



Godzilla and What You Can Do About Him

We're living in a drought, right? The average temperatures this summer and fall have been uncomfortably high & water is scarce. But what kind of conditions are expected this winter? Does anyone remember the El Niño of 1997-98? El Niño is a disruption of the ocean-atmosphere system in the tropical Pacific region that results in serious changes in weather and climate around the globe. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has forecast a 90% chance of another El Niño for the winter of 2015-16, bringing with it high winds, severe rainstorms and flooding in the West and Southwest. The impact of the coming El Niño on San Diego County is expected to be dramatic. Some are calling the system now forming the Godzilla El Niño.

There are steps you can take to prepare your home and family for the pounding we are expected to take beginning, perhaps, next month.

A good roofer could easily become your best friend. Have cracked roof tiles and mortar crowns replaced. Roof tiles may have slipped out of place, exposing the paper and wood below and leaving your home prone to leaks. Debris can accumulate on your roof especially around your chimney from loose or slipped tiles and subsequently cause damage to the paper underlayment and plywood. You don't want to discover one stormy morning that rain has seeped into your home alongside your fireplace. Don't forget that the seals around the vents on your roof can crack and wear out. While you're at it, clean out your gutters so that they can do the job you expect them to do. If you do nothing else to prepare for Godzilla, survey the condition of your roof, buy yourself the necessary repairs and enjoy your subsequent peace of mind.

If you are already confident in the integrity of your roof, here are some more suggestions to prepare for Godzilla.

Look around your property for outdoor furniture and accessories that can be affected by strong winds and excessive rain. Secure benches, chairs, tables, pots and decorative items or store them in your garage. You might want to take the extra precaution of elevating valuable items off of the garage floor. If rain water seems likely to collect in your garage, consider

having sandbags on hand to prevent the rain from seeping in. Before the rain starts, turn off your automatic sprinkler system.

The electrical distribution grids in San Diego County are adequate most of the time. However, they were not designed to withstand the serious storms that have been forecast. Be prepared for power outages. Have flashlights and battery operated lanterns on hand and easily accessible. Remember to buy replacement batteries. Know where your fuse box is located. Know also the locations of your natural gas and water mains. Know how and when to turn them off. Teach other family members how to shut them off. Remember, if you must turn off the natural gas, you will need a professional to turn it back on.

Consider that the power may remain off for several days. Grocery stores may have to close or road conditions may make it difficult (or even dangerous) to get to the store. Keep a stock of emergency food and water (roughly 1 gallon of water per person per day) on hand to see your family through the worst of a power outage. Gas stations may also have to close or may be overwhelmed with business. Don't let your gas tank run low.

Want more to think about?

A fire extinguisher (yes, even in the rain) and a battery operated radio to hear emergency broadcasts are good investments to make.

Make a list of prescription medications that family members have to take daily and over-the-counter meds that may be needed regularly. Have at least a week's supply of both on hand. Assemble a basic first aid kit. Make sure all family members know where the first aid kit is kept. Consider the special needs of disabled, very young or elderly family members.

Program emergency phone numbers into your cell phone and into your kids' cell phones too. Post emergency numbers near your land line.

The last rainstorm that we had demonstrated how quickly our streets and intersections can turn into ponds. Consider how traffic is delayed and disrupted when heavy rains occur. Plan an alternate route from your workplace back to Hidden Trails. In the event that schools or workplaces have to close early, make plans with your family members concerning where you will meet and who will be responsible for whom. We all know how congested Valley Parkway can get. Where will you go / meet if getting home becomes problematic?

For more information, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has free publications on protecting your home and on assembling an emergency kit. Call 1 800-638-6620. Check the website <http://www.fema.gov> for information on El Nino.

For information about flood insurance, call your insurance agent or call the National Flood Insurance Program at 1 800-427-9662.