

# NATURAL DISASTERS IN SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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## FLOODS IN THE INLAND EMPIRE

1862: The San Bernardino Valley experiences a downpour of rain for 24 hours, covering the flat areas from the Santa Ana River to the Pine's Hotel at present-day Third Street and Arrowhead Avenue in San Bernardino. Stormy weather lasts three weeks, washing away adobe houses. Cattle drown. The Seely and Mormon mills wash away. The Agua Mansa settlement is destroyed.

1867: Lytle and Cajon creeks form a river up to 180 yards wide and up to 20 feet deep. Lumber mills, farms, orchards, timberland and vineyards are destroyed.

1883-84: Storms produce 37.5 inches of rain. It is a disaster for railroad companies.

1891: Gutters are washed out at the lower end of Center Street in Redlands. The Zanja Creek overflows and spreads out over State Street and Citrus Avenue.

1915-16: The San Bernardino Valley is hit by 19 days of rain. One hundred feet of sidewalk cave in at Base Line and G Street in San Bernardino. Base Line at Arrowhead Avenue is considered the worst flooded district. County highways between Devore and Kenbrook are washed out. A bridge on Orange Street in Redlands is destroyed.

1938: The worst flood in history hits the San Bernardino Valley, with rain falling at 4.8 inches an hour. Eighty-seven people die. Foothill Boulevard is inaccessible. The Santa Ana River halts traffic across North Orange Street and Tippecanoe Avenue into Redlands and Loma Linda. One hundred bridges in San Bernardino are destroyed.

1941: A spectacular mudflow in Wrightwood was caused by extremely wet weather causing failure of the landslide-prone Pelona Schist. Another huge mudflow occurred here in 1969.

1958: Warm Creek overflows near Tippecanoe Avenue. Cascading water pours over 40th Street in San Bernardino. Water pours out of Waterman Canyon, sending boulders across 40th and Valencia Avenue. Residents on Banana Avenue in Fontana face 5-foot waves. Rock and debris clog Arrow Avenue. A flash flood in Barstow causes \$1 million in damage.

1965: Two big floods hit the San Bernardino Valley. Four people die. Base Line and Highland Avenue wash out at Lytle Creek crossings.

**CONTINUES**

## LIVING ON THE EDGE CONT.

1969: San Timoteo Canyon is closed because of mudslides and rockslides. Flooding washes out Fort Irwin Road and Highways 58 and 91. Mountain and High Desert roads are closed, except for Interstate 15 through the Cajon Pass. Bridges on Orange Street and Barton Road in Redlands are closed. Alluvial floods and debris flows on Deer Creek killed 11 people in the Cucamonga area.

1976: Tropical Storm Kathleen dumped up to 14 inches of rain on mountains and foothills above the Coachella Valley, causing extensive flooding and property damage. Six died in the Ocotillo area of Imperial County. San Bernardino, Riverside and San Diego counties were also affected.

1979: Flash floods sent mud and water raging through hundreds of low desert homes in upscale Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert and La Quinta. Some residents were swept out of their homes at night. A flood-control structure at Magnesia Spring Canyon was overwhelmed. Debris flows killed one and caused \$7 million in damages.

1980: A series of storms unleashed post-fire flooding that overwhelmed a basin below Harrison Canyon in north San Bernardino four times. Forty homes were either damaged or destroyed.

1991: Storms unleashed flood waters 5 feet deep in Desert Hot Springs. Two died and six were injured.

1992: Twelve homes and two apartments in Hesperia are destroyed in floods. Homes in Adelanto and Yucaipa are flooded.

1999: Summer monsoonal rains produced debris flows that roared through Forest Falls at a minimum velocity of 40 to 50 (perhaps up to 80) miles per hour. One life was lost and property damage was significant.

2003: Wildfires burned 700,000 acres in San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles, San Diego and Ventura counties. Since then, flooding in erosion-prone mountain watersheds has killed 17 in San Bernardino County alone, including 16 people on December 25.

2005: A motorist and her unborn child were killed in Highland when their car was swept off a road crossing at City Creek.

