



Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

ABOVE: A minivan drives through water on state Highway 202 in early January. BELOW: Cars cross a submerged section of U.S. Highway 101 south of Seaside in early January.

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Plains will probably have particularly cold temperatures. Some of the effects even started months ago, as the fall Atlantic hurricane season had almost double the average number of storms, driven by the destabilized atmosphere La Niña often causes. And if the weather patterns continue into spring, the Midwest could see a stronger tornado and storm season.

Though they can affect weather year-round, both La Niña and El Niño are felt most strongly in winter. So what does that look like for us this year? While I'm not a meteorologist, I'll be planning for very wet, cold conditions here in the Pacific Northwest for the remainder of winter. This region routinely sees more precipitation during La Niña, and because climate

change has disrupted the jet stream, our normally mild winters have been impacted more frequently in recent years by cold Arctic air, and this year could see the same. If so, then we may be in for more snow and ice.

There is no set pattern of when we'll have a La Niña or El Niño year. I remember as a child hearing about the 1986-1987 El Niño on the news, and being told that it "occurs every seven years." This isn't strictly true, as the time between El Niño years may be anywhere from two years to over a decade, and the same goes for La Niña. Moreover, La Niña or El Niño conditions can extend through more than one year, though they may not show the same intensity every time. La Niña tends to appear across multiple consecutive years more frequently.



What is more probable is that climate change will continue and average temperatures will continue to climb as weather patterns become more disrupted. This includes La Niña and El Niño, as both are projected

to become stronger, and severe years will become more frequent. "El Niño Southern Oscillation in a Changing Climate," a new book published in November, brings together the knowledge and research of more than 95 experts representing 50-plus research facilities from 16 countries to explore how El Niño-Southern Oscillation — and by extension La Niña and El Niño — may change over the next several decades.

As for me, I'm going to make sure that I'm well prepared for at least one Pacific Northwest Snowpocalypse each year, because we're likely in for an increasingly rough ride.

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