



National Weather Service

Storm Data and Unusual Weather Phenomena



January 1997

Location	Date	Time Local/ Standard	Path Length (Miles)	Path Width (Yards)	Number of Persons Killed	Injured	Estimated Damage Property	Crops	Character of Storm
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CALIFORNIA, South Central

CAZ022

01	1345PST								
03	2000PST				1	0	190M	0	Flood

Heavy rainfall on a much above normal snowpack subsequently led to floods in the Southern Sierra Nevada as well as the adjacent San Joaquin Valley. Especially hard hit was Yosemite National Park as the Merced River ran over 80-year historical record high water marks. The water level reached 23.45' on the Pohono Bridge gauging station measuring 24,600 CFS of water discharge as compared to a normal height for the time of year near 3.5'. The crest of the flooding occurred very late on January 2nd lingering well into the morning of the 3rd. One drowning fatality occurred in Mariposa County as a vehicle was swept from a roadway through the Chowchilla River. Huge water flows, upward to 90,000 CFS, coursed through the streams and rivers leading into Millerton Lake with similar amounts on the Merced River into Lake McClure during January 3rd. Damage by County and type within CA Zone 22: Yosemite National Park; Damage to park trails, roads, sewer and water systems, and housing \$178M. Mariposa County; Damage to county roads and property \$8.5M; one fatality at 7:20 PM PST on January 2nd. Madera County; No damage assessed in mountain areas. Fresno County; Highway 180 was damaged along 7 miles of road into Cedar Grove going into Kings National Park plus bridge damage near Big Creek \$1.8M. Kings Canyon National Park; Trail and road damage from high water. Specific damage amount listed under CA Zone 23. F33VE

CAZ023

02	0800PST								
03	2000PST				0	0	1.6M	0	Flood

Heavy rainfall on a much above snowpack subsequently led to high runoff and floods throughout zone streams and rivers. Adversely impacted were Kings and Sequoia National Parks with substantial road and trail damage. Like CA Zone 22 the crest of the flood occurred late on the 2nd and lingered into the 3rd. However, the wet ground continued to give problems for the area until the end of January as continued rains gave rise to mudslides and further damage. Damage by County and type within CA Zone 23 Kings Canyon National Park; Damage to trails, side roads, the General's Highway (Highway 198) inside the park \$287K. Sequoia National Park; Washout damage to roads and trails inside the park \$185K. Tulare County; Damage to bridges and approach to bridges, especially upstream of Three Rivers on the Kaweah River and the Springville area \$1.1M

CAZ024

02	2041PST								
03	2359PST				0	0	50K	0	Flood

Like other rivers in the Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains, the Kern River experienced much above normal water flow into Lake Isabella as heavy rain on a much above normal snow pack occurred. By late January 2nd the Kern River reached 42,000 CFS flowing by Kernville in Kern County. One mobile home very low in a riverside park was swept down river with a couple of others damaged. No injuries were reported.

CAZ020

03	0800PST								
04	2359PST				0	0	3.5M	15M	Flood

Heavy rainfall on a much above normal snowpack led to flooding in California; and specifically the San Joaquin Valley floor and adjacent Southern Sierra Nevada Mountains. Central San Joaquin Valley agriculture suffered tremendously as farm land was inundated from runoff, uncontrolled small streams, and major river flooding thereby causing damage to permanent crops, irrigation equipment, and roads. Damage by County and type within CA Zone 20: Fresno County; Flooding along the San Joaquin River below Millerton Lake flooded houses, and farm land adjacent to the river. Damage to agriculture \$1.0M; other damage to houses, roads at \$1.4M.



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CALIFORNIA, South Central

Madera County; Flooding along the San Joaquin River below Millerton Lake flooded a mobile home park, and farm land adjacent to the river. Damage to agriculture \$5.1M; other damage \$2M.

Merced County; Flooding along the Merced River and especially along the confluence with the San Joaquin River caused significant problems to agriculture. Damage to agriculture \$8.9M; other \$0.1M.

