

SDA NEWS

JUNE 2026

Supporting Community-Based Government

SDA's Michael Valdez and Ann Terry were part of a delegation from the National Special Districts Association who visited Washington, D.C. to advocate for districts—see *page 9*.

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SDA

225 East 16th Avenue
Suite 1000
Denver, CO 80203
(303) 863-1733
Toll Free (800) 886-1733
sdaco@sdaco.org
www.sdaco.org

Designed by Emmett Jordan

There's Still Time to Register for the 2026 SDA Annual Regional Workshops...

But Don't Wait Any Longer!

Do you have questions about open meetings or which records are public records? Are you trying to gain a better understanding of conflicts of interest? Or maybe you would like to hear about this year's legislative changes and how they affect your district?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then make plans to join us in June for this year's Annual Regional Workshops!

SDA, the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool, and the law firm of Collins Cole Winn & Ulmer, PLLC are coming to a town near you to present these educational and entertaining trainings!

These workshops apply to all types of districts (not just Title 32 districts) and are sure to provide a wealth of valuable information for your district. We will cover a wide variety of important topics such as minutes, meeting formats, Board policies, open meetings, conflicts of interest, and public records, just to name a few. We will also discuss establishing and developing a strong safety culture within your district. On top of all this, we will give you the scoop on this year's legislative changes and the impact they may have on your district. And, as always, there will be plenty of time to answer all your questions, big or small.

We will have something for everyone, whether you are a Board member or district employee, a seasoned professional or brand new to your position!

Did we mention that every attendee will also receive a copy of the 2026 SDA Board Member Manual and the legislative update for 2026?

Having this many pertinent and timely issues discussed all in one place is an opportunity you can't afford to miss! And we'll be in your neck of the woods soon so make sure you sign up today for the workshop nearest you!

For more details and to complete the quick and easy registration process, please visit our website at www.sdaco.org. The cost is \$40 per person.

We can't wait to see you in a few weeks!



LAKEWOOD

Friday, June 12 | 8:00-11:30 am

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Monday, June 15 | 8:00-11:30 am

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PARKER

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Parker Water and Sanitation District

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Tuesday, June 16 | 8:00-11:30 am

Platte Valley Fire Protection District

NORTH DENVER

Tuesday, June 16 | 1:30-5:00 pm

The Greg Mastriona Golf Courses at
Hyland Hills Clubhouse

GRANBY

Wednesday, June 17 | 9:00 am-12:30 pm

Grand Fire Protection District

VAIL

Wednesday, June 17 | 9:00 am-12:30 pm

Vail Recreation District Golf and Nordic Clubhouse

CLIFTON

Thursday, June 18 | 8:00-11:30 am

Clifton Water District

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Monday, June 22 | 8:00-11:30 am

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Mark Your Calendars and Start Making Your Plans...

It's Almost Time for the 2026 SDA Annual Conference!

We are so excited for this year's **SDA Annual Conference, September 15-17 at the Keystone Conference Center!** It's hard to believe, but that's right around the corner!

Due to the huge benefits for all our attendees, we will once again be utilizing our hybrid format, with both an in-person and livestreaming option. Much like the previous years, our keynote presentations and breakout sessions will be livestreamed to a convenient online platform that will provide access for those who would like to join us remotely.

The keynotes and breakout sessions will also be recorded! And what's more, **these recordings will be available after Conference** so all attendees can go back and watch the sessions again, either as a refresher or to catch up on anything they missed.

Conference will kick off early on Tuesday morning, and it will be a packed day! We will begin with breakfast, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Presentation of the Colors. Immediately following these opening events, we are going to kick off the day with an entertaining and enlightening keynote speaker, Cam Awesome. (Yes, that's really his last name!)

In addition, we will be celebrating this year's annual award winners on Tuesday at our Awards Luncheon. This is always a wonderful opportunity to recognize all our very deserving winners, and we

are looking forward to it again this year! Tuesday's lunch will also feature keynote speaker, Robyne Hanley-Dafoe. (We'll have more details on all our keynote speakers in the July issue so watch for more to come!)

On Tuesday afternoon, we are bringing back our Discussion Forums! This dedicated time for focused conversations on specific topics has proven very valuable in the past, and we are thrilled to offer these Forums again this year. We are finalizing the details of the topics and our discussion leaders so keep an eye out for more details to come!

