

# System at sea could form first Atlantic tropical storm

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Tropical storm Ida as it moves inland over the Gulf Coast of the US in 2009. A low-pressure area forming over the Atlantic could become the first tropical storm of the season, the National Hurricane Center warned Monday.

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"There remains a high chance, 60 percent, of this system becoming a tropical cyclone during the next 48 hours," the center said in a statement, as officials anxiously eye weather reports.

A major storm could push oil-tainted water from the [Gulf of Mexico](#) spill further ashore or into new states, and bring more misery to earthquake-ravaged Haiti where hundreds of thousands still live in precarious conditions.

If it becomes a named system, the [storm](#) will be dubbed Alex, the hurricane center said.

Forecasters have predicted a rougher-than-average 2010 [hurricane season](#).

Last month, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) forecast an "active to extremely active" hurricane season, saying there could be 14 to 23 named storms, including eight to 14 hurricanes, three to seven of which were likely to be "major" storms, packing 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," NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco said in May.

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

Millions of gallons of oil from the leaking BP-operated well are sloshing around in the Gulf of Mexico, and are already contaminating southern US shorelines and ecologically sensitive marshlands.

And in mountainous Haiti, where floodwaters often trigger mudslides and havoc, hundreds of thousands of people are still living in makeshift camps more than five months after the devastating January 12 quake.

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