

Storms Alpha and Beta named for Greek alphabet, second time ever

September 19 2020



A couple walk up the broken dock to check their boat during Hurricane Sally in downtown Pensacola, Florida on September 16, 2020, before the NHC ran out of names

Meteorologists were forced to break out the Greek alphabet Friday to name Atlantic storms for only the second time ever after the 2020

hurricane season blew through their usual list, ending on Tropical Storm Wilfred.

Tropical Storm Beta was packing maximum sustained winds of 40 miles (65 kilometers) per hour in the Gulf of Mexico, some 280 miles off the mouth of the Rio Grande, the National Hurricane Center said.

It is expected to reach [hurricane](#) intensity over the weekend, according to the Miami-based center.

At the same time, subtropical [storm](#) Alpha was forming on the other side of the Atlantic, some 120 miles off the coast of Portugal. With maximum sustained winds of 45 miles per hour, it is not expected to intensify, the NHC said.

The storms were named after letters of the Greek alphabet, after Tropical Storm Wilfred formed earlier Friday, exhausting the list of names predetermined by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) for tropical storms.

The list consists of 21 male and [female names](#) that alternate in alphabetical order and change every year. The WMO chooses names that are easily recognizable in a region where several languages are spoken, so no names starting with X, Y or Z are chosen.

In the unusual event that the list is used up, the WMO identifies storms by letters of the Greek alphabet: alpha, beta, gamma, delta... as has been the case this year, which has seen an unusually active [hurricane season](#).

"Get out the Greek [alphabet](#) for the rest of 2020," the NHC said in an update on Wilfred.

Meteorologist MJ Ventrice of The Weather Company tweeted that "this

is the second time in history we'll be using the Greek Alphabet."

The first time, he added was in 2005, when Hurricanes Katrina and Wilma devastated Louisiana and Florida, respectively.

Those names, as well as Maria, Irma and Harvey, have been retired permanently from the WMO lists due to the devastation they caused.

Meanwhile, Hurricane Teddy has reached Category 4, the second-highest level. Teddy is swirling around the central Atlantic and could pass near Bermuda, just a week after Hurricane Paulette.

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