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Outlook for the 2026 Northwest Pacific Typhoon Season

Issued: Friday, 24 April by Chris Hebert, TropicsWatch Manager, StormGeo, Inc.

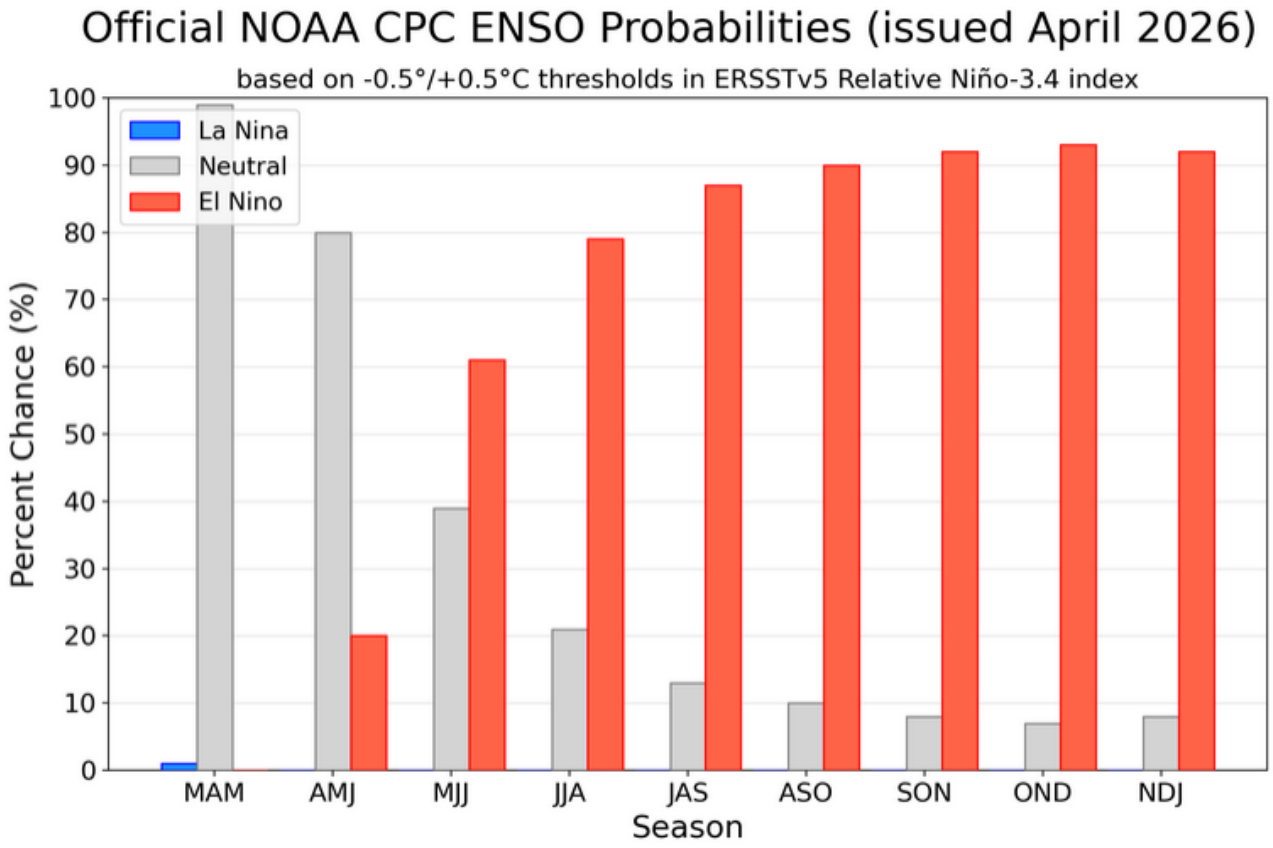
The 2025 West Pacific typhoon season ended with a total of 27 named storms, of which 13 became typhoons. Of the 13 typhoons, 6 became intense typhoons with max sustained wind of 100 kts (115 mph) or higher. The strongest typhoon was Ragasa, which had maximum sustained winds of 145 kts (165 mph). Ragasa formed in the Philippine Sea on the 17th of September and tracked westward north of Luzon on the 22nd of September at its peak intensity. Ragasa made its final landfall in southern China on the 25th of September. The prime impact areas last season extended from central Luzon to Taiwan. No typhoons impacted Japan last season.

