

US Atlantic braces for active hurricane season (Update)

May 23 2013



A US flag is displayed amongst the debris of the tornado devastated school on May 22, 2013 in Moore, Oklahoma. The United States is gearing up for more Atlantic hurricanes than usual this year, triggered by warmer water temperatures than average, US forecasters said Thursday.

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center predicted that the six-month Atlantic hurricane season that begins June 1 will see 13 to 20 named storms, seven to 11 hurricanes and three to six major hurricanes, with winds of at least 111 miles (178 kilometers) per hour.

In comparison, a normal season produces 12 named storms, including six hurricanes and three major ones.

"This year, oceanic and atmospheric conditions in the Atlantic basin are expected to produce more and stronger hurricanes," said Gerry Bell, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

"These conditions include weaker wind shear, warmer Atlantic waters and conducive winds patterns coming from Africa."

The strong West African monsoon is blamed for high Atlantic hurricane activity since 1995, while the Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea have seen warmer water temperatures than average.

The El Nino band of abnormally warm ocean water temperatures is not expected to develop and suppress the formation of hurricanes this year, according to NOAA.

"With the devastation of (Hurricane) Sandy fresh in our minds, and another active season predicted, everyone at NOAA is committed to providing life-saving forecasts in the face of these storms and ensuring that Americans are prepared and ready ahead of time," said Acting NOAA Administrator Kathryn Sullivan.

"As we saw first hand with Sandy, it's important to remember that tropical storm and hurricane impacts are not limited to the coastline. Strong winds, torrential rain, flooding and tornadoes often threaten

inland areas far from where the storm first makes landfall."

NOAA stressed that its outlook was not a hurricane landfall forecast and does not predict how many storms will hit land or where they will strike.

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Citation: US Atlantic braces for active hurricane season (Update) (2013, May 23) retrieved 22 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-05-noaa-busy-hurricane-season.html>

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