

Why it's so wet in California



So much snow has Heavenly extending its ski season to the end of April. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Paul Rogers, San Jose Mercury News

Why is it raining so much this year in California. In a typical year, California has between 10 to 15 “atmospheric river” storms – the fire hoses that rampage in from Hawaii and account for up to 50 percent of the state’s annual rainfall – and nearly all of its floods. But since the rainy season began on Oct. 1, there already have been 30. And there are two months of winter to go.

“We are well beyond double what is normal,” said Marty Ralph, director of the Center for Western Weather and Water Extremes at UC San Diego.

Ralph, one of the nation's experts on atmospheric rivers – which are often called Pineapple Express storms when they come from the tropics – calculated the big boost in atmospheric river storms last week for the state Department of Water Resources. He found that from Oct. 1 to Feb. 16, there was an average of one atmospheric river storm every 4.6 days that made landfall in California. Nine of them were of strong or extreme strength.

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