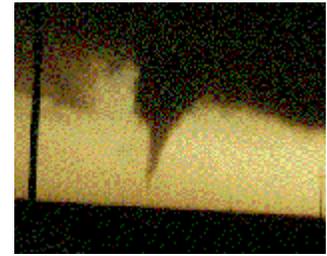




The West Texas

TWISTER



WINTER 1998-99 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE FORECAST OFFICE

LUBBOCK TEXAS

The 1998 Drought



As of late October, the Crop Moisture Index still indicated "Abnormally Dry" conditions over most of West Texas. Recent rains, although spotty, have helped some. The long term Palmer Drought Index categorizes much of West Texas as "Severely Dry". According to this slow changing index, as much as 4 inches of rain is needed to end the long term drought on the South Plains, while 12 or more inches is required east of the Caprock in the Low Rolling Plains where the situation is much worse, listed as "Extremely Dry".

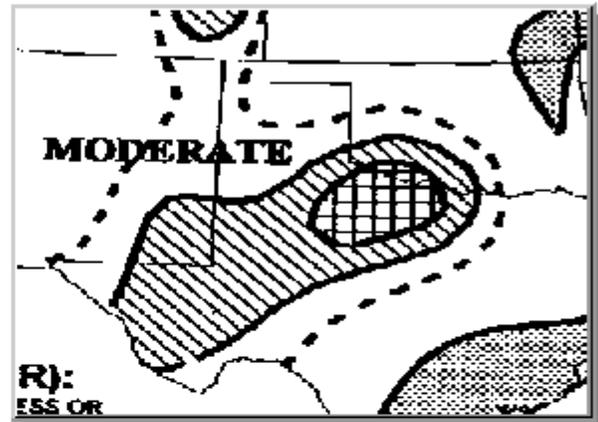
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WILL LA NINA CONTINUE THE DROUGHT??

It appears likely, in a nutshell. Indications are that a mild La Nina will continue to occur over the next several months. La Nina typically results in *warmer* and *drier* than average conditions in West Texas.

The National Weather Service expects warmer and drier than average weather on the South Plains over the 5 month period from November through next March.

La Nina is basically the opposite of El Nino. During La Nina, the equatorial waters in the Pacific are *cooler* than average, whereas in El Nino, those waters are warmer than average. For more details on La Nina and the Texas drought, see the NOAA Climate Diagnostic Center's web site (www.cdc.noaa.gov/TXdrought/).



This picture shows the area affected most by drought (as of late Oct.) according to the Palmer Drought Index.

EL NINO RECAP

NWS forecasts from the Summer and Fall, 1997, for above average precipitation across the South Plains during the '97-98 Winter verified very well. In Lubbock, precipitation from 11/97 through 3/98 was 5.54 inches, which is about 80% *above average*. The average amount for most South Plains communities was 6.27 inches, which is about 85% *above average*. Of course, much of this seems like ancient history because the rains ended in mid-March when a long extremely dry period began.

What's In This Edition...

La Nina Information

The Era of AWIPS Begins

Don't Forget our Internet Address at:

Winter Weather Safety

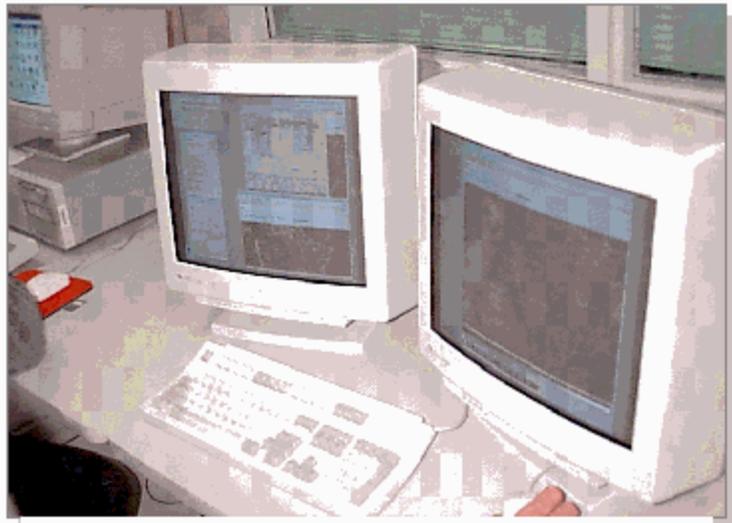
NOAA Weather Radio 2000

cra.nws.noaa.gov/nwslbb/index.html

AWIPS ANTICIPATION

The NWS Office in Lubbock will soon receive a new computer system. This system, nicknamed **AWIPS**, (the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System) will be installed the week of December 7. Training for the operational staff will occur the following week.

This new system consists of 5 high-powered workstations that will allow us to simultaneously view radar, satellite, and current weather observations. We'll also review computer model forecasts, compose forecast products, and issue warnings from AWIPS.



AWIPS Workstations

Internally, this is a major change in the way we accomplish our job, and it should increase our effectiveness. Externally, little if any change will occur to our products.

