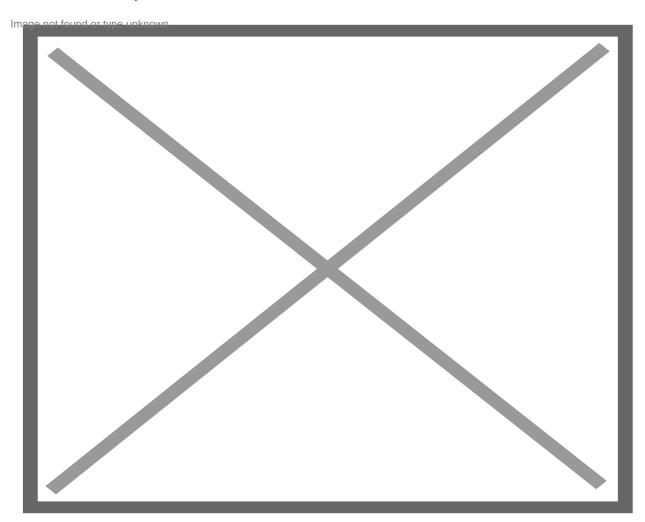# NOAA Predicts Near-Normal Atlantic Hurricane Season, Improves Forecasts for USVI and PR

Hurricane Season / **Published On May 26, 2023 05:06 AM /**

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An area in St. Thomas following Hurricane Irma's passage in 2017.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on Thursday released its outlook for the 2023 Atlantic hurricane season, predicting near-normal activity this year.

The forecast details a 40 percent chance of a near-normal season, a 30 percent chance of an above-normal season, and a 30 percent chance of a below-normal season, extending from June 1 to November 30.

According to the report, forecasters are predicting 12 to 17 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher) this year. Out of these, 5 to 9 could develop into hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), with 1 to 4 potentially escalating to major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or

higher). NOAA expresses 70 percent confidence in these predictions.

NOAA's ongoing technological and scientific advancements have been lauded by Secretary of Commerce Gina M. Raimondo, who believes that these developments will significantly enhance the accuracy of hurricane forecasts and bolster preparedness for communities prone to Atlantic hurricanes.

This year's Atlantic hurricane season is forecasted to be less active compared to recent years due to a mix of competing factors that either suppress or fuel storm development, leading to an overall prediction of a near-normal season.

El Nino, which has the potential to suppress Atlantic hurricane activity, is expected to develop this summer. This prediction follows three hurricane seasons influenced by La Nina. The potential influence of El Nino may be offset by conditions favorable to storm development in the tropical Atlantic Basin, such as an above-normal west African monsoon and warmer-than-normal sea surface temperatures.

Rick Spinrad, NOAA administrator, underscored the importance of data and expertise that NOAA provides in light of climate change. This year, NOAA plans to introduce a new hurricane forecast model and extend the tropical cyclone outlook from five to seven days to provide emergency managers and communities with additional preparation time.

This summer, NOAA will be implementing a series of upgrades, including a 20 percent expansion in the capacity of its operational supercomputing system. This move will facilitate the development and running of more complex forecast models, contributing significantly to the precision of hurricane predictions.

The Hurricane Analysis and Forecast System (HAFS) will become operational in late June and will run in tandem with the current operational Hurricane Weather Research and Forecast Model System. Analysis shows that HAFS improves track forecasts by 10-15 percent compared to existing models.

An upgrade to the Probabilistic Storm Surge model will advance storm surge forecasting for the contiguous U.S. and provide new forecasts for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Other improvements include the extension of the Tropical Weather Outlook's forecast range and the Excessive Rainfall Outlook, as well as the unveiling of a new generation of forecast flood inundation mapping.

NOAA is also focusing on observing systems critical to understanding and forecasting hurricanes, including the deployment of new small aircraft drone systems, Saildrones, and underwater gliders.

"As we saw with Hurricane Ian, it only takes one hurricane to cause widespread devastation," warned FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. "Whether you live on the coast or further inland, hurricanes can cause serious impacts to everybody in their path. The time to prepare is now."

NOAA's outlook is for overall seasonal activity and does not predict landfall. The organization will update the 2023 Atlantic seasonal outlook in early August, just prior to the historical peak of the season.