

WHAT WILL THE 2018 HURRICANE SEASON BE LIKE?

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Many ask what this year's hurricane season will be like. (The hurricane season officially lasts from June 1st through November 30th.) However, most people are not concerned about the *overall* activity, but rather want to know – **“WILL MY HOME OR COMMUNITY BE IMPACTED BY HURRICANE ACTIVITY THIS YEAR?”** Although the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and others issue outlooks for each season's overall activity, *no seasonal prediction can say with any level of certainty if a particular region will be impacted in any given year. THEREFORE, NO MATTER WHAT THE SEASONAL OUTLOOK IS, EVERY INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY SHOULD EXERCISE THE SAME LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS EVERY YEAR.* [It is the responsibility of the National Hurricane Center (NHC) to issue up to 5-day operational track and intensity forecasts for each storm and to provide watches and warnings to geographic areas that may be affected by these storms.]

Basin-wide hurricane activity varies greatly from year-to-year – both in the number and intensity of storms and in the regions where the storms make landfall. Since 1995, the North Atlantic Hurricane basin (which includes the North Atlantic, Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico) has experienced generally heightened levels of overall hurricane activity compared to the lower levels of activity experienced during the period 1971-1994. This period of heightened activity has been attributed to natural multidecadal climate fluctuations – fluctuations that result in increased overall activity for several decades followed by decreased activity for several decades, etc. It is not known when the current period of heightened activity will end.

North Atlantic basin hurricane activity (most of which typically occurs each year during August through October – the peak months of the season) has been above average during most of the years in this current era (since 1995), though there have been some years with average or even below-average activity. One should keep in mind, however, that even "average" years can produce devastating storms (1960 with Donna, 1979 with David and Frederic, 1985 with Elena & Gloria, etc.) and that *even a below-average year like 1992 can create a devastating hurricane like ANDREW!* It only takes ONE tropical storm or hurricane to cause a disaster! Katrina (2005) was not a disaster because 2005 was an extremely active year, but rather because Katrina was a major hurricane hitting a very vulnerable area of coastline. No matter what the seasonal outlook is, every region needs to be prepared this year as with every year.

As an old Russian proverb states: **HOPE FOR THE BEST: PREPARE FOR THE WORST!!!**

Take time NOW to check your preparedness for your home, family, business, etc. There is always something you can do to be better prepared. There are many excellent resources online for hurricane preparedness. Now is the time to make a plan, get supplies early, etc. If you want to do any construction to improve your structure's resistance to hurricane damage, if possible, try not to wait until the season starts to do it. Remember that when you do these improvements, be sure to contact your home insurance agent (and have an inspector come to check the house) to see if you qualify for additional discounts in your premium.

NOAA's SEASONAL OUTLOOKS FOR THE 2018 HURRICANE SEASON:

NOAA's Outlook for the 2018 hurricane season will be issued in late May and will be followed by an update in early August. The outlooks can be accessed via the NOAA homepage: noaa.gov. You can also access the current and past Outlooks at: cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/outlooks/hurricane.shtml

For operational hurricane forecasts, preparedness tips, historical data and other hurricane information, go to NHC's website: hurricanes.gov

Additional hurricane information is at HRD's Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/tcfaq

For general weather information (including radar maps, etc.) go to the NWS website at: weather.gov

For some shutter (an essential part of a home's protection) information check: aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/shutters.

Among other things, the site shows a very effective method of making shutters out of wood. Note that there are more and more shutter types available (plywood alternatives, etc.) as well as hurricane-impact glass.

In addition, the FEMA site (fema.gov) has helpful information about hurricanes and other disasters.