

Treat yourself to a storm? It's all in the name

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A cargo ship rides at anchor at the mouth of river Elbe into the Nordic Sea in Brunsbuettel, northern Germany as a storm dubbed "Christian" hits the region on October 28, 2013

Anyone can get a European storm named after themselves—if they are ready to pay for the honour.

Under a unique sponsorship scheme by the Institute of Meteorology at Berlin's Free University, people can pay 199 euros (\$275) to choose the name of a storm.

Thus the [powerful storm](#) lashing Britain and France on Monday has been dubbed "Christian" in France after Christian Widera.

For another 100 euros, people can name periods of fine weather, or anticyclones, Thomas Duemmel, a meteorologist at the university's institute, told AFP.

While such sponsors are listed on the university's website, Widera has asked that no further [personal details](#) be revealed.

The university has offered the deal since 2002, although it has not stopped the British media christening the latest violent storm St Jude after the patron saint of lost causes, whose feast day is Monday.

Storms' names are cheaper because they occur more frequently, at between 150 and 160 a year compared with around 50 anticyclones, or high pressure systems that mean fine weather, Duemmel said.

The Institute of Meteorology earns between 25,000 and 30,000 euros a year from the service.

This year low-pressure systems are taking male names, and anticyclones female names, but next year they will swap.

"We've put into practice a rule to alternate annually following numerous complaints by feminist organisations," Duemmel said. Previously storms were always feminine while anticyclones were masculine.

The Free University was the first to baptise atmospheric phenomena on the west Atlantic in 1954 to help track them on a meteorological map, gaining accreditation by the World Meteorological Organisation.

According to Duemmel, 80 percent of sponsors are German, followed by

Swiss and Austrians, but the scheme has caught the imagination of people far beyond Germany's borders, with some Japanese even having named European storms.

One sponsor lived to regret his action, however.

Wolfgang Schuette, a 58-year-old German pensioner, who proposed the name Xynthia for a deadly Atlantic [storm](#) in 2010 as part of a competition, admitted to AFP he was sorry the name would always be linked to death and destruction.

"I wanted the name to be used maybe once on the weather forecast and then to fall into oblivion," he said at the time.

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