

Hurricane Season Update

Understanding

A hurricane is a type of storm called a **tropical cyclone**, which forms over tropical or subtropical waters. When a storm's maximum sustained winds reach 74 mph, it is called a hurricane.

There are three hurricane seasons:

Eastern Pacific May 15 through November 30

Atlantic June 1 through November 30

Central Pacific June 1 through November 30

Despite three seasons, hurricanes can, and have, occurred outside of these time frames. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's ([NOAA](#)) National Hurricane Center predicts and tracks these massive storm systems.

Hurricanes are dangerous and can cause major damage because of storm surge, wind damage, and flooding. They can happen along any U.S. coast or in any territory in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans.

As a world leader in hurricane research, NOAA strives to understand the mechanics of these complex storms in order to protect people, property, commerce, and natural resources. Hurricanes can cause catastrophic damage. While it is true that there is little you can do to avoid a natural disaster like a hurricane, there is plenty you can do to prepare for a hurricane, to mitigate the damage after a hurricane and to save lives!

Most people think hurricanes are a problem for the coastal areas only; however, hurricanes are not just a coastal problem. Find out how rain, wind, water could happen where you live [so you can start preparing now](#).

Be sure to consider how COVID-19 may affect your plans. Keep in mind that your best protection from the effects of a hurricane may differ from your best protection from diseases, such as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale is a 1 to 5 rating (category) based on a hurricane's maximum sustained winds. The higher the category, the greater the potential for property damage.

Tropical Depression—Strong storms with maximum sustained winds of less than 39.

Tropical Storm—Strong storms with maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph.

Category ONE Hurricane—Winds of 74 to 95 mph; surge 4 to 5 feet. Some coastal flooding and minor damage.

Category TWO Hurricane—Winds of 96 to 110 mph; surge 6 to 8 feet. Flooding damages piers and small craft in unprotected moorings.

Category THREE Hurricane—Winds of 111 to 129 mph; surge 9 to 12 feet. Flooding near the coast. Terrain may be flooded well inland.

Category FOUR Hurricane—Winds of 130 to 156 mph; surge 13 to 18 feet. Major erosion of beach areas. Terrain may be flooded well inland.

Category FIVE Hurricane—Winds of 157 mph plus; surge 18 feet plus. Flooding causes major damage to structures near the shoreline. Massive evacuation of residential areas may be required.

Hurricane watch vs. warning

- A **watch** is issued when hurricane conditions are **possible** within 36 to 48 hours.
- A **warning** is issued when hurricane conditions are **expected** within 24 to 36 hours.