

...NORTH CAROLINA HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK...

This week has been declared North Carolina's Hurricane Preparedness Week for 2010. All week long the National Weather Service will issue informative messages to help you prepare for hurricane season.

Today we will talk about hurricane history in North Carolina and the outlook for 2010.

This hurricane season NOAA is predicting XX named storms of which XX to XX could become hurricanes including XX to XX 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 XXXXXXXXXXXX hurricane season... just one storm could spell disaster for North Carolina and preparing for these storms is key. North Carolina is one of the most hurricane ravaged states in the country. A look back at our hurricane history tells the story.

Nearly 20 percent of all these tropical systems pass within at least 300 miles of North Carolina. In any given year there is a one in three chance that our state will experience a hurricane landfall. A major hurricane will threaten North Carolina at least once every 11 years. The last storm to make landfall as a hurricane in North Carolina was Hurricane Isabel in 2003. The last major hurricane to threaten and impact the state was Hurricane Fran in 1996. By statistical measures we are due for a significant hurricane impact.

No part of our state has gone unaffected from these giant storms. 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.

Since records have been kept dating back to 1806, over 70 tropical systems have made direct landfall on the North Carolina coast. Even more disturbing is the fact that around 100 tropical systems have moved through the area **impacting** the state **without** actually making landfall along **our** 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 protrude out into 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.

NNNN