



Southwest Weather Bulletin

**National Weather Service Santa Teresa-El Paso
Fall-Winter 2013-2014 Edition**



Torrential Rains Flood New Mexico and West Texas

Late spring and early summer 2013 saw extreme drought conditions persist across southern New Mexico and west Texas as westerly winds sustained the inflow of hot dry air. The exceptionally dry conditions and the above normal temperatures contributed to a huge wildfire over the Gila Wilderness and forced water levels way down at Elephant Butte Reservoir suggesting a challenging growing season for area farmers.

However the monsoon circulation commenced by early summer with east to southeast winds transporting moist unstable air into the region. This factor combined with a series of upper level disturbances and surface fronts to generate numerous showers and thunderstorms across the Borderland. The showers and thunderstorms brought torrential rains to many portions of the region resulting in devastating floods which damaged homes, washed out roads and bridges, caused rivers and streams to overflow and resulted in at least one death. In addition on several days storms also produced very damaging winds.



Heavy rains brought destructive flooding to La Union NM On September 12. (Shari Hill Las Cruces Sun News)

The Borderland was especially hard hit in September when a deep low pressure system caused major flooding not only in west Texas and southern New Mexico but Colorado as well.

On a positive note the above normal rainfall brought much needed moisture to the drought stricken area and greatly alleviated the dry conditions. But many people consider the 2013 monsoon floods comparable to the floods occurring during the historic monsoon of 2006.



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Extreme drought conditions caused Elephant Butte Reservoir to fall to unusually low levels by May 2013. (Mark Lambie Las Cruces Sun News)

May to September 2013 Weather Highlights

May 2013: Another in a series of dry months as little or no rain fell across southern New Mexico and west Texas causing drought conditions to worsen.

June 2013: A hot mostly dry month as high temperatures reached at least 100 degrees on 18 days over El Paso.

June 2: Severe thunderstorms hit west Texas and southern New Mexico. One inch diameter hail fell in the Tornillo, Loma Linda and Clint TX vicinities while high winds tore roofs off of houses and blew down a barn and power lines around Fort Hancock. Winds also gusted to 67 mph at White Sands Missile Range.



On May 10 this weak gustnado moved across east El Paso. (Lexx Snapback Swagg KVIA TV)



Thunderstorm winds caused blowing dust over Santa Teresa on June 4. (Greg Lundeen NWS)



Hot dry and windy weather created favorable conditions for this large wildfire over west El Paso on May 20. (Ruben Ramirez El Paso Times)



The Silver Fire burned almost 150,000 acres on the Black Range of the Gila National Forest in June and July. (Mike Hardiman NWS)

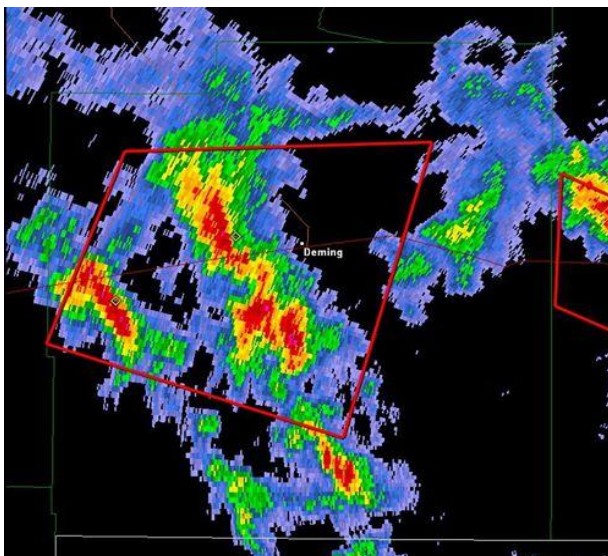
June 6: Late evening thunderstorms produced 68 mph wind gusts at Orogrande NM and 55 mph winds over El Paso.

June 7: Thunderstorm lightning ignited the Silver Fire which will burn almost 150,000 acres of the Black Range in the Gila National Forest. Elsewhere thunderstorm outflow winds gusted around 50 to 60 mph across portions of El Paso, Dona Ana and Luna Counties with power lines blown down at Montana Vista.

