



# News Release

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Contacts: [Gordon MacCracken](#), Communications Office  
[Sharon Moysiuk](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072  
360-236-4074

## **Pacific Northwest should prepare for La Niña winter weather**

**OLYMPIA** — The official start of winter is still weeks away, yet snowfall and windstorms around the state in the past week show it’s time to prepare for a safe and healthy winter. The weather forecasters predict a colder, wetter than average winter in the Pacific Northwest.

[Temperatures](#) near the equator indicate this will be a La Niña winter, bringing lower than average temperatures and increased mountain snow. The snowstorms of 2008, the floods of 2007, and the windstorms of 1995 and 2006 are examples of weather that can pose health risks.

Flooding due to heavy rains and melting snow can make your well water unsafe to drink. Flood waters carry diseases and other contaminants that require precautions to prevent illness. If your well has flooded, assume that the drinking water in your home is contaminated. Use only boiled or disinfected well water or purchased bottled water for drinking, brushing teeth, dishwashing, preparing food, and making ice. Boil well water for one minute at a rolling boil and then cool before use to make your water safe to drink.

It’s wise to keep an emergency supply of drinking water on-hand — a gallon of water per person, per day. Other [emergency supplies to store](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/checklist.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/checklist.htm)) are canned foods and a can opener; “special needs” items such as infant formula and medications; camp stove or barbecue (use outdoors); blankets; battery powered radio; flashlight with extra batteries; food, water, and supplies for pets; and a safe alternative heat source.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a major concern during power outages. Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that can’t be seen or smelled. It can kill a person in minutes. Hundreds of people die accidentally in the United States every year from carbon monoxide poisoning caused by appliances that are used improperly or that are malfunctioning.

Carbon monoxide can build up so quickly that people are overcome before they can get help. Every home should have a carbon monoxide detector to warn families when carbon monoxide levels become unsafe.

[Sources of carbon monoxide](http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/IAQ/co_fact_sheet.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/IAQ/co\_fact\_sheet.htm) include blocked chimney flues and gas or kerosene heaters used indoors; never burn charcoal in a fireplace. An attached garage is a part of your home; carbon monoxide fumes can seep-in from generators or idling cars, so don't run either of them in the garage. Carbon monoxide can also seep into homes from outdoor generators placed too close to open windows or vents; safety guidelines say they should be at least 15 feet away from any windows, doors or vents.

The state Department of Health has a fact sheet on [preventing carbon monoxide poisoning](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/co.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/co.htm) during a power outage; it's available in multiple languages. The agency provides a wide range of [emergency preparedness information](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/default.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/default.htm) from earthquakes to windstorms available in our [Emergency Resource Guide](http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook.htm) (www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook.htm).

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