Tuesday will wrap up with our Opening Night Celebration! And we're bringing back game night! The casino tables and trivia have been so popular that we'll have them both available again this year. This will be a great way to unwind and visit with your fellow attendees after our full day.

Wednesday will feature two more amazing keynote speakers at breakfast and lunch as well as a plethora of information-packed breakout sessions.

On Wednesday evening, we'll enjoy delicious BBQ and music on the beautiful Conference Center patio at our Boots and BBQ event. We will be joined by perennial favorite, **Randall McKinnon**, and you'll have plenty of time to catch up with your colleagues from the special district world.

Continued on page 7



We can't learn from people who are perfect. We can only learn from people who are imperfect.

Leading Imperfectly
James Robilotta

We can't learn from people who are perfect. We can only learn from people who are imperfect.



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so watch your emails
and the SDA website at
www.sdaco.org for details.

SDA Annual Conference
Keystone Conference Center
September 15-17, 2026

Thursday morning will kick-off with a keynote presentation followed by our final breakout sessions. We will then conclude the entire event with a **Grab-and-Go lunch** that you can stay and enjoy before heading home or take with you in the car.

Thursday will be a full day, and **we will end at the perfect time** to get you back on your way.

Over the course of the three-day event, you will have a wide variety of breakout sessions to choose from. Our schedule of breakout sessions will include experts speaking on pertinent and timely issues for special districts of all types. Be ready to take in the valuable and educational information all our breakout speakers will have to offer!

You also won't want to miss the keynote speakers each day! We have given you a sneak preview of who will be joining us on Tuesday, but we also have an amazing lineup planned for Wednesday and Thursday. We will highlight each keynote speaker in the July issue so watch for more to come.

As always, we are excited to be working with all our wonderful sponsors and exhibitors this year! Be sure to spend some time visiting with each of them and learning about their great services. **In addition to our numerous exhibitors and our Gold, Silver, and Bronze Sponsors, we also have 15 Platinum Sponsors.** Below is the complete list for 2026:

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- » GovDeals
- » Western Alliance Bank
- » Highstreet Insurance & Financial Services (*new for 2026!*)

Registration will open in early July so watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for more details as they become available.

Start making your plans now, and we will see you in Keystone, September 15-17! 🍷

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Special District Leaders from Across the United States Visit Washington, D.C. to Advocate for Districts on a National Level

SDA's own Ann Terry and Michael Valdez were part of a 15-member delegation of members from the National Special Districts Association (NSDA) who visited Washington, D.C. in early May to advocate for districts across the country.

The group held 25 meetings with key Congressional offices, the Intergovernmental Office at the White House, and national partners to advance critical federal priorities for special districts. These meetings included the offices of Senator John Hickenlooper, Congressman Gabe Evans, and Congressman Jeff Hurd from the Colorado delegation.

This year also marked an exciting milestone as the NSDA advocacy efforts reached top leadership offices, including Speaker Mike Johnson and House Minority Leader Congressman Hakeem Jeffries.

The current top priority for NSDA is the Special District Fairness and Accessibility Act (H.R. 2766 / S.2014), which would define special districts for the first time in federal law.

Federal law currently lacks a clear definition of "special district," creating unnecessary barriers to federal resources, emergency funding, and essential grants. Special districts provide critical public services—water, fire protection, healthcare, public transportation, and more—yet they are often overlooked in federal policy discussions.

A formal definition of "special district" will foster consistency and enhance special districts' access to federal programs, including programs that provide resources for constructing and protecting critical infrastructure. Moreover, having a formal definition of special districts codified in law would help facilitate the inclusion of special districts in future legislative efforts, particularly



In early May, Ann Terry (front row, third from left) and Michael Valdez (front row, second from left) were part of a large delegation from the National Special Districts Association who visited Washington, D.C. to advocate for districts across the country. The group met with key Congressional offices to advance critical federal priorities, including the Special District Fairness and Accessibility Act.

those that are designed to reauthorize or create new grant programs.

Since 2020, NSDA has led efforts to establish a federal definition. This work has resulted in the proposed legislation to amend U.S. Code Title 13, ensuring that special districts are formally recognized and equitably included in federal programs.