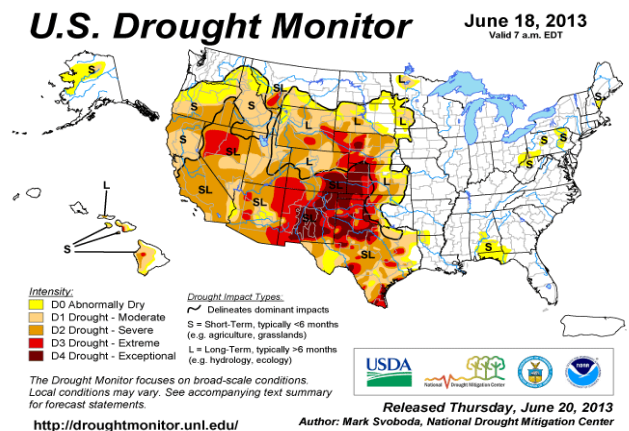
June 14: Severe thunderstorms produced 62 mph winds at White Sands Missile Range.



Strong thunderstorms moved over Hudspeth County Texas on the night of June 7. (Andra Litton)



National Weather Service radar shows severe thunderstorms moving into the Deming area on June 7.



By mid June extreme to exceptional drought conditions existed across much of New Mexico and west Texas.

June 30: Evening thunderstorms produced 80 mph winds at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo. Storms also dropped 1 to 2 inches of rain around Cloudcroft.

July 1: During the evening severe thunderstorms produced 80 to 90 mph winds in Sierra County around Elephant Butte State Park. At least 12 RV trailers were blown over with some vehicles displaced 40 yards. The winds also destroyed several porches and damaged roofs on area homes. Further west thunderstorm winds gusted to 65 mph at Deming.

July 3: Late afternoon severe thunderstorms produced quarter-sized hail which accumulated to an 8 inch depth near Gila in Grant County. Flooding was also reported in the area. Further east over Otero County golf ball-sized hail broke a car windshield in Mescalero while nickel-sized hail accumulated to 6 inches at Elk Silver. Heavy rains also flooded Highway 244 near Elk Silver.

July 4: Nickel-sized hail accumulated to a depth of 3 inches along Highway 70 near San Lorenzo NM.

July 5: Heavy rains fell around the Silver Fire burn scar causing flooding on Forest Road 150 near Camp Thunderbird in Grant County.

July 7: The Mimbres River flooded near Mimbres making low water crossings impassible.

July 8: Thunderstorms dumped heavy rains over Grant County with 2 to 3 inch rainfalls around Silver City and Cliff.

July 10: Severe thunderstorms dropped quarter-sized hail which broke windows and damaged crops at Virden NM.

July 12: Afternoon thunderstorms with heavy rains flooded portions of Silver City.

July 15: Two inches of rain fell in less than an hour causing street flooding at Hachita in Hidalgo County NM.



On the evening of June 14 this thunderstorm moved across the El Paso area. (Mike Hardiman NWS)



Thunderstorm wind gusts of 80 to 90 mph caused severe damage around Elephant Butte on July 1. (John Fausett NWS)



Strong thunderstorms moved across the Santa Teresa-west El Paso area on July 18. (John Fausett NWS)



Thunderstorm winds of almost 90 mph destroyed buildings across Columbus NM on July 23. (Mike Hardiman NWS)



July 23 heavy rains caused flooding over Sunland Park NM. (Joe Rogash NWS)



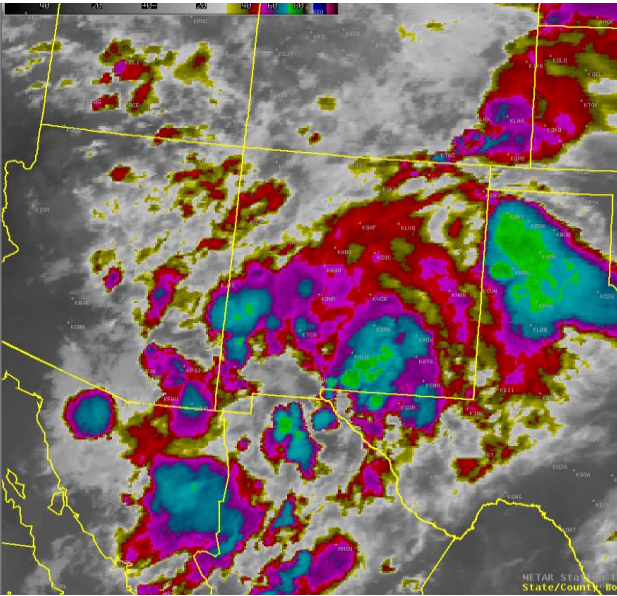
Heavy rains on July 23 also flooded portions of El Paso resulting in street closures. (Joe Rogash NWS)

July 20: Heavy rains caused flooding near Mimbres with cars stranded in roads due to high water levels.

