

On edge during holiday as storm evokes evacuation warning

Published in the Valley Springs News / January 2, 2026

The holiday spirit was somewhat dampened by a series of atmospheric rivers during the past week that dumped more than 2 inches of rain on western Calaveras and prompted the county's Office of Emergency Services and the Calaveras Consolidated Fire Protection District to issue an evacuation warning on Christmas Eve for areas close to flood-prone Cosgrove Creek.

A similar pattern of rain is in the forecast for the New Year's weekend. Rain and showers were predicted to begin on New Year's Eve and linger through Monday.

The late December storms have provided significant snowpack gains and boosted the state's water supply.

The Department of Water Resources on Tuesday conducted the first snow survey of the season at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada. The manual survey recorded 24 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 5 inches, which is 50 percent of average for this location. Statewide, the snowpack is 71 percent of average for this date.

This week's results are welcome news for water managers who rely on the statewide snow surveys to make water supply decisions for the year ahead. California's statewide snowpack had been lacking in early December with above-average temperatures and very little storm activity.

'The dry conditions and warmer temperatures in early December delayed our snow-building season, but the return of storm activity, especially in the last week, helped to build a solid base for this year's snowpack,' said State Hydrometeorologist Angelique Febbiani-Leon. 'Thankfully, the recent storms that reached the state were cold enough to provide necessary benefits for the snowpack and our water supply. While California is in a better position now, it is still early in the season and our state's water supply for this year will ultimately depend on a continued cadence of storms throughout winter and early spring.'

The department's electronic readings from 130 stations placed throughout the Sierra Nevada indicate that the statewide snowpack's snow water equivalent is 6.5 inches, or 71 percent of average for this date, compared to 115 percent at the same time last year.

On average, the largest snow-producing months in the Sierra Nevada are January, February and March.

'It's great to see so much fresh snow in the Sierra following a relatively dry December,' said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. 'More than any other factor, the rain and snow that falls in these critical winter months dictates how much water can be delivered to Californians and farmland statewide. We make the most of what Mother Nature delivers with advance planning that enables Forecast Informed Reservoir Operations and groundwater recharge.'

Major reservoirs statewide are currently 123 percent of average thanks to recent precipitation on top of three consecutive years of above average snowpack conditions.

On average, the Sierra snowpack supplies about 30 percent of California's water needs. Its natural ability to store water is why the Sierra snowpack is often referred to as California's "frozen reservoir."

For the state's current hydrological conditions, visit <https://cww.water.ca.gov>. The next survey is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 3.