

US storms have no bearing on hurricane season

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A girl's room is exposed in a destroyed house in the devastated town of Pleasant Grove, Alabama, on May 1. Natural disasters and a record number of tornadoes in the southeastern United States should not have any bearing on the severity of the upcoming hurricane season, the director of the National Hurricane Center said Friday.

Natural disasters and a record number of tornadoes in the southeastern United States should not have any bearing on the severity of the upcoming hurricane season, the director of the National Hurricane Center said Friday.

Bill Read, the center's director, said it was understandable that people might connect the deadly tornadoes and massive flooding of April and May with an unusually severe hurricane season, but said, "I really don't think there's any way you can correlate" them.

Hurricane season officially begins on June 1 and lasts until November 30.

But Read said that if people believe the upcoming [hurricane season](#) is going to be especially bad, they will at least take steps to reduce any potential damage.

"It's better to us that people say `Hey, there's a greater chance that we can have a hurricane,'" Read told AFP. "If you use this awareness of extreme weather to prepare for a big hurricane coming your way this year, you will come out a lot better than if you don't," he said.

A series of tornadoes, some with gusts over 300 kilometers per hour (200 miles per hour), swept seven states in central and southeastern United States the last week of April, leaving more than 350 people dead and thousands of homes and businesses destroyed.

This month, the worst floods in 70 years inundated homes, crops and roads in six states, hitting areas bordering the Mississippi River particularly hard. Flood waters in Louisiana in recent days have threatened several US oil refining facilities.

This year, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center expects to be more active than usual, with the possible formation of 16 tropical storms, nine of which could become hurricanes.

Five of those hurricanes could be particularly destructive, according to a forecast released last month by tropical [storm](#) specialists at Colorado State University.

The study indicated that the chances of a major hurricane with winds above 178 kilometers an hour (107 miles per hour) reaching US shores this year are 72 percent, well above the normal possibility of 52 percent.

The study determined that there was a 61 percent chance that a major hurricane would hit the Caribbean.

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