

US forecasts 'near-normal' hurricane season

May 27 2016

The coming Atlantic hurricane season is forecast to be "near-normal," after three years of unusually low storm activity due in part to the El Nino ocean warming trend, US government scientists said Friday.

Expect about 10 to 16 tropical storms, of which four to eight could become hurricanes, said the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center.

One to four could become major hurricanes of Category Three or higher.

The 2016 season "will most likely be near-normal," said a statement from the federal agency that nevertheless acknowledged some "uncertainty" in the forecast.

"This is a more challenging [hurricane season](#) outlook than most because it's difficult to determine whether there will be reinforcing or competing [climate](#) influences on tropical storm development," said Gerry Bell, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

"However, a near-normal prediction for this season suggests we could see more hurricane activity than we've seen in the last three years, which were below normal."

Hurricane season begins June 1 and runs through November 30.

The end of El Nino and the arrival of the cooling trend in the equatorial

Pacific known as La Nina could favor an increase in hurricane activity, said NOAA administrator Kathryn Sullivan.

The 2015 season was considered below average with 11 [tropical storms](#) in the Atlantic, of which four became hurricanes, and two became major hurricanes.

The long-term average, taken over the years 1981-2010, allows for typically 12 named storms, six hurricanes, and four major hurricanes.

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