Weather Spotter Checklist

- FUNNEL CLOUD or TORNADO...Watch for cloud rotation and damage
- HAIL...Pean-sized or larger
- HEAVY RAIN...1/2 inch in 1 hr; 1.5+ inches in 24 hrs
- HEAVY SNOW...4 inches in 12 hrs; 6+ inches in 24 hrs
- FLOODING...Of any kind. Is the water level rising or falling?
- POOR VISIBILITY...1/2 mile or less in blowing dust, rain or snow.
- TRAVEL PROBLEMS...Any conditions where poor or hazardous travel conditions observed or reported.
- STRONG OR DAMAGING WINDS...Any winds estimated to be over 40 mph. Or winds that produce any damage. Estimate using Beaufort chart.
- ANY DAMAGE, INJURY OR LOSS OF LIFE DUE TO WEATHER...Be sure to include location, time and specific cause.

If you observe any of these conditions, please call the NWS in Spokane and make a report at (509) 244-0435

La Niña, again?

Indications are that the current La Niña pattern will continue into the winter and possibly early spring. On the average, La Niña winters are wetter and cooler than normal for the Inland Northwest. More specifically, the first part of the winter (Nov-Jan) tends to be wetter but warmer than normal, while the latter half of the winter (Jan-Mar) is cooler than normal. As many of you might remember, La Niña was in place last winter. While the 98-99 winter was wetter than normal, temperatures remained above normal for each month of the winter. This resulted in more rain than snow for the lowlands, with the mountains picking up record snowfall.

So, the obvious question is: since La Niña will be around again this winter, should we expect similar weather to last winter? In some respects, the answer could be “yes”. The above-normal precipitation has a high likelihood of occurrence. As for temperatures and snow vs. rain, the answer is less certain. The Climate Prediction Center (CPC) notes that the trend of the past decade in the Pacific Northwest has been for temperatures to be above average. Last year’s above normal temperatures, despite the La Niña conditions, are consistent with this recent warming trend. Thus, the official CPC forecast is for the recent warm trend to offset the typical cold La Niña temperatures once again, resulting in near-normal temperatures this winter.

However, there is a particularly intriguing statement in CPC’s discussion: The fact that this will be the second La Niña winter in a row may cause the impacts to appear with greater certainty as residual effects of the 1997-98 El Niño have completely dissipated. In other words, last year’s La Niña may have been somewhat “abnormal” due to the previous strong El Niño. This leads us to take a look at past winters where La Niña had persisted. Since 1950, this has occurred 4 times: 1955-56, 1971-72, 1974-75, and 1984-85.

When comparing the consecutive La Niña winters for our three main climatological sites, it is seen that in all but one case (Wenatchee 1984-85), the second La Niña winter was snowier than the first. In fact, the 1955-56 winter ranks as the snowiest winter in Wenatchee, the second snowiest in Lewiston, and fourth snowiest in Spokane. As an interesting side note, in general the second La Niña winter is slightly colder than the first. While it’s impossible to say that the upcoming winter will give above normal snowfall to our area, these findings do appear to support the statement by CPC.

So residents in the Inland Northwest can expect another wet winter, especially through December. And while snowfall is a less certain forecast, it does appear likely the upcoming winter will at least be snowier than last winter.
Are you Prepared for Winter Weather?

Winter weather too often catches people unprepared. Researchers say that 70% of the fatalities related to ice and snow occur in automobiles, and about 25% of all winter-related fatalities are people that are caught off guard, out in the storm. What have you done to prepare to deal with winter weather and to ensure your safety? For starters, prepare a winter survival kit for your car, containing:

- Blankets and extra warm clothing, like boots, mittens and a hat
- Water and high energy snacks, like candy bars or trail mix
- First aid kit
- Battery-powered radio, NOAA Weather Radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- Bright colored cloth for antenna identification
- Tire chains and shovel
- If possible, cell phone or CB radio

Also remember to have your vehicle winterized, including good traction tires, and keep an adequate amount of gasoline in its tank.

Fall Weather Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wenatchee Airport</th>
<th>Avg High Temp</th>
<th>Depart from Normal</th>
<th>Avg Low Temp</th>
<th>Depart from Normal</th>
<th>Total Precip</th>
<th>Depart from Normal</th>
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<tbody>
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<th>Avg Low Temp</th>
<th>Depart from Normal</th>
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<th>Depart from Normal</th>
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| Snow              | 1.23          | 1.62               | 2.85         | 2.1               |               |                   |
|                   |               |                    |              |                   |               |                   |

Spotted corner

The role of a weather spotter is to inform the NWS on presence of severe or significant weather. During and after every major storm, the NWS receives numerous spotter calls ranging from snow totals to wind reports. The NWS may also call to solicit information. But do you ever wonder what the NWS does with this information?

Spotters are a valuable resource during times of changing weather. The NWS also receives and uses data on a daily basis from cooperative observers, ham radio operators and ski resorts. Though the NWS has access to reports from automated equipment across eastern Washington and north Idaho, receiving a human report is deemed more important. These valuable reports are used in a variety of ways, including:

- As ground truth for watches, warnings and advisories
- To confirm what the radar, satellite and automated rain gauges are reporting
- To support updates to forecasts and statements
- In forecaster training to improve warning skills

Y2K & NWS

What can you expect when the clocks strike midnight January 1, 2000? Who knows? As for the National Weather Service, it appears the only difficult forecast will be to determine if it will snow and how cold it will be. That is because the NWS has a great deal of confidence there will be no interruption of our services to the public or other customers. The systems which collect weather data, generate and disseminate weather forecasts, watches and warnings have all been tested and are Y2K ready. Since 1996, the NWS has been working to ensure all systems and computers are ready for the new millennium. This also includes backup systems including emergency generators, cell phones and ham radio equipment. The final phase of testing was completed at the end of March 1999.

All NWS offices, including Spokane, will be fully staffed on the evening of December 31, 1999. In addition, NWS Headquarters will be running a Y2K Situation Desk at their 24-hour Operations Center which will be in contact with all offices and three Y2K international desks in Australia, England and Russia.

Autumn in Review

After a relatively mild summer, warm, dry weather continued into September. In fact, all three climate sites received only a trace of rainfall (i.e. less than 0.01”) during the month. September...