

To:

What: Winter Weather Awareness Day in Texas
Where: State of Texas
When: Thursday, November 10, 2011
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...Winter Weather Awareness Day November 10, 2011...
...Winter Weather Outlook and Impacts for 2011-2012...

In cooperation with The Texas Division of Emergency Management and The Texas Department of Public Safety, Thursday, November 10, 2011, is designated as Winter Weather Awareness Day in the Lone Star State. Every Texan should take this opportunity to prepare for adverse winter weather.

Two historic blizzards have crippled parts of West Central Texas over the past two winters. One occurred on Christmas Eve 2009, and the other one occurred during the early morning hours of February 1, 2011. These historic winter storms should serve as a reminder that even West Central Texas can experience the same type of winter weather that is more common across the northern U.S.

Have a good plan of action when it comes to winter weather: 1) Prepare before a winter storm, 2) check the weather forecast before you travel, 3) monitor temperatures, 4) drive according to the condition of the highway, and 5) have a way to receive warnings.

Each year Texans die from accidents caused by ice, snow, or fog. The Texas Department of Public Safety urges motorists to slow down to the conditions of the roadway. Motorists should not assume the speed limit is the safe speed. For road conditions, please go to the Texas Department of Transportation's website <http://www.dot.state.tx.us> or call 1-800-452-9292.

An updated La Nina Winter Weather Outlook for December through February for West Central Texas is provided on the following pages. Information and graphics concerning the temperature and precipitation outlooks are located at the following links and please feel free to use them.

http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/images/winteroutlooktemp_2_20102.jpg
http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/images/winteroutlookprecip2_20102.jpg

Information on winter weather safety can be also be found at the following links:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter>
<http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/ThreatAwareness/winterstorm.htm>
www.redcross.org

Hector Guerrero
Warning and Coordination Meteorologist

"Working Together To Save Lives"



Winter Weather Outlook for December through February 2012

- The Climate Prediction Center (www.cpc.noaa.gov) reports we are in a La Nina pattern. La Nina is associated with cooling in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. The La Nina pattern will continue through this winter season. La Nina conditions were present during the last winter season, and continued into the spring of this year. The period of record for La Nina (and El Nino) events, dating back to 1950, shows that “back to back” occurrences of La Nina are not uncommon.
- There is some uncertainty on how strong this La Nina will become.
- From the results of a local study, winter season precipitation averaged below normal for Abilene, Brady, San Angelo and Rotan during moderate to strong La Nina years; while winter season temperatures averaged above normal. (See Figure below)
- Another local study showed that snowfall in non-El Niño winters in Abilene averaged 3.8 inches. Although not quite as pronounced, the San Angelo data showed a similar trend, with snowfall averaging around 2.7 inches in non-El Niño periods.
- The 90-day precipitation outlook for December through February indicates an enhanced probability for precipitation to be below normal and temperatures to average above normal, across West Central Texas. This reflects the anticipated effects of La Nina. For specific details, please see graphic at http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/images/winteroutlooktemp_2_20102.jpg and also at http://www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2010/images/winteroutlookprecip2_20102.jpg

Potential Impacts Associated with La Nina this Winter

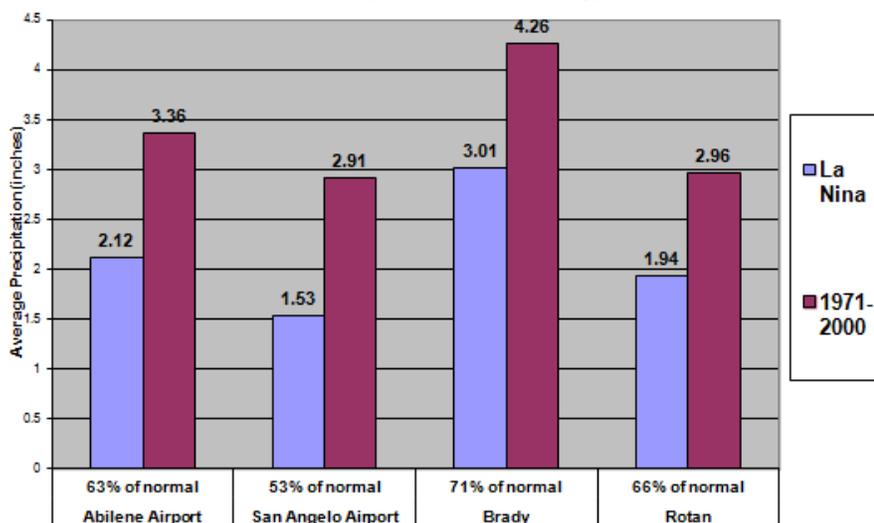
- Persistence or worsening of ongoing drought conditions
- Continued fire weather threat
- Potential for high wind and dust storm events
- Winter weather events still possible



