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13 Named Storms Expected for a Below-Average 2023 Hurricane Season

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Researchers at Colorado State University (CSU) have predicted a slightly below-average Atlantic hurricane season in 2023 due to the likely development of El Niño. The team expects 13 named storms, with six becoming hurricanes and two reaching major hurricane strength (Saffir/Simpson category 3-4-5) with sustained winds of 111 mph or more.

El Niño, the primary factor for the below-average prediction, increases upper-level westerly winds across the Caribbean into the tropical Atlantic, resulting in vertical wind shear that can disrupt hurricane formation. However, there is considerable uncertainty about the strength of El Niño if it does develop.

The CSU team is basing its forecasts on a statistical model and four models that use a combination of statistical information and model output from various meteorological organizations. These models evaluate factors such as Atlantic sea surface temperatures, sea level pressures, vertical wind shear levels, and El Niño conditions.

Phil Klotzbach, research scientist in the Department of Atmospheric Science and lead author of the report, noted that their analog seasons exhibited a wide range of outcomes, from below-normal to hyperactive seasons, which highlights the uncertainty surrounding the outlook.

The researchers predict that 2023 hurricane activity will be about 80% of the average season from 1991–2020. In contrast, 2022's hurricane activity was about 75% of the average season, with two major hurricanes, Fiona and Ian, causing significant damage and fatalities.

The CSU team will issue forecast updates on June 1, July 6, and August 3. The forecast is intended to provide a best estimate of activity in the Atlantic during the upcoming season, not an exact measure. Researchers caution coastal residents to take proper precautions, as it only takes one storm to make the season active for them.

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