



El Niño Impacts

The 1997-1998 El Niño altered weather patterns all over the globe. Because people and animals pattern their lives on average weather, most of the impacts were negative. Some of the major impacts are listed below:

- Severe drought lowered crop yields in regions of Africa, Southeast Asia, Australia, and South America. Over 60% of Algeria's wheat crop was lost, drought sent food prices soaring in Uganda, 70% of North Korea's maize crop failed with more than 60 rain-free days with temperatures near 90 deg. F. (32 deg. C)
- Flooding caused loss of life and road and property damage in central and southern South America. Some locations in central Chile received the amount of their total yearly rainfall in a single day. The increase in rainfall was due to increased moisture picked up over the eastern Pacific Ocean that changed the path of the jet streams.
- Atlantic tropical storms and hurricanes were dramatically reduced in 1997. This decrease was partly caused by abnormally strong high-level winds that blew from the eastern Pacific across the tropical Atlantic to the Sahel region of Africa.
- The strength of hurricanes was increased in the eastern Pacific. Hurricane Nora was the strongest hurricane on record for the eastern Pacific. Hurricane Pauline was also very strong, and it hit Mexico's Pacific resort coast with winds of up to 120 miles per hour. These hurricanes were fed by high ocean temperatures.
- Ice storms in eastern Canada and New England caused some areas to be without power for over a month as rain froze on contact with objects such as power pylons, telephone poles, wires, and trees. The weight of ice caused pylons to crumple and wires to break. The Canadian army was deployed to help in cities and on farms.
- Sea lions and other marine mammals starved off the California coast because warm water blocked the normal upwelling of cold nutrient-rich coastal water. Some of the more fortunate were rescued and nursed back to health. The lack of nutrients in the ocean resulted in less abundant plankton, organisms which are the foundation of this marine food chain.
- Forest fires in Indonesia, started by people clearing land in an area suffering from prolonged drought, blazed out of control because vegetation was so dry. Smoke polluted air over thousands of miles caused health problems and is blamed for the crash of a jetliner that killed more than one hundred people.
- Relatively warm temperatures across much of southern Canada and northern USA was good news to golfers but poor news for skiers. Demand for heating fuels decreased dramatically and there were lower fuel prices elsewhere in the USA.