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## **Southern California storms are good news in the Sierra**

**DON THOMPSON**

**Associated Press**

**SACRAMENTO** - The recent storms that swamped Southern California, causing fatal mudslides, stranding motorists and causing general havoc, in fact bode well for this summer's water supply, new snow pack figures showed Tuesday.

Some portions of the southern Sierra Nevada range had nearly double the typical snowfall for this time of year.

The snow pack dwindled a bit farther north, but still was nearly half-again above average as water watchers conducted their second snow survey of the season.

"The Southern California mountains are doing a lot better than they have in six or seven years," said Don Strickland, a spokesman for the state Department of Water Resources. "All of this water we had, which caused flooding in Southern California, helped fill a lot of reservoirs."

Most of California's winter rain runs off into the ocean. Where it falls as snow, it accumulates into a vast virtual reservoir that slowly feeds rivers and groundwater as it melts each spring. California gets more than a third of its drinking and irrigation water from Sierra snow, while snow-fed hydroelectric plants produce about a quarter of the state's power.

"We really rely on that snow pack," said Strickland. "All things considered, it's shaping up to be pretty good right now."

Across the Sierra, the snow pack was 143 percent above average. About 90 percent of all the snow that would usually be on the ground on April 1 already had fallen, the department's automated and manual snow measurements found.