

# Feds upgrade El Nino to strong

By Associated Press

Federal forecasters upgraded this year's El Nino to an unusual strong status, but said it's probably not a record breaker or drought buster.

Mike Halpert, deputy director of the federal Climate Prediction Center, said the current worldwide weather shifting event doesn't match the monster El Nino of 1997-1998, nor is it likely to.

With even warmer waters in the central Pacific in August, the hottest in more than 17 years, the prediction center moved the El Nino up from moderate status. So far the El Nino is the third strongest on record, behind 1997-98 and a weird one in 1987-88 that peaked early.

Meteorologists said strong El Ninos usually dump heavy rains on southern California, but its four-year water deficit is too big to be erased in one wet winter.