



Hawai'i Ho'ohēkili

Skywarn Weather Spotter Newsletter
National Weather Service, Honolulu, HI



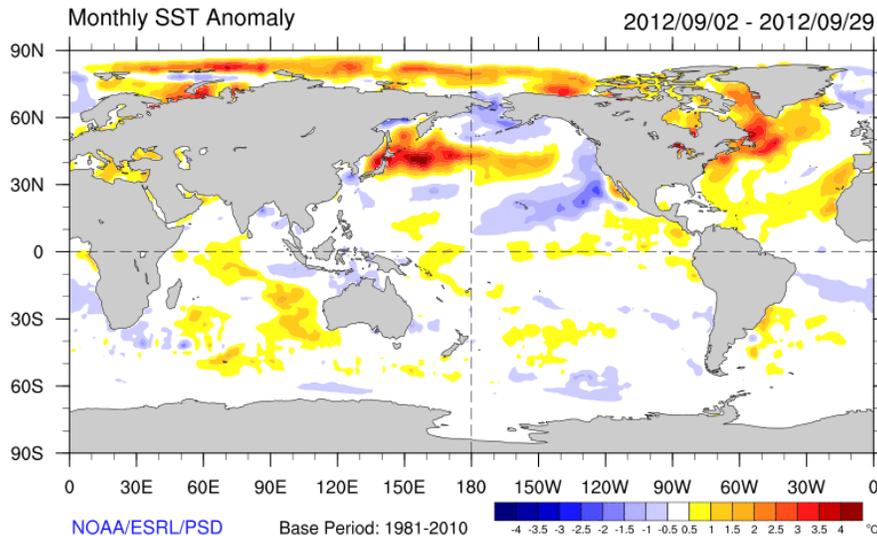
Wet Season Edition, 2012-2013

Issued — October 2012

Spotter Newsletter Volume 6

El Nino Watch!

Climate indicators suggest the onset of weak El Nino conditions this winter. SST anomalies in parts of the Pacific are above the +0.5 C threshold associated with El Nino events. Latest forecasts show weaker SST anomalies for the equatorial Pacific compared with the August dataset, suggesting conditions will produce only a marginal El Nino event. The consensus forecast favors SST anomalies peaking between 0.5 and 1.0 C by NOV/DEC, and then decreasing into 2013. This suggests that weak El Nino conditions will be in store for this cool season. Based on historical studies on the effects of warm episodes—drier and cooler than normal conditions are expected for Hawaii.



The 2012-2013 wet season begins with more than half of the state in drought - Kevin Kodama, Senior Hydrologist

U.S. Drought Monitor

September 25, 2012
Valid 7 a.m. EST

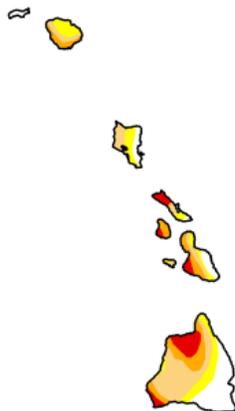
Hawaii

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	22.16	77.84	55.86	27.35	10.77	0.00
Last Week (09/18/2012 map)	22.16	77.84	55.86	27.35	10.77	0.00
3 Months Ago (06/26/2012 map)	21.11	78.89	50.32	25.23	8.48	0.00
Start of Calendar Year (12/27/2011 map)	43.55	56.45	47.37	28.72	1.66	0.00
Start of Water Year (09/27/2011 map)	5.02	94.98	44.93	14.84	0.85	0.00
One Year Ago (09/20/2011 map)	5.02	94.98	43.55	14.84	0.00	0.00

Intensity:

- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Drought - Moderate
- D2 Drought - Severe
- D3 Drought - Extreme
- D4 Drought - Exceptional



The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. See accompanying text summary for forecast statements.

<http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu>



Released Thursday, September 27, 2012
Anthony Artusa, NOAA/NWS/NCEP/CPC

The 2012 Hawaiian Islands dry season has concluded and, as expected, large areas of the state...especially in leeward areas of Maui County and the Big Island...head into the new wet season under significant drought.

Areas of extreme drought...or the D3 category in the U.S. Drought Monitor map...remain firmly in place. In Maui County this includes the southwest slopes of Lanai, western Molokai, and southwest Maui from Kihei to Makena. On the Big Island extreme drought continues to cover most of the South Kohala District, the Pohakuloa region of the Hamakua District, and the north-facing slopes of Hualalai in the North Kona District. Extreme drought has redeveloped over the lower elevations of southwest Kau.

Keys to Storm Spotting: Get informed, observe, identify, report, SAFETY!

Get information—through the Internet, weather radio, or even phone apps, which provide everything from storm warnings to radar images. Observe and identify—be aware of strong winds, lightning, flash flooding, and hail. REPORT—provide information about your identity, location and your storm observations. SAFETY—Stay well away from any hazardous weather!

Hawaii Incident Meteorologist provide support for five West Coast Wildland Fires

- Derek Wroe, Incident Meteorologist

The National Weather Service has a cadre of approximately 90 Incident Meteorologists (IMETs) that are specially trained to provide on-site weather information and forecasts at high impact events. The IMET program dates back to 1916, several years after a catastrophic wildfire killed 86 people as it tore through Idaho and Montana in two days. While the focus of the IMET program remains on wildfire, IMETs now respond to various hazards including oil spills and post-hurricane emergencies.

An IMET must be ready to leave on a moment's notice, and once on scene, the IMET serves as the incident's self-contained weather expert whose main objective is to provide weather forecasts and warnings to the first responders. The IMET works alongside the Incident Commander's staff and usually lives in the camp with the firefighters.



