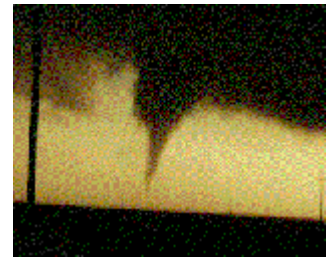




The West Texas

TWISTER



WINTER 1997-98 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECAST OFFICE LUBBOCK TEXAS



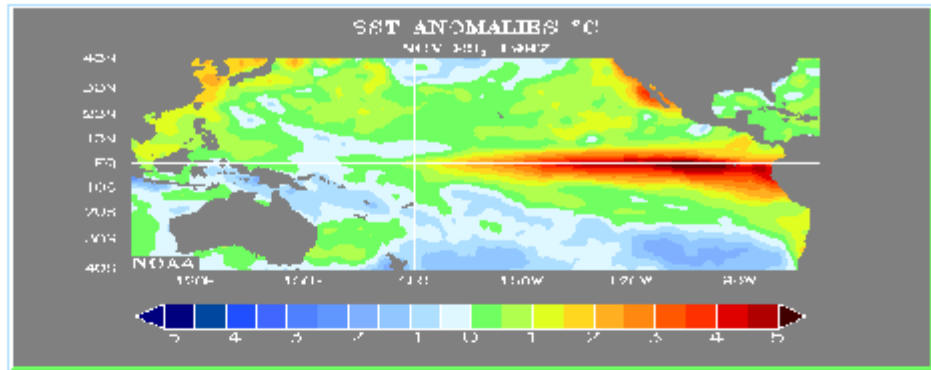
NEW **Aviation** **Section on** **Home Page**

For those of you who fly or who are interested in aviation weather information, there is now an Aviation section on our home page. Here you will find

- METARS
- AIRMETS
- SIGMETS
- TAFS
- AREA Forecasts
- RADAR Imagery and more.

see our Web Address below

El Nino Still Going Strong !!



The red (or dark area) above located along the equator represents sea surface temperatures that are above normal (this picture is from November 23). This plays a big role in altering normal atmospheric circulations around the world...The El Nino phenomenon!



HERE COMES WINTER...



Some weather terms that you might come across this winter:

* **Winter Storm Watch:** conditions are favorable for hazardous winter weather to develop (though it is still an uncertain event)

* **Winter Storm Warning:** hazardous winter weather is imminent or already occurring. This usually means that the NWS expects 4 or more inches of snow in a 12-hour period.

* **Snow Advisory:** 1 to 3 inches of snow expected.

* **Winter Weather Advisory:** issued for a mix of winter weather that will create a significant inconvenience. This is typically issued when we expect freezing rain/drizzle and/or light snow to create hazardous driving conditions.

What's In This Edition...

El Nino Information

Winter Weather Safety

New SAME Radios now available

Winter Weather Terms

Don't Forget our Internet Address at:

dryline.nws.noaa.gov



El Nino

facts and speculations

El Nino: Briefly, Just What is it?

El Nino is an abnormal state of the ocean and atmosphere. The waters of the eastern equatorial Pacific become several degrees warmer than normal, which in turn alters atmospheric circulation patterns (referred to as the Southern Oscillation). The result is "unusual" weather - droughts in areas where rain is usually plentiful, and rain where it is usually dry - across many parts of the world.

What El Nino Might Mean for West Texas

On average, El Nino results in 80 percent above average precipitation in Lubbock from late fall through winter (November through March). Average temperatures during that same time are just slightly below average.

El Nino winters have also featured some of Lubbock's snowiest winters. There have been just 7 winters with 20 inches or more of snow in Lubbock - 5 of those 7 were El Nino winters. Lubbock's all-time greatest snow storm and snowiest season both occurred during the winter of 1982-83, which was the strongest El Nino on record.

