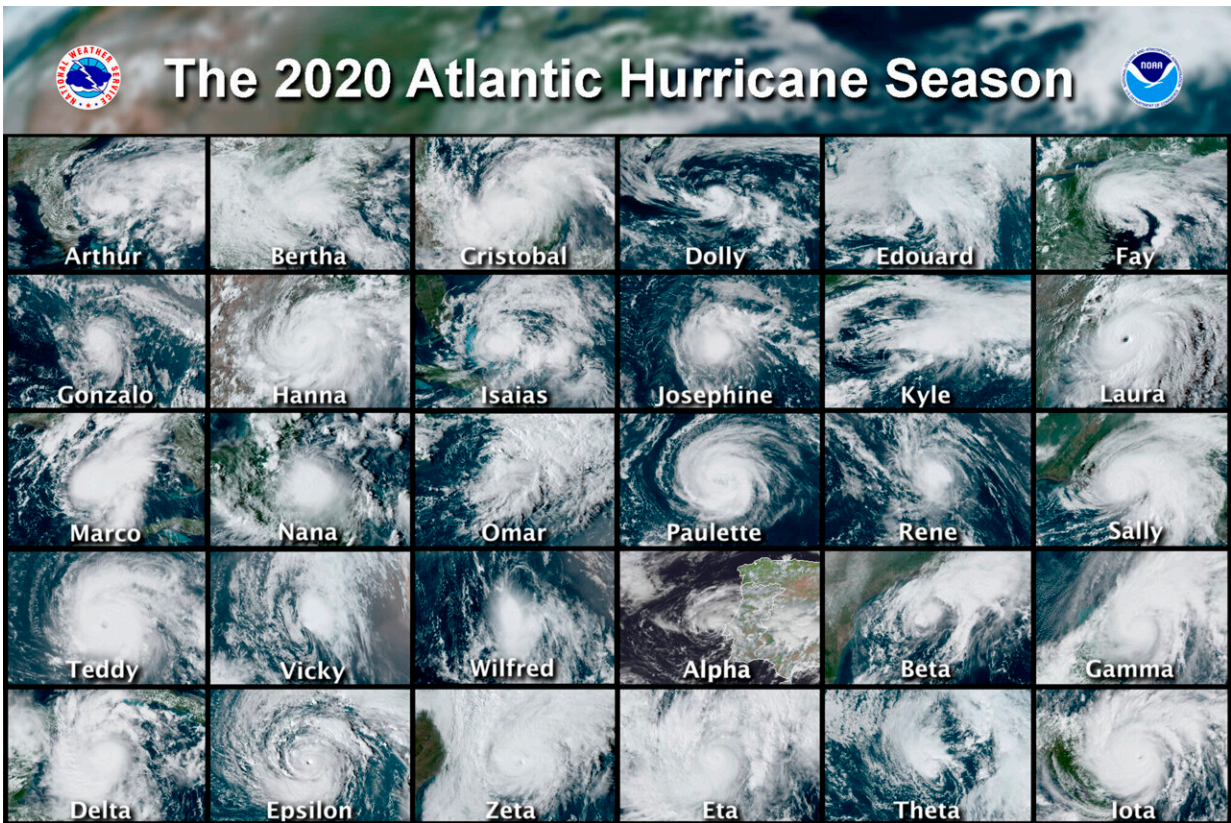


Experts predict busy Atlantic storm season but not like 2020

May 20 2021, by Seth Borenstein



This combination of satellite images provided by the National Hurricane Center shows 30 hurricanes which occurred during the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season. According to a forecast by the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration released on Thursday, May 20, 2021, they expect another busy Atlantic hurricane season for 2021, but it won't be as crazy as the previous year's record breaker. Credit: National Hurricane Center via AP, File

The Atlantic hurricane season will be busier than normal, but it's unlikely to be as crazy as 2020's record-shattering year, meteorologists said Thursday.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [forecasted that the hurricane season](#), which runs from June through November, will see 13 to 20 named storms. Six to 10 of those storms will become hurricanes and three to five will be major hurricanes with winds of more than 110 mph (177 kilometers per hour), the agency predicted.

Since 1990, a typical [season](#) sees 14 named storms, seven hurricanes and three major hurricanes—a climate normal that has increased in recent decades. There's a 60% chance that this hurricane season will be busier than normal and only a 10% chance it will be below normal, NOAA said.

Lead agency forecaster Matthew Rosencrans said the season looks to be busy because of warmer water, which fuels storms; reduced cross winds that decapitate storms; and more seeds of stormy weather coming off the coast of Africa. There is also no El Nino weather event, the natural temporary warming of the central Pacific that squelches Atlantic hurricane activity, he said.

Atlantic waters are nearly 0.68 degrees (0.38 degrees Celsius) warmer than normal, which is not as hot as 2020 when they were 1 degree (0.56 degrees Celsius) above normal, Rosencrans said.

Last year, there were 30 named storms—so many that meteorologists ran out of names and dipped into the Greek alphabet to identify them. There were 14 hurricanes [last year](#), seven of them major.

Earlier this year, meteorologists decided to ditch the Greek alphabet after the normal list of names runs out, instead creating a special overflow list. Seven of last year's storms caused more than \$1 billion in

damage.

As if on cue, [stormy weather](#) popped up northeast of Bermuda this week, with the National Hurricane Center giving the system a 90% chance of becoming a named storm in the next five days. It would be called Ana and is likely to be short-lived and keep away from land. About half the years in the last decade have had named storms before the June 1 start of hurricane season, Rosencrans said.

Several universities and private weather companies also make [hurricane season](#) forecasts, with all of them echoing NOAA's predictions. They predicted 16 to 20 named storms, seven to 10 hurricanes and three to five major hurricanes.

"The latest data and forecasts suggest a slightly more aggressive forecast for 2021 is in order, although still nothing close to what happened in 2020," said Todd Crawford, chief meteorologist at The Weather Company, which is forecasting 19 named storms and four major hurricanes.

The [Colorado State University forecast](#), which is the longest-running seasonal forecast, cited the same reasons as NOAA in predicting 17 named storms, eight hurricanes and four [major hurricanes](#). It says there is a 69% that a major hurricane will hit somewhere in the U.S. coastline this season, which is higher than the average of 52% for the last century. It gives Florida and the Gulf coast a nearly 50-50 chance of being hit by a major hurricane.

The head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency urged Americans in [hurricane](#)-prone areas to prepare now, not later. Deanne Criswell said that includes people who live inland because storms are dropping more rain and causing more flooding due to climate change.

Climate change has increased [storm](#)'s rainfall about 3%, and in the future it could be as much as 10%, Rosencrans said.

Warmer water from [climate change](#) increases the number of the strongest hurricanes, but research doesn't show a change in the overall number of named storms from global warming, Rosencrans said.

University of Arizona [forecast](#) chief Xubin Zeng said the last decade has been unusually active in the Atlantic.

"We need to ask ourselves if this is part of the natural variability of the system or if we are already seeing impacts of global warming," Zeng said in a press release. "If this is part of the natural variability, then after some overactive seasons, we'd expect activity to quiet down, but every year is kind of crazy in the past few years."

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Citation: Experts predict busy Atlantic storm season but not like 2020 (2021, May 20) retrieved 26 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2021-05-experts-busy-atlantic-storm-season.html>

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