

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC  
800 AM EDT SUN MAY 24 2009

...NORTH CAROLINA HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK...

This week has been declared North Carolina's Hurricane Preparedness Week for 2009. All week long the National Weather Service will be issuing informative messages to help you prepare for hurricane season.

Today we will talk about hurricane history in North Carolina and the outlook for 2009.

This hurricane season NOAA is predicting 14 named storms of which 4 to 7 could become hurricanes including 1 to 3 major hurricanes with winds in excess of 111 mph. An average season has 11 named storms...including 6 hurricanes with 2 becoming major hurricanes. Despite forecasts of a near normal hurricane season... any one of these storm could spell disaster for North Carolina and preparing for these storms is key. North Carolina is one of the most hurricane ravaged state in the country. A look back at our hurricane history tells the story.

North Carolina receives more than its share of tropical storms and hurricanes. Over the past 15 years North Carolina has seen presidentially declared disasters resulting from hurricanes in locations from the Outer Banks to the Blue Ridge mountains. No part of our state has gone unaffected from these giant storms.

Ever since the first expeditions to Roanoke Island in 1586 hurricanes have been recorded to have caused extensive damage to the state. Reliable tracking and classifications of tropical systems did not begin until nearly 300 years later in 1886. Since that time over 1000 tropical systems have formed in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico. Nearly 20 percent of all these tropical systems passed within at least 300 miles of North Carolina. Statically the coast of North Carolina can expect to receive a direct hit from a land falling tropical system once every 4 years. In any given year there is a 33 percent chance that a tropical storm or hurricane will track directly over Central North Carolina. Increase the time period to every 3 years and the chance of experiencing a tropical storm or hurricane increases to nearly 70 percent for locations from Interstate 95 west to the Triad. Tropical systems can bring the threat of heavy rains, flooding and tornadoes nearly every summer as tropical systems make landfall to our south and then move north.

Since records have been kept dating back to 1806, around 70 tropical systems have made direct landfall on the North Carolina coast. Even more disturbing is the fact around 100 tropical systems have moved through and impacted the state without actually making landfall along the coast. North Carolina's unique geography with respect to its protruding coastline makes the state a favorable target for hurricanes. Residents living in the eastern half of North Carolina from Raleigh to the coast stick out in the Atlantic Ocean along the same longitude as the Florida coast and Bahamas. This geographical fact makes the coast from Wilmington to Cape Hatteras the most favorable location for hurricane and tropical storm landfalls.

The most active months for tropical systems in North Carolina are August and September. However hurricanes have wreaked havoc as early as late June and as late as mid November. The peak tropical activity usually occurs in a six week

period from mid August to late September. During active cycles in hurricane activity North Carolina can experience multiple hurricanes and tropical storms within weeks of each other. Years when North Carolina has been hit by more than one tropical system include...

1842

1899

1933

1954 Carol...Edna and Hazel

1955 Connie...Diane and Ione

1971 Doria and Ginger

1996 Arthur...Bertha and Fran

1999 Dennis and Floyd

2004 Bonnie, Charley, Gaston, Jeanne, Frances and Ivan

2006 Alberto and Ernesto

2008 Cristobal and Hanna

Hurricane Hazel remains the most powerful hurricane to ever make landfall in North Carolina. Hazel struck a category 4 hurricane with winds of 144 mph. Since that time hurricane Floyd in 1999 became the costliest hurricane in North Carolina history. Sixty-six counties were presidentially declared disaster areas following Floyd. Total storm losses exceeded six billion dollars. Hurricane Fran...the second costliest hurricane in state history...was the last hurricane to severely impact the Raleigh area.

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