Flooding swept from the adjacent Southern Sierra Nevada early January 3rd and continued beyond the 4th. The peak flow in this valley floor zone rivers in the east occurred late on the 3rd with the crest reaching the west side of the zone late in the night / very early on the 4th.

CAZ021

04	0410PST 2359PST								
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Heavy rainfall on a much above normal snowpack led to flooding in Central California. Southern San Joaquin Valley agriculture suffered as farmland was inundated, especially in Kings County as Tulare Lake reformed. Flooding continued to be a problem well beyond January 4th. Damage by County and type within CA ZONE 21:

Kings County; Tulare Lake reformation kept acreage from being farmed during the 1997 crop year. Damage to agriculture \$50.3M; no other damage.

Tulare County; Flooding on the San Joaquin Valley floor in the vicinity of Earlimart from the White River, Porterville from the Tule River, and other east side communities along the South Sierra.

Damage to agriculture \$5.4M; other damage \$0.1M.

Kern County; A breach in Poso Creek levees early on the 4th through the 5th put water onto the valley floor near Wasco. Damage to agriculture unassessed. Other damage \$50K to a couple of homes.

Tulare County 5 E Tulare

15	1610PST 1625PST								
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A line of thunderstorms WNW-ESE through Northern Kings into Tulare County brought reports of funnel clouds...most notably reports of two funnel clouds 5 miles east of Tulare at 1610 PST. The only other reports of consequence with this line were locally heavy rain at Lemoore and Visalia, and pea-size hail in Porterville.

Tulare County Porterville

15	1653PST 1658PST								
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With some late afternoon thunderstorm activity in Kings and Tulare Counties, pea-size hail was reported. No damage to area crops or property was reported.

Fresno County 10 E San Joaquin

20	1200PST 1205PST								
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Funnel cloud observed by Fresno County deputies from several miles away was first thought to have touched the ground. Post-storm interviews lead to the classification of funnel only. No damage reported.

Fresno County 8 N Hanford to 5 SW Kingsburg

20	1330PST 1340PST								
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Spotter reports and NWS staff observed this funnel during its life as it crossed the valley along the Kings/Fresno County line. Pea-sized hail also accompanied this storm and was reported 5 miles southwest of Kingsburg. No damage report was received.

Tulare County 8 NNW Visalia

20	1440PST 1445PST								
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Spotter report of funnel cloud but no damage reported in the area.

Tulare County 1 N Exeter to 3 ENE Exeter

20	1535PST 1545PST	3	10	0	0	50K	0		Tornado (F0)
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					Killed	Injured	Property	Crops

CALIFORNIA, South Central

Funnel presence with damage on the ground in the vicinity leads to the conclusion of a small F0 tornado. Roofs were damaged, fences and trees downed, and some debris lifted that caused power outages when striking power transmission lines in a 3 mile "path" for the funnel that only occasionally was on the ground. Severe weather reports from the general public in the area around Exeter and another small Tulare County town of Farmersville are viewed as chaotic. However WSR-88D signatures indicate the presence of outflow boundary interaction and subsequent thunderstorm re-development in the area.

Tulare County
3 NE Exeter to
3 ENE Exeter

20	1545PST 1547PST	0	0	0	0	0	0	Hail (0.75)
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Storm spotter reports indicated that hail also occurred with funnel presence near Exeter in Tulare County (sizes from 1/2 to 3/4 inch). Duration of the hail size at 3/4 inch in diameter was only for 2 minutes. No damage reported from the hail.

Tulare County
10 NNW Porterville to
10 N Porterville

20	1615PST 1620PST	0	0	0	0	0	0	Funnel Cloud
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One of many funnel clouds reported this day. Unlike the Exeter area to the northwest, no damage was reported in the vicinity of this funnel. Law enforcement observed the funnel but verified that it did not touchdown.

CAZ022

23	1630PST	0	0	2.1M	0	0	0	Heavy Rain
26	2359PST							

Damage was reported in Kings National Park where a rock and mud slide on Thursday, Jan 23rd, at 1630 PST took out Generals Highway just below Giant Village. Numerous trails and other roads were damaged within the Kings National Park boundary from the winter rains. Other damage from January rains resulted in Highway 180 being damaged near Boyden Cave in the Fresno County high country. The repair cost for seven miles of Highway 180 leading to Cedar Grove in the park alone is \$1.8M.

