



HURRICANE FACT SHEET

When Are Hurricanes Most Likely?

Hurricane season begins on June 1 and continues through the end of November. August and September are peak months during hurricane season.

Who Is Most At Risk?

People who live along the coast are most at risk due to storm surge. Inland areas can also be affected by high winds, floods, and tornadoes spawned by the hurricane.

What Causes a Hurricane?

Hurricanes can develop when the sun's rays heat tropical waters to at least 82 degrees Fahrenheit. This causes the air to grow warmer and rise. Water rises with it as vapor, and the heat causes the air to rise faster and faster. In about 12 hours, the heated air will begin to circle counterclockwise, forming stronger and stronger winds that whirl with increasing speed. A wind becomes a hurricane when it reaches speeds of more than 74 miles (120 km) per hour. The moist, hot winds of a hurricane swirl upward around a calm column of low-pressure air known as the eye. Some hurricanes can develop more than one eye, but the largest is always the main eye and measures an average of 15 miles across. Inside the eye there are no storm clouds, almost no wind, and calm conditions. The rising winds rotate in increasingly tight spirals around the eye, rising faster and faster. Cooler air is also sucked in, heated, and sent twisting up the eye. When the hot air rises high enough, it cools and forms water droplets that cluster together as clouds and drop rain. The rain is blown around by fierce winds. As a hurricane moves, it churns up the sea beneath the eye, sucking ocean water up and creating huge ocean waves. The raised water is carried along by the storm to the shore.