NOAA Weather Radio 2000

A new weather radio system is coming to a NWS office near you. With NOAA Weather Radio 2000, forecasts and statements will automatically and instantaneously go straight from the NWS forecaster to the NOAA Weather Radio 2000 and out onto the airways saving valuable minutes. There will be no delay in critical weather information and even more timely forecasts and observations. As soon as we issue a product, it will be inserted into the broadcast cycle. Also, as soon as a product expires, it is immediately withdrawn from the broadcast cycle. This means that the broadcast will always be fresh.



NWR CRS (Console Replacement System)

The NOAA Weather Radio 2000 will allow us to program specific products to air at specific times. This will eliminate the uncertainty of the old deck driven system. It will allow us to make and publicize a broadcast schedule. However, significant warning information will always have a number one priority on NOAA Weather Radio and override normal programming.

NOAA Weather Radio 2000 will directly feed into the Specific Area Message Encoder (SAME) for use by specialized receivers and the new Emergency Alert System (EAS). In the past, warnings and watches were alerted manually. The manual choosing and pressing of a series of buttons could lead to human error causing mistakes in the digital code that is broadcast. Automation of the manual entry eliminates these errors and speeds up the process of broadcasting the warnings.

NOAA Weather Radio 2000 will also allow us to free up staff to focus on the process of detecting severe weather and providing accurate and timely warnings. However, NOAA Weather Radio 2000 uses an automated computer voice that will be a noticeable change from our current NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts. It will take some getting use to, especially by people who have grown accustomed to hearing our voices over the radio and have come to know us. However, with the rapid advancement in technology today, The National Weather Service already has plans for improving the voice quality on the NOAA Weather Radio 2000. We plan to begin implementing this new NOAA Weather Radio technology at the Lubbock office early in 1999.



WINTER WEATHER

Fortunately, we don't receive too many winter storms in our area. However, when winter weather does strike, it can be hazardous. If you can't postpone travel during winter storms, at least be prepared. All vehicles should at least have: **blankets - shovel - snacks - flashlight - sand (for traction) - booster cables**

National Weather Service Forecasts

- Telephone - **745-4260**
- NOAA Weather Radio - **162.40 MHz**
- Web site - **cra.nws.noaa.gov/nwslbb/index.htm**

Road Conditions

Texas Department of Transportation - Phone number - **800 452-9292**

Texas Department of Transportation - Web site - **www.dot.state.tx.us/hcr/main.htm**

Watch/Warning Definitions

WINTER STORM WATCH ... THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS MAY OCCUR IN YOUR AREA: BLIZZARD CONDITIONS ... HEAVY SNOW ... ACCUMULATIONS OF FREEZING RAIN OR FREEZING DRIZZLE ... OR HEAVY SLEET. WINTER STORM WATCHES ARE USUALLY ISSUED WITHIN 12 TO 24 HOURS OF THE EXPECTED CONDITIONS.

WINTER STORM WARNING ... ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING WINTER WEATHER ELEMENTS ARE IMMINENT OR OCCURRING: HEAVY SNOW ... DANGEROUS ACCUMULATIONS OF FREEZING RAIN OR FREEZING DRIZZLE ... OR HEAVY SLEET. THESE ELEMENTS COULD CREATE CONDITIONS LEADING TO INJURIES OR LOSS OF LIFE. IF ONLY ONE WEATHER ELEMENT IS EXPECTED ... THE WARNING MAY BE ISSUED AS AN "EVENT SPECIFIC" WARNING, SUCH AS A "HEAVY SNOW WARNING" OR A "FREEZING RAIN WARNING".

SNOW ADVISORY ... SNOWFALL OF GENERALLY BETWEEN 1 AND 3 INCHES IS EXPECTED. THIS MAY CAUSE HAZARDOUS DRIVING CONDITIONS.

WIND CHILL ADVISORY ... WIND CHILL VALUES GENERALLY COLDER THAN MINUS 20 DEGREES F ARE EXPECTED.

FREEZING RAIN OR FREEZING DRIZZLE ADVISORY ... AN ACCUMULATION OF ICE MAKING ROADS AND OTHER EXPOSED SURFACES HAZARDOUS ... AND/OR CAUSING TREE BRANCHES AND POWER LINES TO





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of the warmest if not the warmest year on record in recent history for the planet.

In This Issue...

La Nina Information, AWIPS, NOAA Weather Radio 2000... and more!



The 1998 Drought

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The drought conditions in the Panhandle are not nearly as severe. This area received more frequent showers and thunderstorms during the spring and summer months. In fact, in the northeastern sections of the Panhandle, near normal conditions persist.

Despite the dry conditions, most West Texans are experiencing an unusually long growing season. Only the southern Panhandle and the northwestern South Plains had experienced a hard freeze as of this writing (mid November), while the rest of the area had seen only a light freeze or no freeze at all. Lubbock and West Texas have continued to experience an unusually warm year. This is consistent with what climatologists have noticed - that 1998 is one

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