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The Strongest El Niæo Since 1950? A Data Study of the Winter 2026 27 Outlook

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOAA and the World Meteorological Organization now put the odds above 80 percent that the 2026 27 El Niæo becomes the strongest since records began in 1950, with a December peak, a forecast Pacific anomaly of about +3.7℃, and a split North American winter: warmer in the north, wetter across the south.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS & STRATEGIC OUTLOOK

Executive Summary Two of the world’s leading forecast authorities have converged on the same verdict: the El Niæo that began developing in June 2026 is strengthening fast and is on course to become one of the most powerful events since modern records began in 1950. The World Meteorological Organization WMO forecasts a near-100 percent likelihood that the event persists through February 2027 and peaks in December 2026, while the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NOAA Climate Prediction Center puts the chance of a historically strong event above 83 percent. The headline number is the forecast Niæo-3.4 sea-surface temperature anomaly of about +3.7℃ for October December 2026 above the previous record of +2.6℃ set during November 2015 to January 2016. For readers, the practical consequence is a divided winter: NOAA’s December February outlook favours warmer-than-average conditions across much of the northern United States and wetter-than-average conditions from California to Florida and along the East Coast, with drought expected to ease across the Southwest and Southeast but worsen in parts of the northern Rockies. This study tests those claims against the published numbers, separates measured observations from model forecasts, and sets out what would confirm or overturn the record-strength verdict by early 2027. Methodology This study rests on three primary sources, cross-checked against independent reporting of each release: the WMO Global Seasonal Climate Update of October 8, 2026, built on a consensus of 13 leading national and international meteorological centres; the NOAA Climate Prediction Center ENSO diagnostic discussion of October 8, 2026; and NOAA’s United States Winter Outlook of October 15, 2026, covering December 2026 to

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