

## 2010 hurricane season may be worst on record: officials

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Waves slam over a seawall in Jupiter, Florida, during a hurricane in 2004. The 2010 Atlantic hurricane season may be one of the worst on record, US officials warned Thursday, amid fears it could deepen an oil crisis in the Gulf of Mexico and bring new misery to Haiti.

The 2010 Atlantic hurricane season may be one of the worst on record, US officials warned Thursday, amid fears it could deepen an oil crisis in the Gulf of Mexico and bring new misery to Haiti.

An "active to extremely active" hurricane season which starts on June 1 is expected for the Atlantic Basin this year, US officials said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA) said it was predicting 14 to 23 named storms, including eight to 14 hurricanes, three

to seven of which were likely to be "major" storms, with winds of at least 111 mph.

This is compared to an average six-month season of 11 named storms, six of which become hurricanes, two of them major.

"If this outlook holds true, this season could be one of the more active on record," said NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco.

"The greater likelihood of storms brings an increased risk of a [landfall](#). In short, we urge everyone to be prepared," he said.

Hurricane fears are particularly acute this year in the [Gulf of Mexico](#), where millions of gallons of oil from a leaking BP undersea well is pushing into ecologically sensitive marshlands.

And in Haiti, hundreds of thousands of people are still living in makeshift camps more than five months after a devastating earthquake.

NOAA said the prospect that there will be more and bigger storms this year than average was due to several factors.

Windshear, which helped suppress [hurricane activity](#) in 2009 by tearing up storms before they developed, is expected to be weaker this year as the El Nino effect dissipates in the eastern Pacific.

[El Nino](#) is a cyclical phenomenon that brings unusually warm ocean temperatures to the equatorial Pacific, but cooler temperatures to the Caribbean and the Atlantic.

Its opposite is La Nina, when Pacific temperatures are unusually cold. In those years, the US southeast is unusually warm, enabling storms to grow and move.

[Sea surface temperatures](#) in the Atlantic are already up to four degrees Fahrenheit above average, NOAA said.

"Whether or not we approach the high end of the predicted ranges depends partly on whether or not La Nina develops this summer," said Gerry Bell, a hurricane forecaster at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

"At present we are in a neutral state, but conditions are becoming increasingly favorable for La Nina to develop."

And NOAA said the period since 1995 has been one of unusually high storm activity with eight of the last 15 seasons ranking in the top ten for the most named storms. In 2005, there were 28 named storms.

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