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# Weather Or Not

## *WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard*

### Highlights:

Office Comings And

Goings

Spotter Talks A

Success

UCSB Tsunami Ready

What About Tsunamis?

Weather Wrap-Up

Weather Glossary

## Office Comings and Goings

Since our last newsletter, WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard has had several notable personnel changes.

In March 2004, general forecaster Eric Hilgendorf decided to leave the National Weather Service to pursue other interests. In his short time at our office, Eric was instrumental in the development of our Fire Weather Program. In addition, Eric served as our Incident Meteorologist (IMET), providing on-site weather forecasts for major wildfires. In Eric's absence, yours truly will assume the responsibilities of the IMET.

In April 2004, Jayme Laber was selected as the new Senior Service Hydrologist for both WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard and WFO San Diego. Before joining the National Weather

Service, Jayme worked for several years as the Hydrology Section Manager with Ventura County Flood Control. Jayme's knowledge of hydrologic and flooding concerns across Southern California will be a great benefit to WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard and our hydrologic operations.

In May 2004, student employee Curt Kaplan was promoted to the position of general forecaster, filling the position vacated by Eric Hilgendorf. As a student employee, Curt was involved in many programs at WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard such as climate, severe weather and even the spotter program. Given Curt's dedication and enthusiasm, he should be a great asset to the forecaster ranks at Oxnard.

## Spotter Talks A Success

In January 2004, the National Weather Service in Oxnard conducted six Weather Spotter Training and Recruitment sessions across our forecast area. Training sessions were held in Morro Bay, Santa Barbara, Oxnard, Santa Clarita, Long Beach and Palmdale.

Overall, attendance for all six training sessions was excellent. In total, 73 people attended the training sessions including 63 non-spotters. From these 53 people, the NWS has signed up about 38 new spotters into the program which is probably the best total of new spotters this office has experienced in several years. Personally, I would like to thank

Donna Nuzzi, as always, who helped promote the talk in Santa Clarita.

I would like to thank everyone who attended this latest round of spotter training sessions. Your participation in the Spotter Program is greatly appreciated.

## UCSB Tsunami Ready

On June 22, the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) will officially earn TsunamiReady and StormReady status in a ceremony to be conducted on the UCSB campus. The ceremony will be attended by several NWS personnel including Meteorologist In Charge Dan Keeton and Warning Coordination Meteorologist Tim McClung of WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard. With this honor, UCSB becomes the first university in the nation to be regarded as TsunamiReady.

The TsunamiReady and StormReady programs are voluntary preparedness programs that establish guidelines for communities to follow for tsunami and severe weather readiness. As participants in the program, UCSB adopted requirements set by the National

Weather Service in the areas of communications, warning reception and dissemination, public outreach and awareness programs and administrative planning. After meeting the specified requirements, UCSB was approved as TsunamiReady and StormReady by an advisory board that included members of local county emergency management, representatives from the California Office of Emergency Services and the National Weather Service.

“Preparing each coastal community for any number of possible weather hazards, including the unlikely event of a tsunami, directly addresses the National Weather Service’s mission of protecting lives and property,” said MIC Dan Keeton.

## What About Tsunamis?????

With interest piqued by the impending TsunamiReady certification of UCSB, I thought it would be useful to briefly explain what a tsunami is and its possible impacts upon Southern California.

Tsunamis are seismic sea waves caused by disturbances under the ocean such as earthquakes and land slides. As the tsunami crosses the deep ocean, its length from crest to crest may be one hundred miles or more, its height from trough to crest only a few feet. Although it cannot be felt aboard a ship in deep water or seen from the air, tsunami waves in deep water may reach speeds exceeding 600 mph. The damaging effects of a tsunami are felt mainly at or near the coastline due to large waves lifting normal water levels and pushing inland. A tsunami may affect areas hundreds or even thousands of miles

from its origin with devastating results. Tsunamis occur mainly in the Pacific Ocean and Alaskan Gulf regions because of the surrounding geologically active areas. Fortunately here in Southern California, it would take a cataclysmic earthquake in the Santa Barbara Channel to produce a tsunami of damaging magnitude.

The National Weather Service has two offices that monitor tsunamis: the Alaska Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska which issue Tsunami Watches/Warnings for the West Coast of North America and the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Honolulu, Hawaii which has responsibility for the rest of the Pacific Ocean. Whenever a Tsunami Watch or Warning is issued, the message is immediately transmitted over the NOAA Weather Wire and newswire services.