July 23: Early evening severe thunderstorms produced a wet microburst near 90 mph at Columbus NM with numerous buildings damaged or destroyed. Meanwhile around 2 to 3 inches of rain fell across portions of the El Paso area including Sunland Park NM causing flooding and road closures. Hail an inch in diameter also fell at Hurley NM.

July 24: Severe thunderstorms with heavy rains struck El Paso and Dona Ana counties. High winds blew down 50 large trees and a building under construction in west El Paso with flooding again making some roads impassible. In Las Cruces flooding was reported at Sierra Middle School and a water rescue occurred due to high waters at Sonoma Ranch Blvd. Winds were also measured to 70 mph at Talavera. In Vado NM 20 people were evacuated after four mobile homes flooded.

July 25: Almost 2 inches of rain fell at White Signal NM in Grant County.



Infra red satellite image shows the severe thunderstorms which moved across southern New Mexico and west Texas on July 24.

July 26-27: Severe thunderstorms and torrential rains slam southern New Mexico and west Texas from the mid afternoon and evening into the early morning hours. Up to 3 inches of rain fell over portions of White Sands Missile Range and heavy rains flooded Interstate 25 and other roads near Hatch NM. Flooding was also reported around Truth or Consequences and Caballo. In Luna County water levels reached a depth of 3 feet closing the road to Rockhound State Park. To the south high winds again damaged buildings in Columbus. In Grant County penny-sized hail and street flooding occurred at Silver City while Highway 35 flooded near Mimbres.

July 30: Heavy rains flooded portions of west El Paso and Vinton along the Interstate 10 frontage road.

August 7: Highway 52 flooded at Winston NM with the water 3 to 4 feet deep.

August 10: Thunderstorms brought 1 to 2 inches of rain around Las Cruces and Radium Springs while 1.5 inches of rain fell at Bayard.

August 11: Flooding occurred over the Highway 144 bridge across Alamosa Creek at Monticello NM in Sierra County.



July 24 severe thunderstorms blew down 50 large trees over west El Paso. (KFOX-TV)



Heavy rains caused flooding in Vinton TX on July 30. (Mike Hardiman NWS)



Flooding near Kingston on August 4. (USDA)

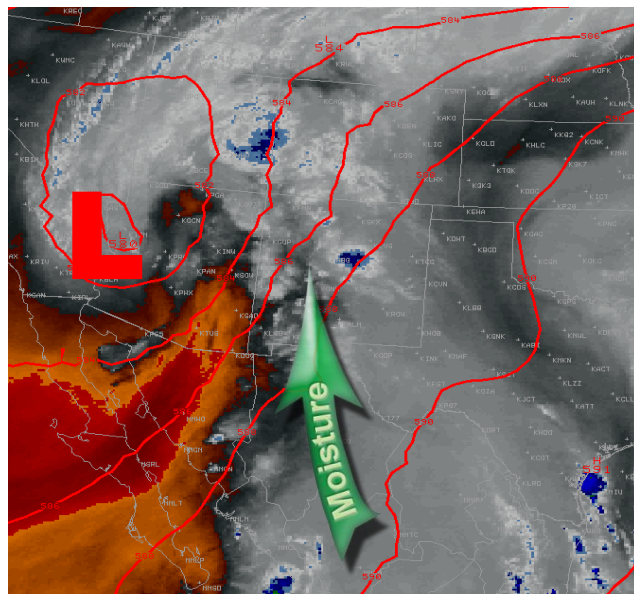
August 14: During the evening thunderstorms dumped over 2 inches of rain from south central Dona Ana to western El Paso County. Vado was hardest hit as 24 people were evacuated when their homes flooded. Heavy rains also flooded homes in Canutillo and Chamberino with street flooding also occurring around west El Paso, Santa Teresa and Sunland Park where a water rescue occurred.

August 29: Thunderstorms dropped heavy rains and flooded the Lordsburg area with water up to 5 feet deep at the Interstate 10 underpasses. Some water rescues were required.

