Three Named Storms

COLLEGE PARK, MD — An above-normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season is expected, according to forecasters with NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service. The outlook predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal season, a 30% chance of a near-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season. Atlantic hurricane seasons run from June 1 through November 30.

This week, Tropical Storm Cristobal became the third named storm of the season and the earliest third named storm ever formed. The next name on this year’s list will be Dolly.

NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center is forecasting a likely range of 13 to 19 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 6 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher). NOAA provides these ranges with a 70% confidence. An average hurricane season produces 12 named storms, of which 6 become hurricanes, including 3 major hurricanes.

The combination of several climate factors is driving the strong likelihood for above-normal activity in the Atlantic this year. El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) conditions are expected to either remain neutral or to trend toward La Nina, meaning there will not be an El Nino present to suppress hurricane activity. Also, warmer-than-average sea surface temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea, coupled with reduced vertical wind shear, weaker tropical Atlantic trade winds, and an enhanced west African monsoon all increase the likelihood for an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season. Similar conditions have been producing more active seasons since the current high-activity era began in 1995.

Hurricane preparedness is critically important for the 2020 hurricane season, just as it is every year. Keep in mind, you may need to adjust any preparedness actions based on the latest health and safety guidelines from the CDC and your local officials. Visit the National Hurricane Center’s website at hurricanes.gov throughout the season to stay current on any watches and warnings.

NOAA will upgrade the hurricane-specific Hurricane Weather Research and Forecast system (HWRF) and the Hurricanes in a Multi-scale Ocean coupled Non-hydrostatic model (HMON) models this summer. As the hurricane season gets underway, NOAA will begin feeding data from the COSMIC-2 satellites into weather models to help track hurricane intensity and boost forecast accuracy. COSMIC-2 provides data about air temperature, pressure and humidity in the tropical regions of Earth — precisely where hurricane and tropical storm systems form.

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bdpatoday (ISSN 1946-1429) is a periodical published monthly and weekly by participating local BDPA Chapters of National BDPA (NBDPA) within their respective media markets by local BDPA Chapter Communications Committees.

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First Class and Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and additional regional mailing offices.

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