



What El Niño Winter Means to Michigan

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You may have noticed this fall and winter have been a little bit more mild than in years past. Some have even managed to squeeze in a round of golf in late November! Did you know this is the result of a predictable weather cycle called El Niño? But what is El Niño and what does it mean for what you can expect this winter?

What is El Niño?

El Niño is the name given to an ocean condition where the surface of the Pacific becomes warmer from South America through to Australia. This body of warm water alters the normal seasonal pattern throughout parts of the world. The effects of El Niño are mostly experienced during the winter in the U.S.

This current version of El Niño is the strongest it's been since 1997-1998.

What does El Niño mean for the Michigan weather?

Many of you who cringe at the thought of cold and snowy winters should rejoice – El Niño means we'll probably have a warmer than normal winter. This is no guarantee, however.

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The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, <http://www.noaa.gov/>) has stated that for our region of Michigan, there is a greater than 50 percent chance of warmer than normal temperatures this winter. This also means that there is a 33 percent chance of normal temperatures and a 17 percent chance of below normal temperatures.

As you can see, it's not a 100% sure thing we'll be warmer this winter, but there is a significant chance it will be.

The farther north in Michigan you travel, the higher the chance of warmer-than-normal temperature predictions there are. The Upper Peninsula, strangely, has a 60 percent chance of warmer temperatures than normal!

Southern Lower Michigan, or our neck-of-the-woods, including Ann Arbor, Jackson, Lansing and Kalamazoo all have a lesser chance of warmer than normal temperatures, with 40 percent likelihood.

How much warmer might it be?

Just because we have a strong chance of warmer-than-normal temperatures, that doesn't mean it will be much warmer than normal. The forecast from NOAA does not indicate how much warmer it will be, but it could be as small as a few degrees in added warmth.

Okay, what about snow?

Michigan has a 40 percent chance of being drier than normal, 33 percent chance of being right on normal moisture and 27 percent chance of more moisture than usual. This is due to the southern states receiving more moisture than normal from the El Niño effect. There's a strong possibility we'll have less snow than in a normal year in Michigan.

What does this mean for me and my family?

Weather is difficult to predict, but with the information we have available to us, there is a strong chance that this Michigan winter will be slightly warmer and drier than normal. Does this mean we won't be cold and won't get snow?

Absolutely not. In fact, it still could be worse than normal. All the effect of El Niño does is skew the chances toward slightly warmer and drier.

You will still need coats, gloves, shovels and snow plows.

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You might still have school closures and traffic accidents on I-696.

You can probably still head out to the UP snowmobiling, go skiing at Mt. Holly, or ice fishing on Lake St. Clair.

You will still need to insulate your attic, wrap your siding up tight and make sure your roof is in great shape to withstand the winter.

You will still need to be on the lookout for ice damming and extensive icicles hanging off of your gutters. Those massive icicles shouldn't be there – they are a sign of missing insulation and poor ventilation!

The upside, you just might get away with 1 or 2 less inches of snow when it does decide to dump on us.

If you have any questions about the condition of your roof, gutters, siding or insulation levels in your attic, be sure to give us a call at 888-776-1998 and we can schedule an appointment as soon as possible. We're always here to help, in any season.

Featured image source: NOAA



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