

## AccuWeather Public Relations - Expert Quotes and Technical Briefing

Issued August 10, 2026

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### 2026 United States Fall Forecast

Increased risk of flooding rain across the southern U.S., prolonged drought and wildfire concerns in parts of the Northwest is a fall pattern driven by a [strengthening El Niño](#).

### Northwest U.S. Drought and Wildfire Risks, Plus Smoke Impacts Elsewhere

Drought conditions will remain widespread across much of the Northwest through early fall, increasing the risk of large, fast-moving wildfires, widespread smoke impacts, and ongoing water shortages. The greatest concern extends across northern California, eastern Oregon, southern Idaho and Utah, where prolonged dry conditions; above-average warmth and periodic dry thunderstorms will continue to create favorable conditions for wildfire growth.

- Large wildfires could send smoke across the Rockies, Great Lakes and into parts of the Northeast and mid-Atlantic, reducing air for millions
- Canadian wildfire smoke may also periodically impact the Great Lakes and Northeast
- Little drought relief is expected until late fall, with reservoirs, rivers and streamflows remaining below normal across many areas
- [AccuWeather's preliminary damage estimates indicate wildfires](#) could result in billions of dollars in economic impacts across parts of the Northwest this season

#### On areas where the wildfire risk will be most notable:

*"The greatest wildfire threat this fall will be across the interior Northwest, including eastern Oregon, eastern Washington, Idaho, Montana and parts of northern Utah. These areas are expected to miss out on much of the monsoonal moisture from the south, allowing dry conditions to persist. Dry thunderstorms are often the spark that ignites new fires, and once they start, wind can quickly drive rapid fire growth."*

— **Paul Pastelok, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert**

### Southwest Monsoon to Bring Heavy Rain and Flooding

An active monsoon pattern combined with surges of tropical moisture from the eastern Pacific is expected to bring repeated rounds of heavy rain to the Southwest through the early part of the fall. While the rainfall may provide some drought relief, it will also increase the risk of flash flooding.

El Niño could help direct additional Pacific storm systems into southern California later in the season, raising the potential for heavier rainfall and an atmospheric river.

- Flash flooding and mudslides from southern California to New Mexico during the late summer, and early fall monsoon
- Tropical moisture increases the risk of localized flooding across the desert Southwest
- Rainfall helps to improve short-term drought conditions across parts of the Southwest, while long-term water shortages persist

### ***On flooding rain in Southern California***

*“It looks like they could have some tropical moisture that could produce maybe a little bit of severe weather in Southern California during the month of September, early October, which would actually interrupt the dry season, which is good news for fire prevention going forward.”*

**— Paul Pastelok, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert**

## **Southeast Flooding**

El Niño is expected to steer more storm systems across the southern United States this fall, increasing the risk of repeated rounds of heavy rain and flooding from the Gulf Coast into the Southeast. While the additional rainfall may ease drought in some areas later in the season, it could also lead to flash flooding, river flooding, and travel disruptions.

The Southeast will also remain vulnerable to tropical systems through the peak of hurricane season, with even a single storm capable of producing widespread flooding well inland.

- Repeated heavy rains from eastern Texas across the Gulf Coast into the Southeast
- Tropical systems that could bring flooding rainfall and coastal impacts during September and early October
- Improving drought conditions across much of the Southeast as the wetter pattern becomes established later in the fall

*“El Niño typically puts a lid on a lot of severe weather during the height of the season, but Florida always can come out with some severe weather, southern Georgia, southern South Carolina.”*

**— Paul Pastelok, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert**

## **Northeast Heat and Drought**

After a wet start to the summer, parts of the Northeast are expected to turn warmer and drier as fall begins. Below-average rainfall and above-average temperatures may allow drought conditions to expand through September and October, increasing stress on water resources and vegetation before wetter weather arrives later in the season.

- Drought expanding across parts of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic through early and mid-fall
- An increased risk of brush fires and periods of poor air quality as vegetation dries out
- Favorable conditions for vibrant fall foliage, with warm, dry days followed by cool nights

## Fall Snow Forecast

Snow this fall is expected to vary considerably by region. While parts of the Northeast could see the potential for a significant snowfall event in November, snowfall across the western United States will depend on the evolution of El Niño and the timing of Pacific storm systems later in the season.

- Early-season snowfall across the north-central Rockies in late September or early October
- Below-normal early-season snowfall in the Cascades
- Increasing snowfall and early-season snowpack in the Sierra Nevada later in the fall

*“We’re expecting the southern storm track to become more active as we move deeper into the season, bringing more opportunities for snow across parts of the western United States and increasing the potential for an above-average snow season in some higher-elevation areas as El Niño continues to strengthen.”*

**— Paul Pastelok, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert**

## El Niño Drives the Pattern

AccuWeather expert meteorologists believe there is a [90 percent chance a Super El Niño forms](#), which will become a dominant climate driver throughout the fall, influencing temperatures, precipitation patterns, storm tracks and tropical activity across the country.

- More active southern storm track increasing the potential for flooding from the Southwest to the Southeast
- Above-average temperatures favored across much of the northern tier of the United States
- Few Atlantic tropical storms overall, but continued potential for impactful U.S. landfalls
- Drought improvement expected across parts of the southern U.S. later in the season as rainfall becomes more frequent

*"When you have a strong El Niño, it changes the weather pattern across much of the country. Some areas become much wetter; others stay warmer than normal, and those shifts can have a big impact on flooding, drought, tropical activity, and even early-season snowfall."*

**— Paul Pastelok, AccuWeather Lead Long-Range Expert**