Setting up a RAWS under smoky conditions in the Feather River Canyon

In order to become certified as an IMET, a forecaster must complete 250 hours of coursework and an apprenticeship of 20 days on large wildfire incidents.

Honolulu forecaster Derek Wroe spent most of August becoming the latest certified IMET. This process involved working at several large fires in California and Nevada covering varied terrain and climates. Derek's first assignment at the Piute Complex was spent in the mountains of the southern Sierra Nevada, where daytime temperatures climbed above 100 degrees and even topped 110. When the afternoon winds kicked in, it felt as if nature turned a hair drier on the valley. Derek then moved to the bone-dry high desert of northwest Nevada for the Lost Fire, where afternoon relative humidity values bottomed out at a desiccating 3%. Derek spent the remainder of August at the Chips and Bagley Fires in the

rugged and heavily timbered northern Sierra Nevada. During the heat of the day, these fires often put up large smoke plumes, some visible over 100 miles away, and at night temperatures would drop into the upper 30s and 40s, making for some uncomfortable mornings when crawling out of the sleeping bag and tent.

As is evidenced by Derek's experience, an IMET needs to be ready to live in and forecast conditions very different than what most of us typically experience here in Hawaii. However, the rugged terrain of the islands presents challenges similar to weather forecasting in the western U.S., and Hawaii also serves up a supply of cold, dry, and sometimes wintery weather at high elevations. This experience serves the two IMETs of the Honolulu Forecast Office well as they prepare themselves to head out on the next challenge.



Briefing about a lightning event on the Chips Fire



Smoke plume from the incident command post. Tops hit nearly 30,000 feet and were visible from 120 miles away in Reno, NV



The TEL Method: The Best Way to Tell It!

- Anthony Reyes, Meteorologist

During events of hazardous weather, reports from trained spotters provide invaluable information from the field, which can become an integral part of the decision-making process of issuing a warning. Spotters

are also known as the “eyes and ears” of the NWS, since they can identify and report an ongoing weather event that may be too small, or is evolving too fast for the weather radar or ground instruments to detect promptly.

Since time is of the essence during these events, it is important to convey your weather report in a clear and efficient way. Forecasters will be extremely busy during a hazardous weather event, thus communication of weather reports should be kept short, concise, and as accurate as possible. One of the best ways to provide an efficient report is to follow the “TEL” method, which stands for “Time”, “Event”, and “Location”.

Time: Provide the time of the event.

Event: describe the weather event, such as a tornado, funnel cloud, flooding, strong winds, hail, etc.

Location: approximate the location of the event, which may not be the same as your location.

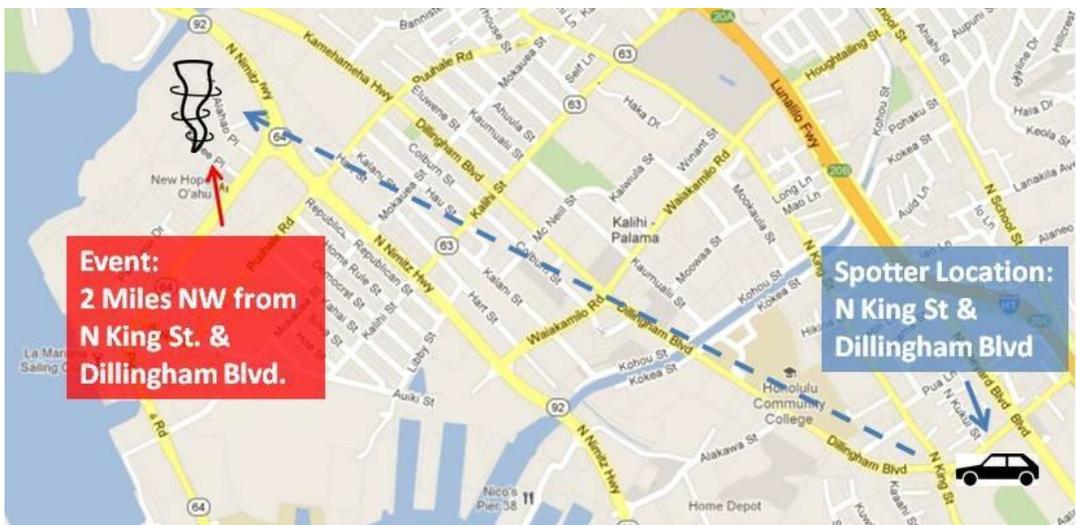


Here is an example of a great report: **This is Spotter OAH-55, at 5:25 PM I drove through Golf Ball size hail, about 1 mile west of Kaneohe Beach Park.**

If an event that is happening at a certain distance from your position, it is important to be specific regarding the true location of the event. In the previous example, the spotter happens to be in the middle of the hail event; therefore, the location of the spotter and the event happens to be the same. However, this is not always the case, as shown in the example below:

The spotter’s intention is to report a funnel cloud that is happening about *2 miles northwest of the intersection of Dillingham and N King Street* in Honolulu. This should not be confused with the spotter’s actual location, *Dillingham and N King Street*.

This is one of the most common sources of errors from weather reports which affects, among other things, web applications that use the location information to plot the event on a map. It also creates problems when trying to verify the report against radar and satellite data. Therefore, always use the estimated position of the event for the “location” portion of your report. Some devices such as certain models of smart phones and tablets have geo-tagging capabilities, which can provide specific position coordinates in latitude and longitude form.



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The NWS in Honolulu is very grateful for having an outstanding group of Skywarn Spotters, volunteers who are always keeping a vigilant eye on Hawaii’s skies. Thank you for your great support! Remember, if you see a hazardous weather event, TEL it!



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