EL NIÑO

STATE OF EMERGENCY

SEPTEMBER 21, 2026

The State of Emergency (SOE) is intended to jump-start statewide preparedness for a potentially historic 2026-2027 El Niño by rapidly mobilizing agencies, removing regulatory barriers, and prepositioning resources before severe weather arrives.

El Niño is not a storm, series of storms, an atmospheric river, or a series of atmospheric rivers. El Niño is a natural oceanic-atmospheric phenomenon measured by the warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific Ocean.

THE SOE DOES:

Includes but is not limited to:

- Mobilize state agencies to coordinate preparedness, planning, and resource support with local and tribal governments.
- Suspend certain procurement and contracting rules so state agencies can rapidly obtain supplies, equipment, and services.
- Direct the California Coastal Commission to expedite coastal permitting.
- Require the California Department of Water Resources to procure and pre-stage flood-fighting materials statewide.
- Direct agencies to fast-track permits for levee repairs, debris removal, vegetation management, sediment work, and other flood-risk-reduction projects.

THE SOE DOES NOT:

- Authorize disaster assistance under the California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA).
- Activate any federal assistance programs.
- Provide any other direct financial assistance to local governments.
- Activate price-gouging protections or impose a 10 percent emergency rent-increase cap under Penal Code §396. The SOE explicitly suspends these restrictions.
- Override any local price-gouging rules that may be triggered by local emergency proclamations.

Local agencies retain discretion on their own emergency measures.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A copy of the September 21, 2026, proclamation can be found here.

For specific questions on how El Niño or the SOE may affect your county, please contact your Cal OES regional operations representative. Visit the Cal OES website to find the contract information for your regional operations representative.