Ann, who also serves as President of NSDA, was thrilled with the productive meetings and the progress that is being made on the federal legislation. "The bipartisan Special District Fairness and

Accessibility Act would establish a formal definition of 'special district' in federal law and ensure that the nearly 40,000 special districts nationwide are eligible to receive all appropriate forms of federal financial assistance. NSDA looks forward to continuing to work with Congress as well as our special district partners across the nation to ensure that this critically important piece of legislation is enacted into law."

For more information, please visit the NSDA website at www.nationalspecialdistricts.org.

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Registration is Open for the 2026 SDA Annual Regional Workshops!



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Important Reminders About Budgets and Budget Amendments

It's hard to believe that we are already halfway through 2026! As you are keeping tabs on your district's annual budget, you may be wondering if changes to the budget can be made during the budget year, should the need arise.

Before we get to that question, let's take a moment to go back to the beginning and look at the actual importance of a district's annual budget.

First, the annual budget is critical enough that the district cannot certify a mill levy without it, and the County Assessor will not release property tax revenues for the year without an adopted budget being certified and filed with the Division of Local Government.

Procedurally, the Board must designate a qualified person to prepare the budget and submit it to the Board on or before October 15 of each year. *§29-1-105, C.R.S.*

The County Assessor will certify the district's assessed valuation, including any last-minute changes, by December 10 of each year. *§39-5-128(1), C.R.S.*

There is a very specific procedure for advertising, considering, and adopting the annual budget. A certified copy of the adopted budget, which includes the resolution to adopt the budget, set the mill levy rate(s), and appropriate funds; and the budget message must be filed with the Division of Local

Government no later than 30 days following the beginning of the fiscal year of the budget. *§29-1-113, C.R.S.*

There is no specific criteria for how detailed a budget should be nor how much it is based upon line items, although the district's accounting or financial advisors will likely have some input on the level of line item designation. Generally speaking, expenditures need not be laid out in great detail, but spending should be confined to the line items.

As part of the adoption of the budget is the adoption of a resolution which adopts the budget and makes appropriations for the budget year. The amounts appropriated shall not exceed the budgeted expenditures, and the district is limited in making expenditures to the amounts that are appropriated.

Now, let's look at what your next steps would be should you need to revise your adopted budget.

If it becomes clear that there should be a change in the budget allocations, there is a procedure for amending the budget and appropriations. The amount of appropriated funds may be revised, supplemented, transferred, or adjusted during the year by the adoption of a resolution at a public hearing amending the budget. For supplemental budgets and appropriations, the resolution shall set forth in full the source and amount of the

revenue being appropriated; the purpose for which the revenues are being budgeted and appropriated; and the fund or spending agency that will be making the supplemental expenditure.

...the annual budget is critical enough that the district cannot certify a mill levy without it...

The notice provisions and requirements for adoption of budget amendments are the same as for adopting the budget. *§29-1-109, C.R.S.*

Budgets may be amended at any time throughout the year by following the prescribed procedure. It is not uncommon for a district to go through the budget year and then adopt an amendment near the end of the year, truing up the budget and appropriation to the actual expenditures that have been made through the year. This is not the best practice if there are significant departures from the budget, although it is certainly better than ending the year with spending that is not accounted for in the four corners of an adopted budget as amended. 🍌

It's June...Is Your Audit Report Complete?

Unless your district is exempt, hopefully your auditor has finished or is close to finishing your audit and delivering the audit report to the district Board. If not, then he or she only has until June 30 to complete it. The district, in turn, has 30 days from receipt to file a copy of the audit and audit report with the Colorado Office of the State Auditor.

One more thing, if your district had, as of December 31, 2025, any authorized but unissued general obligation debt, then you also need to submit a copy of your audit report (or application for exemption from audit, if applicable) to the Board of County Commissioners or the governing body of the municipality.



A Super El Niño is in the Forecast. *Here's What that Means for Colorado.*

By Shannon Mullane

This story was originally published by Fresh Water News, a collaboration between The Colorado Sun and Water Education Colorado covering water stories of critical importance to Colorado and the West. Support and subscribe to The Colorado Sun at coloradosun.com and to Water Education Colorado at watereducationcolorado.org.

As Coloradans grapple with a record low snowpack heading into summer, the super El Niño and strong monsoon season in the forecast could provide some late summer relief.

