



HURRICANE FACT SHEET

What is a Hurricane?

A hurricane is a tropical cyclone in which winds reach speeds of 74 miles per hour or more and blow in a large spiral around a relatively calm center. The eye of the storm is usually 20-30 miles wide and may extend over 400 miles. The dangers of the storm include torrential rains, high winds and storm surges. It produces measurable damage from heavy rainfalls, winds, and flooding.

High winds are a primary cause of hurricane-inflicted loss of life and property damage. Another cause is the flooding resulting from the coastal storm surge of the ocean and the torrential rains, both of which accompany the storm. To decrease such damage several unsuccessful programs have studied ways to "defuse" hurricanes in their developing stages; more recent hurricane damage-mitigation steps have included better warning systems involving real-time satellite imagery. A hurricane watch is issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours. A hurricane warning is issued when hurricane conditions (winds greater than 74 mph/119 kph or dangerously high water and rough seas) are expected in 24 hours or less.