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Experts Warn of 'Super-Charged' Atlantic Hurricane Activity in 2024

AccuWeather's team highlights a potentially unprecedented hurricane season due to climatic shifts

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Battered trees and rough seas in St. Thomas while Hurricane Irma was whiplashing St. Thomas on Sept. 6, 2017. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

AccuWeather's team of hurricane experts has issued an early alert about the possibility of a highly active Atlantic hurricane season in 2024. Chief Meteorologist Jonathan Porter expressed "serious and growing concerns" over what could be a "super-charged" season due to a combination of climatic factors.

The season, traditionally starting on June 1, might see an upsurge in activity owing to the return of La Niña and unusually warm Atlantic Ocean temperatures. "The current El Niño pattern is forecast to transition into a La Niña pattern during the second half of the hurricane season," Porter stated, pointing out that La Niña conditions typically reduce wind shear, thus fostering more tropical storms and hurricanes.

Historical data suggests a correlation between La Niña years and increased hurricane activity, with the 2005 and 2020 seasons, each recording 31 tropical systems, cited as precedents. According to AccuWeather Long-Range Expert Paul Pastelok, the latter part of 2024 could mirror these active seasons if La Niña develops as predicted.

Warm ocean temperatures are another critical factor highlighted by Porter. He noted that as of mid-February, Atlantic temperatures were comparable to mid-July averages, a trend that could escalate as the year progresses. "Any storms that do form will have the potential to rapidly strengthen, even close to land, due to the exceptionally warm waters," he warned.

This unusual warmth in the Atlantic's Main Development Region (MDR) could significantly influence the season's intensity. Ocean temperature anomalies, as measured in February, showed a staggering 65% increase over the next closest year, underscoring the potential for a highly active season.

The Gulf Coast, particularly the Texas Coast, is earmarked as a high-risk area for tropical system impacts this year. Pastelok's analysis suggests increased vigilance for residents along the Gulf Coast and Atlantic Seaboard, especially given the trend of pre-season tropical system formations in recent years.

AccuWeather plans to release its comprehensive 2024 Atlantic hurricane season forecast in March, offering more detailed insights to both business customers and the general public. Communities are urged to heed these early warnings and prepare for a potentially unprecedented hurricane season.