Colorado's weather is impacted by everything from temperature changes in the Pacific Ocean to pressure patterns over Texas—not to mention rising temperatures around the globe. This year's La Niña conditions, created by cooler water temperatures in the Pacific, should have brought snow to Colorado's northern mountains. Instead, the state ended the winter a month early with record hot days and a rapid snowmelt, prompting drought restrictions and water cutbacks around Colorado.

[As of the end of April], the La Niña is over and the odds are increasingly good for a super El Niño later in 2026—a climate pattern that has historically brought wetter winter conditions to Colorado, according to the National Weather Service.

It's a tentative dose of hope for residents looking for a reprieve from record-breaking dry conditions, said Russ Schumacher, Colorado state climatologist and a professor at Colorado State University.

"Things are probably going to get worse before they get better,"

Schumacher said. "I don't think we're going to be stuck in just dry, dry, dry for many, many more months to come. I think there is some reason for optimism."

A lot of Colorado's bad drought

water temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean that are influenced by winds circling the Earth near the equator, called trade winds because of their use in early sail-dependent commerce.

A lot of Colorado's bad drought years have come during La Niña conditions, and Colorado has had multiple La Niña years in a row. Colorado should be rooting for La Niña to go away at this point.

—Russ Schumacher, Colorado state climatologist

years have come during La Niña conditions, and Colorado has had multiple La Niña years in a row. Colorado should be rooting for La Niña to go away at this point, he said.

"It doesn't guarantee that things are going to improve in the near term," Schumacher added, "but we have a better chance of it if La Niña is in the rearview mirror."

What are El Niño and La Niña?

El Niño and La Niña are opposing climate patterns in the Pacific Ocean that can affect weather worldwide. Together, they're called the El Niño-Southern Oscillation cycle, ENSO for short.

The patterns vary based on

Meteorologists watch a specific region in the Pacific near the equator to determine whether the water temperature is warmer or cooler than normal, said Erin Walter, a service hydrologist for the National Weather Service in Grand Junction.

If the region's water temperature is more than 0.5 degrees Celsius warmer than usual, then scientists call it an El Niño.

If the temperature is more than 0.5 degrees Celsius cooler than usual, it is a La Niña.

"They're basically like opposite waves," Walter said. "They ebb and flow together. And they're more irregular than one would think."

The warmer or cooler temperatures need to last for months before scientists will shift the classification from neutral into El Niño or La Niña territory. The climate patterns typically last nine to 12 months, but can sometimes last for years.

El Niño and La Niña events occur every two to seven years, on average, but they don't occur on a regular schedule. Generally, El Niño occurs more frequently than La Niña, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Fun fact: The names for the two climate patterns can be traced back to observant South American fishermen in the 1600s, NOAA says.

The fishermen first noticed periods of unusually warm weather in the Pacific Ocean and called the resulting patterns El Niño de Navidad, the Christmas Child or the Christ Child in English, because El Niño typically peaks around December.

La Niña means Little Girl in Spanish. La Niña is also sometimes called El Viejo, anti-El Niño, or simply "a cold event," according to NOAA.

How Do ENSO Cycles Impact Colorado and the World?

