



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DATE:

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Home Protection, it's In the Bag

In its most recent El Niño Diagnostic Discussion, the National Weather Service along with the federal Climate Prediction Center stated “there is an approximately 95% chance” that El Niño will continue through the winter and won't begin to weaken until the spring. That means we can expect a lot of rain from El Niño making the risk of flooding higher than normal.

Properly placed sandbags can help redirect water, mud and debris away from your home. Bags should be filled with heavy-bodied or sandy soil, avoid fine sand and rocky soils. They should be filled one-half to two-thirds full and in most instances be left untied. This allows the sand inside the sandbag to move and mold with the ground or other sandbags when they are laid on top of each other, preventing gaps where water can seep through.

The Army Corps of Engineers gives detailed instructions on how to best place sandbags so they are most effective:

- Remove any debris from the areas where bags are to be placed.
- Place the bags lengthwise and parallel to the direction of flow. Fill the low spots first before placing bags the full length of the area to be raised.
- Place the sandbags to redirect water, mud or debris, not dam it
- Do not place sandbags directly against the outer wall of a building. Wet bags can create added pressure on the foundation.
- Fold the open end of the bag under the filled portion. Place succeeding bags with the bottom of the bag tightly and partially overlapping the previous bag.
- Offset adjacent rows or layers by one-half bag length to avoid continuous joints.
- To eliminate voids and form a tight seal, compact and shape each bag by walking on it and continue the process as each layer is placed. This flattens the top of the bag and prevents slippage between succeeding layers.

Sandbags can best be used to help protect doorways if a waterproof layer like heavy plastic or waterproof canvas is placed behind them. If possible, tape it to the door frame. Stack the sandbags in a pyramid formation, following the above instructions, and wrap the plastic up and over the top. The waterproof sheeting is always essential for protection of doorways.

Keep in mind, sandbags DO NOT guarantee a water-tight seal, but following these instructions can help you more effectively protect your home and property.

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The County of San Bernardino offers free sandbags and sand throughout the county, and officials strongly urge residents to use this resource. However, County fire stations maintain only a limited supply of sandbags to be used during an emergency. Homeowners should not depend on that supply. Sand and sandbags can also be purchased at many home improvement and hardware stores. Purchase sandbags early and make them a part of your emergency supplies so they will be available if you need them.

County officials are strongly encouraging residents to get flood insurance. Flood insurance is available on almost any enclosed building and farms. The contents of insurable buildings, including rental units, are also insurable. Flood insurance can be purchased through the National Flood Insurance Program at www.floodsmart.gov. It must be purchased at least 30 days before a flooding event, so don't wait until the first rain! Prepare your home now!

Some other helpful resources:

- An El Niño resources web page for residents to obtain information on storm preparation is available at www.sbcounty.gov/main/elnino.asp
- To find your closest sandbag location, check SBCoFire's website at www.sbcfire.org
- Check the National Weather Service at www.weather.gov to see current and upcoming weather events
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's El Niño Portal has regular El Niño forecast updates, www.elnino.noaa.gov

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