### Did You Know...

Since 1800, there have been two tsunamis of note in Central and Southern California:

#### December 21, 1812:

An earthquake generated a tsunami that affected the south coast of Santa Barbara County as well as the Ventura County Coast. The tsunami reportedly produced 5 to 10 foot waves.

#### November 4, 1927:

An earthquake off Point Conception produced a tsunami along the Central California coast. The tsunami produced waves around 7 feet at Port San Luis in San Luis Obispo County.

## Weather Wrap-Up

In the last several months, Central and Southern California have experienced a myriad of weather events. The following article is a summary of the most notable events of the last several months.

On September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2003, monsoonal thunderstorms produced flash flooding in the Antelope Valley, near the city of Pearblossom. Along Largo Vista Road, flash flooding resulted in one vehicle being stranded.

In October 2003, the main story in Southern California was the massive wildfires. In the forecast area of WFO Los Angeles/Oxnard there were four major fires of note. The Padua Fire (in Los Angeles County) burned over 10,000 acres in the Angeles National Forest. The Piru Fire (in Ventura County) burned 64,000 acres in the mountains north of Piru. The Verdale Fire (in Los Angeles County) burned over 8,500 acres in the northwest portion of Los Angeles County. Finally the Simi Fire (in Ventura County) burned over 108,000 acres in the hills north of Simi. All of the fires were exacerbated by high temperatures and Santa Ana winds.

In November 2003, the big weather story was a large and powerful thunderstorm that developed over South Central Los Angeles County on the 12<sup>th</sup>. This storm dropped over 5 inches of rain, producing widespread flash flooding that stranded thousands of motorists during the evening rush hour. In addition, the storm produced hail accumulations around 5 inches, making the area look like a winter wonderland. Overall, 130 homes and businesses reported significant damage due to flooding and/or

hail. Across the coastal waters, two waterspouts were reported, one west of Newport Beach and another west of Laguna Beach.

In February 2004, many significant weather events were reported. In Ocean Dunes (in San Luis Obispo County), a waterspout developed over the ocean and moved onshore as a weak tornado on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The tornado actually hit a park ranger in his truck, but did not produce any damage or injuries to the ranger or his truck. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, a powerful Pacific storm produced 8 to 14 inches of snowfall in the mountains of Los Angeles and Ventura counties as well as 1 to 3 inches in the Antelope Valley. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, lightning struck an 80 foot tree in the community of South Pasadena, slightly damaging several homes. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, another Pacific storm produced 8 to 16 inches of snowfall in the mountains as well as flash flooding along Mount Baldy Road near the Padua Burn Area. On the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, the last Pacific storm of the month dumped between 1 and 6 inches of rain across the area, producing flash flooding around the burn areas of Ventura County.

In March 2004, another Pacific storm dumped 12 to 24 inches of snowfall across the mountains between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. In April 2004, three waterspouts were reported off San Clemente Pier on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Here are some rainfall totals for the current water year (which began July 1, 2003) and normal rainfall amounts.

### **Downtown Los Angeles:**

Current: 9.25 inches  
Normal: 15.08 inches

### **Camarillo:**

Current: 6.52 inches  
Normal: 15.51 inches

### **Santa Barbara:**

Current: 10.17 inches  
Normal: 16.88 inches

### **Santa Maria:**

Current: 8.75 inches  
Normal: 13.96 inches

### **Paso Robles:**

Current: 6.80 inches  
Normal: 13.06 inches

Note: water year runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>.

**NWSFO Los  
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## Weather Glossary

Here are definitions of some weather terms commonly used by forecasters:

**Breezy:** Sustained winds 15 to 25 mph.

**Windy:** Sustained winds 20 to 30 mph.

**Marine Layer:** A moist shallow layer of air of marine origin with drier air above it.

**Stratus:** A low, gray cloud layer with a uniform base.

**Overcast:** Clouds covering more than 9/10 of the sky.

**Broken:** Clouds covering 6/10 to 9/10 of the sky.

**Scattered:** Clouds covering 1/10 to 5/10 of the sky.

**Clear:** Clouds covering less than 1/10 of the sky.

## Acknowledgements

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