Study Results



Comparative Seasonal Precipitation
Winter (December-February)



Winter Safety at Home and Work

- Patchy freezing drizzle or rain is deadly. When the temperature falls below 32 degrees, even a little mist, drizzle, or frost can create slick bridges and roadways. Slow down especially on overpasses and bridges.
- Each year people die in house fires and from carbon monoxide poisoning because of faulty heating sources. Be sure to place your electrical heating source in a safe place away from curtains and combustible materials. If you have a gas furnace, be sure to install carbon monoxide detectors. Always install smoke detectors, they could save your life.
- Be alert for the development of wildfires when strong wind speeds and low relative humidity co-exist. Use safe fire prevention measures.
- Dense fog kills, too. When driving in low visibilities due to dense fog or snow, slow down and use your low beams.
- Always have a way to receive winter weather forecasts and warnings because weather can change fast.

Primary concerns are loss of heat, power and telephone service and a shortage of supplies if storm conditions continue for more than a day. A good idea to have the following on hand:

- A 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day).
- Food that won't spoil: peanut butter, high energy bars, non-perishable foods.
- One change of clothing and shoes per person.
- Portable radio.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- Extra set of car keys.
- Cash and a credit card.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- First-aid kit.
- Prescription medicines.
- Emergency tools.
- Battery-powered NWR.

Fire Safety

Be sure to practice good fire prevention when you use an emergency heat source at home. Don't use equipment that can generate sparks outside especially when fire weather conditions are elevated or are occurring.

Heating Fuel

Refuel before you are empty. Fuel carriers may not reach you after a winter storm.

Emergency Heat Sources

- Use emergency heat sources (fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters) properly to prevent a fire.
- Ventilate properly.

Fire Extinguishers/Smoke Alarms/Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Check fire extinguishers.
- Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they work properly.

Winter Vehicle Safety Tips During Winter Weather

- Plan your travel and check the latest weather reports to avoid the storm!
- Fully check and winterize your vehicle before you leave.
- Keep your gas tank near full to avoid ice in the tank and fuel lines.
- Avoid traveling alone. Always drive to the conditions of the highway.
- Let someone know your timetable and primary and alternate routes.
- If you become stranded:
 - Never leave the safety of your vehicle.
 - Run the motor about 10 minutes each hour for heat.
 - Open the window a little for fresh air to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Be sure to keep your exhaust clear of snow as you're keeping warm in the car.
 - Turn on the dome light at night when running the engine.
 - Tie a colored cloth, preferably red, to your antenna or door.
 - After snow stops falling, raise the hood to indicate you need help.

Assemble a Disaster Kit for your Home and when you Travel:

- Mobile phone, charger, batteries.
- Blankets/sleeping bags.
- Flashlight with extra batteries.
- First-aid kit.
- Knife.
- High-calorie, non-perishable food.
- Extra clothing to keep dry.
- Large empty can to use as emergency toilet. Tissues and paper towels for sanitary purposes.
- Small can and waterproof matches to melt snow for drinking water.
- Sack of sand or cat litter for traction.
- Shovel.
- Windshield scraper and brush.
- Tool kit and tow rope.
- Battery booster cables.
- Water container.
- Compass and road maps.

Winter Farm Safety and Pets

- Move animals to sheltered areas.
- Shelter belts, properly laid out and oriented, are better protection for cattle than confining shelters, such as sheds.
- Haul extra feed to nearby feeding areas.
- Have water available. Most animals die from dehydration in winter storms.
- Make sure pets have plenty of food, water and shelter.

Winter Weather Injuries and Fatality Statistics

- About 70% result from vehicle accidents.
- About 25% occur in people caught out in a storm.
- Most happen to males over 40 years old.