

# Top US official warns of 'heavy' hurricane season

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US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, pictured in May 2011, warned Wednesday that a "heavy" US hurricane season could be in store, after briefing President Barack Obama on latest forecasts.

US Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano warned Wednesday that a "heavy" US hurricane season could be in store, after briefing President Barack Obama on latest forecasts.

Obama gathered top [disaster preparedness](#) officials, state and local authorities and non-profit groups for a White House meeting on the first day of the [Atlantic hurricane season](#) to discuss this year's predictions.

The season, which runs to November 30, will feature atmospheric conditions which experts predict will lead to formation of 12 to 18 named [tropical storms](#), of which six to 10 could become hurricanes,

according to the US [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA).

"Right now, it looks like that there could be a heavy hurricane season, but that doesn't speak to landfall," Napolitano told reporters at the White House.

"So we need to be prepared for landfall, if it happens.

"The bottom line for the president was... that this team have been planning, coordinating, organizing, recognizing each other's strengths and leveraging those strengths as we head into the hurricane season," she said.

"Our big question to the public right now: are you ready? Do you know what to do?"

Obama's briefing included Craig Fugate, administrator for the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#), NOAA head Jane Lubchenco and National Hurricane Center director Bill Read.

"The president stressed the importance of this team approach and engaging the entire nation in [emergency preparedness](#)," the White House said in a statement.

Obama has made multiple trips in recent weeks to victims of killer tornadoes and floods which have ripped across the US heartland, even before hurricane season begins to threaten American shores.

The political risks of a failure to prepare or respond to natural disasters give White House aides sleepless nights.

The botched handling of [Hurricane Katrina](#), which flooded New Orleans

in 2005, was seen as a devastating political blow from which then-president George W. Bush never recovered.

NOAA forecasts reveal elevated threats this year to the United States and nations around the Caribbean and predict between three and six major hurricanes of Category 3 intensity or higher on the five-level Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale.

Skies have been generally calm across the Atlantic, and NOAA and other meteorological websites predicted no drama in the opening days of the season. The peak Atlantic storm period is August to early October.

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