

IBHS Warns: Hurricane Ike is Much Stronger Than it Appears

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TAMPA, Fla., Sept. 12 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Institute for Business & Home Safety is warning residents not to underestimate the impact Hurricane Ike will have on the Texas coast.

According to Dr. Tim Reinhold, IBHS Chief Engineer and Senior Vice President of Research, "The total kinetic energy in this storm is about the same as Hurricane Katrina at its peak. People must understand that the Category 2 rating is a measurement of the storm's wind speed. As of 2:30 p.m. CDT, this hurricane's storm surge potential is a 5.1 on a scale with a maximum of 6.0 - which means it is in the same league as Katrina was at landfall."

These kinetic energy calculations come from the Wind and Surge Destructive Potential classification that associates a numerical value similar to the Saffir-Simpson scale to each storm, and reflects potential damage due to wind, storm surge, and waves.

This scale was developed by Mark Powell, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) research meteorologist, and Dr. Reinhold. Powell and Reinhold theorized that assigning a numerical value to storms that represent more than the sustained maximum wind speed would have great benefit. This incorporates other physical characteristics of the hurricane such as the overall size of the storm and the area affected by winds exceeding certain threshold values.

"By incorporating both size and intensity, I see this system as a better way to allow people to assess the true potential impact of an approaching storm," said Powell. "If people knew that Katrina had a much higher damage potential than Camille, the Mississippi residents who chose to stay might have evacuated."

Added Reinhold, "People who decide to leave or stay in response to a hurricane warning make decisions based on perceived vulnerability, and past hurricane experience is one of several influences on this perception. They need to understand the full force of the impact Hurricane Ike will bring - and evacuate coastal Texas now."

IBHS is an independent, nonprofit, scientific and educational organization supported by the property insurance industry. The organization works to reduce the social and economic effects of natural disasters and other risks to residential and commercial property by conducting research and advocating improved construction, maintenance and preparation practices.

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