September 9-12: A large trough of low pressure to the west generated deep southerly winds across New Mexico and western Texas with the transport of very moist unstable air. As a result showers and thunderstorms with torrential rainfalls deluged much of the region producing devastating flooding over some locations. The governor of New Mexico would declare a State of Emergency as the high water levels brought widespread damage and disruptions to the region.

September 9: Serious street flooding was reported from downtown Silver City to Pinos Altos as 1 to 2 inches of rain fell across the area.

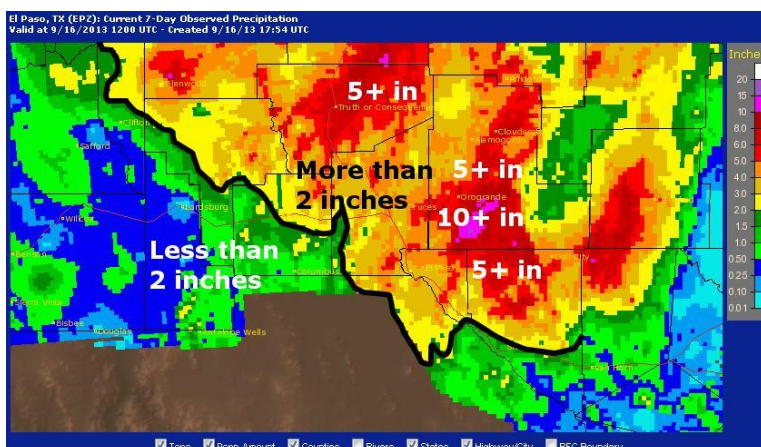
September 10: Widespread thunderstorms with heavy rains moved across southern New Mexico and west Texas. Grant County was hardest hit as 3.5 inches of rain fell near Tyrone with around 1 to 2 inches falling elsewhere. Almost 2 inches of rain also fell at Santa Teresa in Dona Ana County.



A deep trough of low pressure to the west generated heavy rains and flooding across New Mexico, far west Texas and Colorado in September 2013.



Heavy rains on September 11 flooded the Salt Flats near Dell City in Hudspeth County. (Guadalupe Mountains National Park)



From September 9-15, 3 to 10 inches of rain fell across portions of west Texas and Southern New Mexico.



Heavy rains severely damaged La Union NM on September 12. (John Fausett NWS)



Flooding at La Union NM after the September 12 heavy rains. (John Fausett NWS)

September 11: Showers and thunderstorms continued with heaviest rains falling over Hudspeth, El Paso and Dona Ana counties. Up to 7 inches of rain fell around Dell City flooding the Salt Flats. Almost 4 inches of rain also fell at Fort Hancock with 3.3 inches at Horizon City and 2.3 inches at Socorro. Heavy rains flooded Vado forcing some people to evacuate a trailer park. Flash flooding was reported around the East Mesa portion of Las Cruces where 1 to 2 inches of rain fell.

September 12-13: An extremely active period as heavy rains caused severe and widespread flooding from the morning of the 12th to the morning of the 13th. Over 4 inches of rain fell across portions of El Paso flooding roads and homes over portions of the city and causing a car to overturn. The flooding and heavy rains caused rock slides which closed Trans Mountain Road and floodwaters forced the closure of Interstate 10. The rains also caused an electrical explosion and fire in downtown El Paso.

Meanwhile almost 4 inches of rain fell at Horizon City TX causing flooding here and at Loma Linda while over Tornillo water levels were up to the hoods of cars. Homes and neighborhoods flooded in Socorro TX with at least 15 families having to be evacuated. In San Elizario TX serious flooding damaged the historic Old County Jail and La Portales Museum along with some homes.



Flooding over northeast El Paso on September 12. (Carlos Rivera El Paso Times)



Flooding at Socorro TX after the September 12 downpours. (Rubin Ramirez El Paso Times)

In southern New Mexico, 2 day rain totals of around 3 to 4 inches caused widespread home flooding and evacuations in southern Dona Ana County with many roads washed out and utility outages occurring. La Union suffered severe damage after an earthen dam was breached causing massive flooding in the community as the high waters inundated homes and streets.

Further north 3 to 4 inches of rain fell across Sierra County including the Truth or Consequences vicinity. The heavy rains caused Palomas and Animas Creeks to overflow and as a result about 200 households had to be evacuated as homes and roads flooded. In addition the floods washed out bridges including those across Highway 187. A dike broke near King Canyon further exacerbating the flooding and water damage.