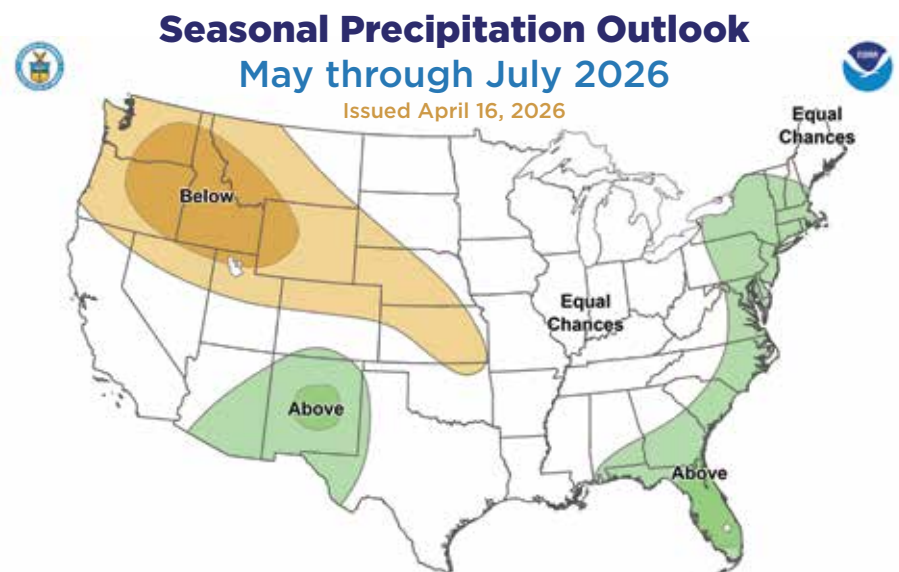
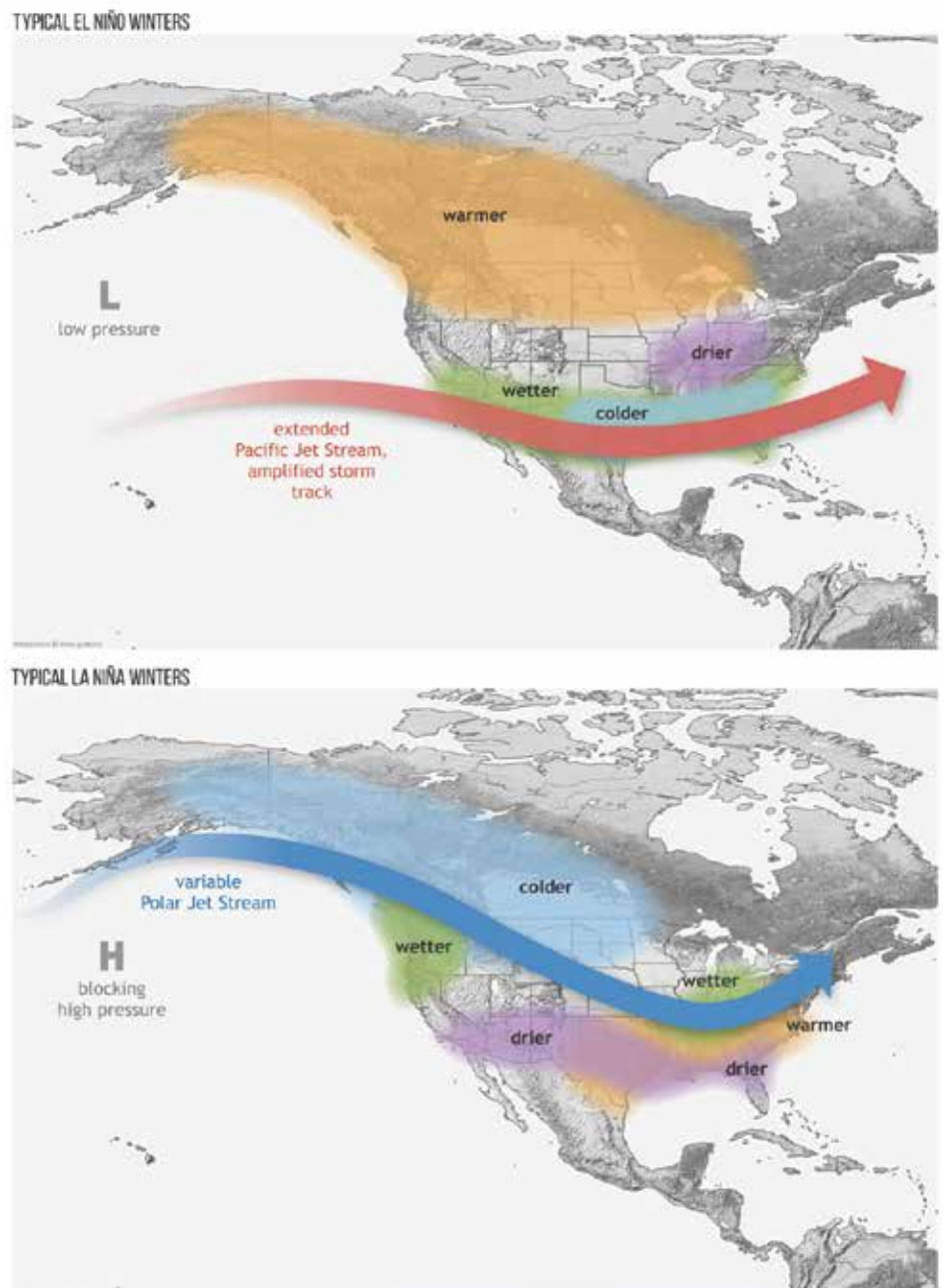
The temperature fluctuations in the Pacific Ocean impact how and where jet streams, narrow bands of strong wind, flow in the atmosphere. Those jet streams impact which regions of the world have a dry spell, and which ones are hit with storms.

