State Water Resources Control Board

October 9, 2026

ATTN: Wastewater Treatment Plants Regulated by a Regional Water Quality Control Board

PREPARATION FOR ANTICIPATED 2026-2027 EL NIÑO RAINY SEASON

The State Water Resources Control Board and Regional Water Quality Control Boards (collectively, Water Boards) are notifying you to prepare your wastewater treatment or disposal system for the 2026-2027 rainy season.

On September 21, 2026, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a proclamation of a state of emergency in preparation for potential severe weather and flooding associated with the predicted El Niño event. El Niño is a natural climate pattern that occurs when a band of warm water develops in the Pacific Ocean which causes higher than average rainfall throughout the state.

In California, public and private entities that own or operate a wastewater treatment system, which has the potential to discharge waste to the environment, are regulated by waste discharge requirements orders issued by the Water Boards. To minimize overflows or a wastewater treatment bypass due to severe storms, regulated entities must have an up-to-date emergency response plan and complete preventative maintenance: fix structural vulnerabilities and ensure adequate system capacity.

The Water Boards will evaluate rain-related, unauthorized discharges of waste to the environment to determine if the regulated entity took appropriate preventative maintenance and preparation measures for the rainy season. Failure to demonstrate adequate preventative measures may result in an enforcement action.

If you have questions, please contact NPDES_wastewater@waterboards.ca.gov

Sincerely,

Phillip Crader, Deputy Director
Division of Water Quality