Caution: A Few El Nino Thoughts to Remember

Although El Nino typically results in above average precipitation (both rain and snow), the effects of each El Nino on West Texas is different. A couple El Nino episodes featured well below average precipitation. El Nino's effects are more strongly felt closer to the equator. We are far enough north of the equator that El Nino's effect can be inconsistent, especially since many other factors can affect our weather.

Even assuming we receive about 80 percent above average precipitation, it's still not that much precipitation. The average is about 3.25 inches (November through March), so 80 percent above average only means less than 6.00 inches during those five months. That's still a lot less than most areas of the country receive during the same time period.

El Nino and Severe Weather Season

The effects of El Nino usually begin to dissipate in the spring, so it does not seem to significantly impact our severe weather season.

El Nino: The Bottom Line

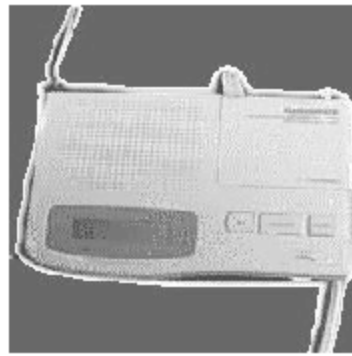
The forecast is for above average precipitation -some of which may be snow -through March. In our February 1998 newsletter, we'll tell you how well our expectations were (or were not) met.

New SAME Radios are now available...

With the new Emergency Alert System (EAS) now in operation, each NOAA Weather Radio console is equipped with a Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME). This allows local government, television, radio, cable systems, and the general public, to be notified of watches and/or warnings affecting their specific area. For example, a resident of Hockley County can set up the SAME receiver to alert only for a watch and/or warning for Hockley County (or any desired combination of the seven counties listed below). New radios with the SAME feature are now being sold by companies such as Radio Shack for about \$80. These radios require a user to program the FIPS code(s) for the counties in which they are receiving warning alarms. The FIPS codes for our listening area are as follows:

COUNTY FIPS Code

Lamb 048279
 Hale 048189
 Floyd 048153
 Hockley 048219
 Lubbock 048303
 Crosby 048107
 Lynn 048305



Winter Weather Safety

When significant winter weather occurs, please consider whether you can postpone your travel. If you absolutely must travel during snow or ice storms, be sure your vehicle is prepared. Necessary items include:

blankets - shovel - snacks - flashlight - sand (for traction) - booster cables

Before you depart, make sure to check out the latest forecasts and road conditions.

Watch/Warning Definitions

● **WINTER STORM WATCH** ... THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY OCCUR IN YOUR AREA: BLIZZARD CONDITIONS ... HEAVY SNOW ... ACCUMULATIONS OF FREEZING RAIN OR FREEZING DRIZZLE ... OR HEAVY SLEET. WINTER STORM WATCHES ARE USUALLY ISSUED WITHIN 12 TO 24 HOURS OF THE EXPECTED CONDITIONS.

● **WINTER STORM WARNING**...ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING WINTER WEATHER ELEMENTS ARE IMMINENT OR OCCURRING: HEAVY SNOW... DANGEROUS ACCUMULATIONS OF FREEZING RAIN OR FREEZING DRIZZLE ... OR HEAVY SLEET. THESE ELEMENTS COULD CREATE CONDITIONS LEADING TO INJURIES OR LOSS OF LIFE. IF ONLY ONE WEATHER ELEMENT IS EXPECTED...THE WARNING MAY BE ISSUED AS AN "EVENT SPECIFIC" WARNING, SUCH AS A "HEAVY SNOW WARNING" OR A "FREEZING RAIN WARNING".

● **BLIZZARD WARNING**... SUSTAINED WIND SPEEDS OF AT LEAST 35 MPH WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY CONSIDERABLE FALLING AND/OR BLOWING SNOW. VISIBILITY WILL BE DANGEROUSLY RESTRICTED ... OFTEN NEAR ZERO.



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In This Issue...

El Nino Information, New SAME Radios, Winter Weather Terms.... and more!

Winter Weather Advisories