SUMMARY OF THE JANUARY 1988 WEATHER ON THE MONTEREY PENINSULA, CALIFORNIA

General: In contrast to December 1987, the first month of 1988 was mild overall, on the dry side, and attended by only a few occurrences of fog and an absence of high winds for the most part.

Temperature: Thanks to a January “heat wave”, the temperatures last month turned in an above average performance. The overall average of 52.3°F, 0.7°F above the 37-year normal, was contributed to by both the daytime and nitetime temperatures, especially the latter. By day the 60.5°F average is 0.4°F above normal while the nitetime average, 44.1°F, is one full degree above normal. Record breaking temperatures occurred with a sustained warm spell from 24 through 27 January. Records were set, as follows. For the daily maximums: on 24 Jan, 71°F tied the record set in 1969; on 25 Jan, 76°F (also the high for January 1988) beat the record of 72°F set in 1986; and on 26 Jan, 74°F beat the previous high for the date, 73°F, set in 1986. Low for the month, 35°F, was registered near sunrise on 1 Jan 1988, representing the tail-end of a December 1987 cold spell. There were a considerable number of cloudy days in January with daytime temperatures not exceeding 59°F – 19 to be exact – and this partly accounts for reports of higher than normal home heating bills for the month.

Precipitation: The number of days with measureable rainfall in January 1988 is substantial (12 vs normal of 10) but the amount of rain collected in the gauge is disappointing. 2.18” fell during the month compared to the 37-year normal of 3.39”. January is traditionally the wettest month of the year. On nine of the twelve days less than 0.20” fell and there were many more days with only clouds and not a drop of rain. 8.44” has fallen to 1 Feb as compared to a normal of 10.83” and last year’s amount of 6.46” at this time. Only 10 of the last 37 Januarys were drier than the one just past – not good news when coupled with the fact that month’s end gave evidence of the beginning of a persistent mid-winter dry spell.

January was actually more important for weather missed! A remarkably intense weather disturbance brushed the area on 16-17 January, accounting for most of the month’s rainfall and sending local barometers to their lowest reading in at least five years. 991 millibars (29.263 inches of mercury) was recorded at about 10 AM Sunday January 17 as the mid-Pacific low center approached Monterey and then turned south giving Southern California storm damage that was historically unparalleled in some localities. In the Los Angeles/Bakersfield areas the record low barometric pressure was an all-time record. The singular downpour from 12:05 to 12:15 in Monterey on Saturday January 16 (rate of fall over 2”/hour for several minutes) was part of the storm just described.

Wind: Winds were well-behaved on the Peninsula in January. The airport average (6 AM to 11 PM) of 7.6 miles per hour is less than December and close to expectation for the month. The maximum gust at the National Weather Service Climate Station was 37 miles per hour during the mid-month storm that brushed the area while all other days produced gusts less than 30 miles per hour and mostly less than 20 miles per hour.

Fog: Fog was not a problem on the Peninsula in January – as it should be at this time of the year. Four days, each with a restricted period of fog, compare with a 25-year normal of six days in the month. Fog occurrence can be expected to increase from January through the months of July and August.