So far this season, there have been four named storms, including Super Typhoon Sinlaku, which struck Saipan and the Northern Mariana Islands in mid-April.

El Niño/La Niña

One primary driver of typhoon activity in the Northwest Pacific is the state of El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). ENSO is represented by the Oceanic Niño Index (ONI), which is defined as the 3-month average surface temperature anomaly for the Niño 3.4 region in the Tropical Pacific. When the sea surface temperature anomaly is less than 0.5C below normal over a three-month period, it is identified as a La Niña. Conversely, when the average sea surface temperature anomaly is greater than 0.5C for a three-month period, it is identified as an El Niño.

Last season, water temperatures in the Tropical Pacific were neutral to a weak La Niña. For 2026, La Niña has faded away to neutral conditions. Currently, all computer models are predicting a strong El Niño through the summer and autumn. This would result in sinking air over the West Pacific, a significant inhibiting factor as far as typhoon development.

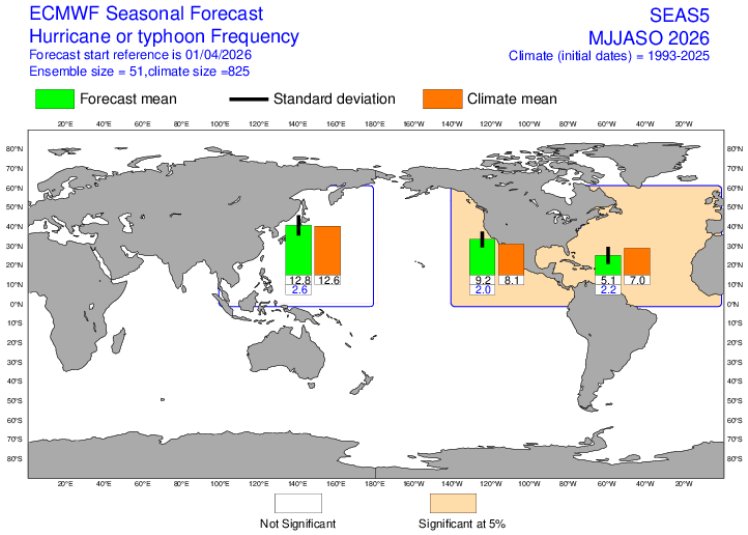


Source: https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/enso/current/

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European Model Seasonal Forecast

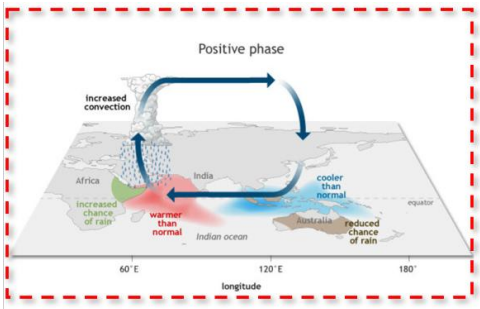
Each year, the European model produces seasonal tropical cyclone forecasts around the world. For 2026, the European model is predicting a near normal 22 named storms through October, and a close to normal 12.8 typhoons through October. This seems a bit odd, since the European model is predicting a strong El Niño. With a strong El Niño, the season would be expected to have fewer typhoons than normal.