The ENSO events can lead to flooding, heavy rains, landslides and drought. They change where fish can find nutrients in the ocean. La Niña can lead to a more severe hurricane season, according to NOAA.

In the United States during El Niño conditions, a subtropical jet stream moves across southern states, like California, Texas and Florida, making them cooler and wetter than usual. Northern states tend to be warmer and drier than average, Schumacher said.

During La Niña, the jet stream comes out of the Northwest across the western United States. The Pacific Northwest and Midwest are

Continued on page 14



cooler and wetter than average, while the Southwest is warmer and drier than average.

Colorado sits in the middle, which makes it harder to define clear impacts of ENSO events and to separate them from other common climate variations around the Rocky Mountains, Schumacher said.

Typically, El Niño tends to bring wetter-than-average conditions, particularly to southern Colorado and in the fall and spring. (This year, that would mean fall 2026 and spring 2027.)

During La Niña, the conditions flip. Colorado's northern mountains often receive more snow while southern portions of the state are warmer and drier.

That doesn't always happen: This winter is an example of La Niña conditions that did not drop very much snow on the northern part of the state—or anywhere.

Which team should Coloradans be on? Definitely El Niño, Schumacher said.

"It tilts the odds towards things being wetter," he said.

A "Super" El Niño in the Forecast

This year, the region's water temperature is more than 2 degrees Celsius warmer than usual for multiple months—prompting climate scientists to dub it a super El Niño.

They expect neutral conditions between April and June. After that, conditions could stay neutral or transition into a strong El Niño, according to the National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center. Seeing El Niño conditions is likely, but whether they appear will depend on wind patterns over the Pacific Ocean.

For anyone looking for rain and snow in Colorado, this is a reason for optimism later in the

summer and for the coming winter, Schumacher said.

In 1997, the last really strong El Niño brought moisture to most of Colorado in the summer and fall. There were floods along the Front Range and Eastern Plains.

But just because that's what happened one other time doesn't mean Colorado will see the same conditions again.

"It would be speculation to read too much into that," Schumacher said.

So what exactly would a super El Niño mean for Colorado?

"The short answer is, we don't really know," he said.

Climate and weather researchers only have a few similar years in history to analyze, and that's not enough data to identify clear trends with high certainty. There have been only five strong El Niños since 1950, with the last taking place from 2015 to 2016.

"In terms of what that's going to mean for how the jet stream responds to that, and then in turn, what kind of precipitation we get in Colorado?" Schumacher said. "I think it's too early to say."

The Non-Niño Weather Event You Should be Watching

There is one other weather phenomenon that will come into play this summer: monsoons.

"The outlooks are pointing towards the active monsoon season this summer, and so that's probably the thing to keep a closer eye on in the near term," he said.

Monsoons are different from ENSO patterns. El Niño conditions are stronger in the winter and weaker in the summer and have global impacts.

Monsoons are local seasonal circulations that develop every

summer in the Southwest. They arise when shifting wind patterns bring moisture from the eastern Pacific and the Gulf of California into the Southwest.

Active monsoon seasons can provide a large fraction of the annual precipitation to lower elevations in parts of the state, like western and southeastern Colorado. This year's forecast indicates monsoons are likely for July, August and September, Schumacher said.

These active seasons bring afternoon thunderstorms every day and flash floods in Colorado's canyons. They can help reduce some of the risks of a historic drought year, like wildfire risks later in the summer.

"As with any seasonal forecasting, it's uncertain," Schumacher said. "Four months out it's hard to put really high probabilities on anything."

What Do Monsoons Mean for Colorado's Water Supply?

An active monsoon season will offer some relief, but it will not refill Colorado's reservoirs.

The monsoon storms might bring intense rain over a short amount of time, but in the big picture, they do not provide very much water. The amount of water that normally comes from a big winter snowstorm is much higher than the amount of water in an afternoon storm.

The cloudy and cool weather with rain showers would help reduce the demand for outdoor irrigation for gardens and crops while providing a small boost in the supply, Schumacher said.