CAZ023

23	1630PST	0	0	190K	0	0	0	Heavy Rain
26	2359PST							

Across the Fresno/Tulare County line south into Sequoia National Park January rain continued to bring rock and mudslides to areas of the park complex. Damage to the General's Highway (Highway 198) occurred just below Giant Village on Thursday, Jan 23rd, at 1630 PST. In addition, high water from runoff resulted in damage to Highway 198 just above Three Rivers being washed away outside the park. No vehicles or other damage was reported in that location.

CAZ021

24	1500PST 2200PST	0	0	25K	0	0	0	Flood
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A 10 foot section of the Jaye Street bridge in Porterville was washed away as the forecast for large amounts of mountain rain caused enough concern to force large water releases from Lake Success on the Tule River. No injuries were reported as the water level stayed 9 feet below the bridge and the event was well anticipated.

Madera County
Oakhurst

24	1700PST	0	0	0	0	0	0	Heavy Rain
26	2359PST							

Following the heavy rain and snowmelt floods of early January and another storm passage around Jan 20th, another period of heavy rain occurred from the afternoon of Friday, Jan 24th, through Sunday Evening, January 26th. With moist antecedent conditions on Southern Sierra Nevada watersheds, saturated soils on the Central San Joaquin Valley floor, and water releases from filling mountain reservoirs into area rivers, small streams and urban areas experienced flooding. Doppler storm total precipitation from the period from the 24th through the 26th showed areas in the Southern Sierra getting from routinely 3-4 inches of rain, and areas in the Central San Joaquin Valley getting close to an inch of rain. A Madera County spotter at Oakhurst reported a storm total of 4.06 inches; a Fresno County spotter in the low foothills at Wonder Valley reported a storm total of 1.54 inches. Visalia storm totals in Tulare County were close to 1.4 inches; Fresno .83 inches; Hanford .53 inches; and Bakersfield .31 inches. A NE Fresno spotter reported a January rain total through the 26th of 4.60 inches. Tuolumne Meadows in the high Southern Sierra Nevada reported 115 inches of high water content snow on the ground.



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CALIFORNIA, South Central

Madera County

Coursegold to 5 SE Madera	26	1206PST 2130PST			0	0	Urban/Sml Stream Fld
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Small stream flooding in many CA Zone 22 streams and ponding of water in low lying areas on the adjacent San Joaquin Valley Floor (CA Zone 20). Spotter reports indicated some flooding in the Coursegold area from Coursegold Creek near Road 207. In addition, on the San Joaquin Valley floor, Cottonwood Creek west of Highway 99 to Highway, Coursegold Creek near Road 207 in Eastern Madera County. This flooding continued on the San Joaquin Valley floor until 0600 PST, Monday, January 27th.

Merced County

2 WNW Le Grand to 9 W Le Grand	26 27	1536PST 0600PST			0	0	Urban/Sml Stream Fld
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Flooding in Merced County from South Sierra Nevada Mountain runoff produced minor flooding along small creeks such as Deadman's Creek, Dutchman Creek, and Mariposa Creek from late on the 26th through early on the 27th.

Tulare County

Lindsay	26 27	2110PST 0600PST			0	0	Urban/Sml Stream Fld
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Similar to locations in CA Zones 20 and 22, CA Zones 21 and 23 experienced small stream and urban flooding on Sunday, Jan 26th, until about 0600 PST Jan 27th. Tulare County reported numerous roads with ponded water. Lewis Creek flooded in the vicinity of Lindsay. Runoff and small stream flooding from Dry Creek affected the area around Woodlake near 0350 PST on the morning of the 27th. No damage reports were received.

Fresno County

Mendota	27	0350PST 0600PST			0	0	Urban/Sml Stream Fld
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Panoche and Silver Creek are frequent culprits of putting sheet flow onto western Fresno County resulting in flooding in the town of Mendota such as late in the evening of January 26th / early January 27th.