Forecasters predict another active hurricane season with 19 tropical storms, 9 hurricanes

7 April 2022, by Doyle Rice

After two of the most active hurricane seasons on record in 2020 and 2021, top hurricane forecasters on Thursday said we should expect another above-normal season this year.

For the season, which begins June 1, meteorologist Phil Klotzbach and other experts from Colorado State University—among the nation's top seasonal hurricane forecasters—predict 19 named tropical storms will form in 2022, of which 9 will become hurricanes.

An average season has 14 tropical storms, seven of which become hurricanes. If the prediction holds true, it will be the seventh consecutive above-normal season.

A tropical storm becomes a hurricane when its wind speed reaches 74 mph.

Of the nine predicted hurricanes, four are expected to spin into major hurricanes—Category 3, 4 or 5—with sustained wind speeds of 111 mph or greater. The group said there's a 71% chance at least one major hurricane will make landfall somewhere in the U.S.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to Nov. 30, though storms sometimes form outside those dates. In fact, storms have formed in May in each of the past seven years.

According to Klotzbach, the reasons for the above-average forecast include the predicted lack of El Niño and warmer-than-normal seawater in the subtropical Atlantic Ocean.

One of the major determining factors in hurricane forecasting is whether we are in an El Niño or La Niña climate pattern.

El Niño is a natural warming of tropical Pacific Ocean water, which tends to suppress the development of Atlantic hurricanes. Its opposite, La Niña, marked by cooler ocean water, tends to increase hurricanes in the Atlantic.

El Niño generally increases vertical wind shear in the Atlantic, which can tear apart developing hurricanes.

Insurance companies, emergency managers and news outlets use these seasonal forecasts to prepare Americans for the year's hurricane threat. The team's annual predictions provide the best estimate of activity during the upcoming season, not an exact measure, according to Colorado State.

The university, under the direction of meteorologist William Gray, was the first group to predict seasonal hurricane activity in the mid-1980s. Gray died in 2016.

This is the team's 39th forecast. It covers the Atlantic basin, which includes the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.

Federal forecasters from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration will issue their
prediction for the season in May.

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