"Monsoon rains just aren't nearly enough to fill up reservoirs or even bring them back up from really low levels," he said. 🌧️

The monsoon storms might bring intense rain over a short amount of time, but in the big picture, they do not provide very much water.



The Full 2026 Legislative Wrap-Up Will be Available after July 1!

Want to learn more about what happened during the 2026 Legislative Session that will affect your district? Looking for a sneak peek of what's to come next year?

Then make sure you check out our full 2026 legislative wrap-up which will be recorded and available after July 1!

SDA's Legislative Team will provide an overview of the 2026 Legislative Session, including the bills and issues that proved to be the most pertinent for special districts.

Board members and all district employees will benefit from this valuable presentation which will highlight what the new legislation may mean for your district. You'll also get the inside scoop on what's on the horizon for the 2027 Legislative Session!

This is one you don't want to miss! Please watch your emails and the SDA website at www.sdaco.org for all the details once the recording is available. 📌



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LOCKOUT TAGOUT DEMONSTRATIONS

Guest article by the Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool

The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool (CSP Pool) remains committed to our more than 2,500 public entities as *Your Risk Management Partner*. Each month, we are focusing on a different program or service we offer our membership, either at no cost or at a discounted rate. This month, we're highlighting our Lockout Tagout Demonstrations.

Free Lockout Tagout Demonstrations

Lockout/tagout (LOTO) is critical to workplace safety because it prevents the unexpected release of hazardous energy, like electricity, while equipment is being

serviced or maintained. Without proper LOTO procedures, workers face serious risks including shocks, burns, and even fatalities.

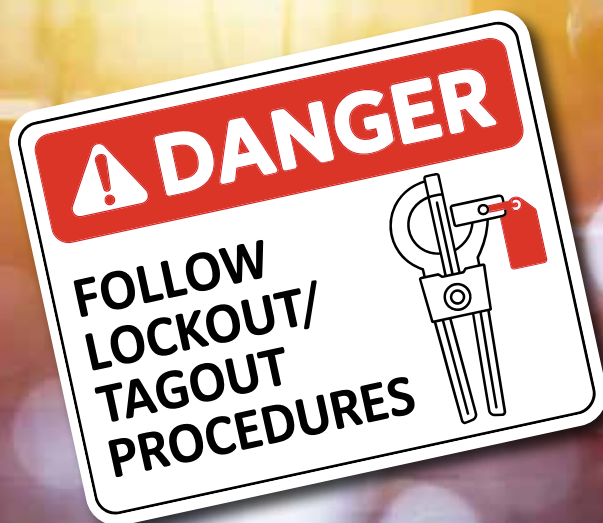
For organizations responsible for protecting their teams, it's not just a best practice—it's a core part of a strong safety culture.

That's why our members are encouraged to request a free virtual or hands-on demo: it's an opportunity to ensure your team understands exactly how to properly isolate and secure an electrical source, ask questions in real time, and build confidence in procedures that could ultimately save a life.

Request your free LOTO demonstration today at csdpool.org/request-a-safety-consultation.

To learn more, visit our website at csdpool.org/safety-consulting.

As *Your Risk Management Partner*, we remain committed to providing specialized coverages tailored for public entities, exemplary claims support, and safety and loss prevention services to ensure everyone within the organization—from Board members to supervisors and staff—has the tools they need to succeed. If you have any questions about the resources mentioned here, please visit csdpool.org or message us at csdpool.org/connect.





The Colorado Special Districts Property and Liability Pool Has Launched a New Podcast!

Entitled **“Safe Not Sorry,”** this informative podcast is designed to explore real-world challenges members face and to share practical insights to protect people, property, and communities. The first episode is called “Why Safety?” and discusses the history of safety and its relevance to modern day life.

You can listen in on Spotify and Apple Music. Take a few minutes and check it out today! 🎧



You Will Lose Your 25% Discount if You Don't Pay Your SDA Renewal by July 1...*So Don't Delay!*

Many of you renewed your 2026 SDA membership by March 1 and received a 25% discount, but there is one more important step to take care of.

Now, make sure you *pay* your dues by July 1 or you will lose the discount!

This only gives you a few more weeks so don't wait any longer!

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Karla Boughey, our Membership Services Coordinator, at 303-863-1733. 🍷

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Learn the ins &
outs of LOTO
from a certified
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Request A Lockout Tagout Demo



csdpool.org/safety-consulting

