this winter to drought-parched California.”

That’s dramatic!! If you haven’t been a weather-watcher before, now is the time to start. Here is why:

Emergency Shelters Need To Be Located Throughout The Monterey Peninsula



In case of severe flooding or other weather-related disasters, every community in our area should have a designated shelter. Last week’s column promised to provide in this column the locations of such emergency shelters in Sand City, Seaside and Marina. Wrong!

I e-mailed questionnaires to authorities in every community but didn’t allow time to receive answers. Therefore, I am revising the order of these columns to give the mayors fair time for response.

Meanwhile, enroute to my Tap Bananas dance practice at Scholze Park Community Center in New Monterey on Monday, I saw a mature couple and their dog hunched under a tent made from a blue plastic tarp stretched across a picnic table on

the soggy grass. They looked miserable in plastic rainwear. Their “baby” looked like—well, a wet, woofing tail-wagger. What do you think a dog dressed in rain gear was trying to say?

I interpret this model’s expression to mean, “Scholze Park would be a great indoor shelter in New Monterey.”

The Weather Doing What Weather Does

In Missouri, where I lived for 21 years, harsh weather forced communities to provide emergency shelters. People grumbled, “God is no respecter of man,” meaning: “Super-wealthy homeowners and poverty-level homeless are equally vulnerable to all conditions visited on earth from the heavens.”

Weather is the link connecting science and religion because of its indisputable truth: Just as the sun’s light spreads freely over us all, so do wind, lightning, fire, and rain.

Under non-ideal conditions, multi-million –dollar homes can be destroyed by mudslides, floods and tornadoes as surely as makeshift tents can be swept away in flash floods. It’s not bad karma or punishment. It’s just weather doing what weather does.

It pays to be an alert weather-watcher!

Survival “Ifs” When You’re Caught In A Storm

While awaiting storm-shelter news, these tips can help you survive power outages like the one in October that shut down the peninsula.

Remember, staying warm, dry and hydrated is your top priority. Food counts, too.

If you are housed, lay in a supply of candles and lighter; if you have a working fireplace, logs stored indoors so they remain dry will kindle a fire. You should have a gallon or two of bottled water handy for emergency use.

If you store tap water, boil it between two and four minutes before putting it in capped containers. If homeless, carry smaller bottles.

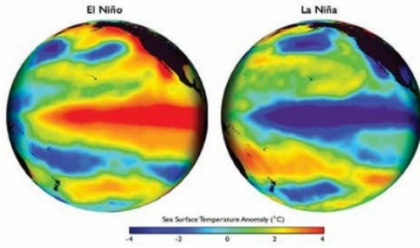
If houseless, head for the nearest indoor place you can find until the storm has passed, Maybe at businesses such as all-night restaurants like Denny’s (one in Marina and two in Monterey), all-night supermarkets like Safeway in Del Rey Oaks, or pharmacies like some Walgreens are dry spots.

If you have access to a vehicle, stay in it, even if you double up and are crowded. Your body heat will keep you warm and dry until the storm passes.

If outdoors with no dry place to go, wrap up in a tarp, your tent or whatever other waterproof item you have and move to a location where you have a roof over your head. It may be a parking garage, breezeway between buildings or even a spot under a bridge or freeway overpass.

Survival expert Charles Crooks advises the sheltered and unsheltered to stock up on canned foods. “One can of tuna gives you enough protein for a whole day,” he says. “Canned green beans, potatoes and fruit cocktail provide food and fluids.”

Illustrations from Wikipedia



The aforementioned Los Angeles Times report says, “The National Weather Service’s Climate Prediction Center said Thursday that all computer models are predicting a strong El Niño to peak in the late fall or early winter. A host of observations have led scientists to conclude that, collectively, these atmospheric and oceanic features reflect a significant and strengthening El Niño.”

This means rain. Lots of rain, but not enough to be drought-busters, although the El Niño that causes floods, snowfalls and mudslides also causes droughts.

According to Wikipedia, “El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is an irregularly periodical climate change caused by variations in sea surface temperatures over the tropical eastern Pacific Ocean, affecting much of the tropics and subtropics. The warming phase is known as El Niño and the cooling phase as La Niña.”

So, how severe will El Niño be? The 2016 Farmers’ Almanac predicts near-to-below normal winter precipitation will cover much of the country, including the drought-stricken Southwest, where conditions are predicted to be “Dry and mild.”

And last, but not least, if possible, use soft, fleecy blankets in which to roll up Native-American style. Inexpensive Indian blankets are amazingly warm, even if they’re made in China.

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Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or leave a message at The Yodel Lady at 831-899-5887.