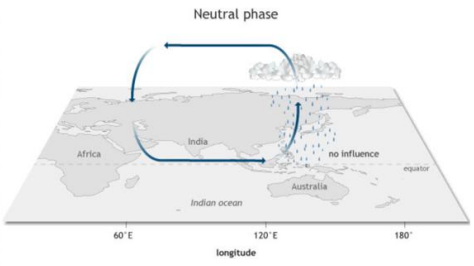
European Model Typhoon Frequency Forecast for 2026

Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

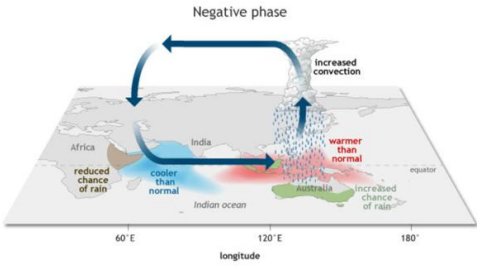
Another feature which can significantly influence Northwest Pacific typhoon activity is the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD). The IOD is defined by the difference in sea surface temperatures between the eastern and western tropical Indian Ocean. The current forecast is for a positive IOD for the coming typhoon season. This would be an inhibiting factor as far as typhoon development this season across the Northwest Pacific.



Positive – Generally results in sinking air and cooler water across the West Pacific, resulting in decreased activity there.



Neutral – Neither enhances or inhibits tropical cyclone activity in the West Pacific Basin.



Negative – Generally results in rising air and warmer water across the West Pacific, resulting in increased activity there.

Source: http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/#tabs=Indian-Ocean

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Water Temperatures

Water temperatures in the northwest Pacific are generally not a major issue during typhoon season, as the water is always warm enough for typhoons to form. However, water temperatures so far this season are cooler than average across both the South China Sea and the Philippine Sea. While the water isn't cool enough to prevent typhoons from forming, the cooler water may limit the number of very strong typhoons in these two regions this season. Water temperatures from Taiwan through northern Japan are well above normal, which would provide a favorable environment for stronger typhoons.

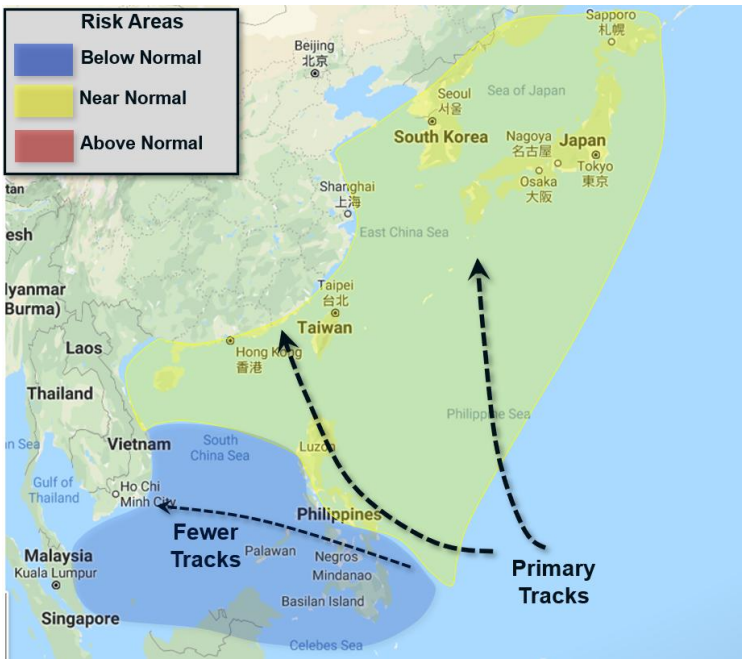
Our Forecast

Most seasonal predictors indicate that typhoon activity across the West Pacific will be a little below normal again this season. The strong El Niño and positive Indian Ocean Dipole should be inhibiting factors.

We think that activity will be below normal this year. Stronger typhoons may be concentrated farther north and east than is typical, threatening southeast China through Japan more than Vietnam. The South China Sea may be a little quieter than normal. We are predicting a total of 23 named storms this season, which is a little below the 30-year average of 26. As for typhoons, we are predicting a total of 14 this season, which is below the 30-year average of 16 typhoons.

2026 Season Forecast
23 Named Storms (-)
14 Typhoons (-)

30-yr Average
26 Named Storms
16 Typhoons



Meteorologist: Chris Hebert