Tragically a motorist drowned when floodwaters swept his vehicle off highway 54 in Ash Canyon.



Heavy rains and flooding over Sierra County NM on September 12-13 forced water rescues at Las Palomas Canyon. (The Herald of Truth or Consequences)



Flooding in downtown Truth or Consequences on the morning of September 13. (The Herald of Truth or Consequences)



Heavy rains caused rockslides on Trans Mountain Road in El Paso. (Joshua Villalobos)



September 12 flooding over Canutillo NM. (Jason Grzywacz NWS)



A man was killed on September 13 when floodwaters swept away his vehicle off Highway 54 in Ash Canyon. (KOB-TV)

September 14: Heavy rains to the north combined with a log jam and debris to cause the west fork of the Gila River to overflow and flood Gila Hot Springs. Water rescues were necessary as a few dwellings and roads were washed out.

September 15: Over 5 inches of rain fell around the Cloudcroft vicinity resulting in severe flooding of area roads. Highway 144 at Silver Lake was closed as the water levels reached depths of 5 to 6 feet. Highways 82 and 130 were also closed from the flooding. The floodwaters pushed over utility poles and trees and damaged several buildings.

September 16: Thunderstorms with heavy rains caused street flooding around Alamogordo and Boles Acres. Highway 82 also flooded.

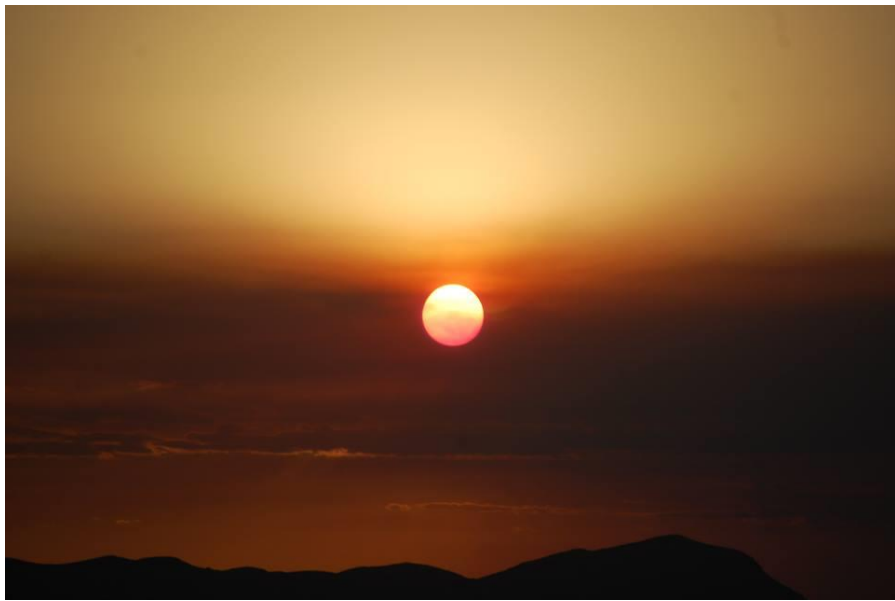
September 17: Two inches of rain fell in an hour near Sixteen Springs in Otero County. As a result flooding occurred around Sixteen Springs and Walker Canyon with evacuations required. County Road 10 also washes out.



September 12 flooding at Las Cruces. (Samantha Montoya Las Cruces Sun News)



On September 14 the Gila River overflowed causing some damage and evacuations. (Gila National Forest)



June sunset over Las Cruces NM. (Tom Johnson)



September flooding near Lake Roberts NM. (John Fausett NWS)

Spotters...Please call the National Weather Service If You Observe:

Tornado or Funnel Cloud...Report Time, Location and Movement

Hail...1/2 Inch or Larger

**Damaging Winds...Damage To Buildings, Motor Vehicles, Trees, Power Lines
And Other Structures**

**Flash Flooding...Flooding Of Streets and Buildings , Or If Rivers, Streams And
Arroyos Flood Or Overflow**

**Heavy Rains...1/2 Inch of Rain In Less Than 30 Minutes Or At Least 1 Inch Of
Rain In Less Than 2 Hours**

Blowing Dust...Whenever Blowing Dust Reduces The Visibility To Less Than 2 Miles.

Snow Amounts Greater Than An Inch