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NOAA Predicting 13-19 Named Storms, 6-10 Hurricanes, and 3-6 Major Hurricanes During 2020 Above Normal Hurricane Season

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As the Caribbean grapples with the deadly novel coronavirus, the 2020 Hurricane Season, which starts on June 1 and runs through November 30, has no intention of giving respite. On the contrary, this year's storm season, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, will most likely be a busy, above-normal season.

The Climate Prediction Center, which is an arm of the National Weather Service, predicts a 60 percent chance of an above-normal season, a 30 percent chance of a near-normal season and only a 10 percent chance of a below-normal season.

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a likely range of 13 to 19 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA provides these ranges with a 70 percent confidence. An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes.

“As Americans focus their attention on a safe and healthy reopening of our country, it remains critically important that we also remember to make the necessary preparations for the upcoming hurricane season,” said U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. “Just as in years past, NOAA experts will stay ahead of developing hurricanes and tropical storms and provide the forecasts and warnings we depend on to stay safe.” NOAA is an arm of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

The prediction center said a combination of several climate factors is driving the strong likelihood for above-normal activity in the Atlantic this year. El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are expected to either remain neutral or to trend toward La Nina, meaning there will not be an El Nino present to suppress hurricane activity. Also, warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, coupled with reduced vertical wind shear, weaker tropical Atlantic trade winds, and an enhanced west African monsoon all increase the likelihood for an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season. Similar conditions have been producing more active seasons since the current high-activity era began in 1995.

“NOAA's analysis of current and seasonal atmospheric conditions reveals a recipe for an active Atlantic hurricane season this year,” said Neil Jacobs, Ph.D., acting NOAA administrator. “Our skilled forecasters, coupled with upgrades to our computer models and observing technologies, will provide accurate and timely forecasts to protect life and property.”

This year, as during any hurricane season, the men and women of NOAA said it remains ready to provide the life-saving forecasts and warnings that the public rely on. And as storms show signs of developing, NOAA hurricane hunter aircraft will be prepared to collect valuable data for our forecasters and computer models.

NOAA is also launching new upgrades to products and tools that will further improve critical services during the hurricane season.

NOAA will upgrade the hurricane-specific Hurricane Weather Research and Forecast system (HWRF) and the Hurricanes in a Multi-scale Ocean coupled Non-hydrostatic model (HMON) models this summer. HWRF will incorporate new data from satellites and radar from NOAA's coastal Doppler data network to help produce better forecasts of hurricane track and intensity during the critical watch and warning time frame. HMON will undergo enhancements to include higher resolution, improved physics, and coupling with ocean models.

As the hurricane season gets underway, NOAA will begin feeding data from the COSMIC-2 satellites into weather models to help track hurricane intensity and boost forecast accuracy. COSMIC-2 provides data about air temperature, pressure and humidity in the tropical regions of Earth — precisely where hurricane and tropical storm systems form.

Also during the 2020 hurricane season, NOAA and the U.S. Navy will deploy a fleet of autonomous diving hurricane gliders to observe conditions in the tropical Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea in areas where hurricanes have historically traveled and intensified.

Locally, the Dept. of Human Services and the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency, have been making preparations, including examining and preparing hurricane shelter

sites, while taking into consideration Covid-19 related protocols for social distancing and safety, said VITEMA Director Daryl Jaschen during a recent interview with the Consortium [earlier this month](#).

NOAA advised that as with every hurricane season, the need to be prepared is critically important this year.

“Social distancing and other CDC guidance to keep you safe from COVID-19 may impact the disaster preparedness plan you had in place, including what is in your go-kit, evacuation routes, shelters and more. With tornado season at its peak, hurricane season around the corner, and flooding, earthquakes and wildfires a risk year-round, it is time to revise and adjust your emergency plan now,” said Carlos Castillo, acting deputy administrator for resilience at FEMA. “Natural disasters won’t wait, so I encourage you to keep COVID-19 in mind when revising or making your plan for you and your loved ones, and don’t forget your pets. An easy way to start is to download the FEMA app today.”

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