

HURRICANES

Hurricanes and tropical storms form over warm ocean waters, like those found in the Gulf of Mexico during the summer and fall of each year. On average, 11 tropical storms, 6 of which become hurricanes, develop in the Atlantic basin each hurricane season, which runs from June 1st to November 30th. The peak hurricane threat for the Alabama coast is in August and September, but hurricanes can strike the coast during every month of the hurricane season. Everyone in Alabama needs to be prepared for hurricanes and tropical storms. Even inland areas, well away from the coastline, can experience destructive winds, tornadoes and floods from tropical storms and hurricanes.

Tropical Cyclone Definitions

- Tropical Depression: An organized system of persistent clouds and thunderstorms with a closed low-level circulation and maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less.
- Tropical Storm: An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a well defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph.
- Hurricane: An intense tropical weather system with a well defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or greater.
- Hurricane/Tropical Storm Watch: Hurricane or Tropical Storm conditions are possible in the watch area within 48 hours.
- Hurricane/Tropical Storm Warning: Hurricane or Tropical Storm conditions are expected in the warning area within 36 hours.
- Extreme Wind Warning: Short duration warnings issued by the NWS to provide the public with advance notice of the onset of extreme sustained winds of a major hurricane, usually associated with the eyewall of the hurricane.

HISTORICAL HURRICANE INFO

The Atlantic Basin has, on the whole, seen a very active period of tropical cyclone development since 1995. During this recent period of increased activity, the Alabama coast has been impacted by hurricanes a total of 8 times. The hurricane return period for a major Category 3 hurricane on the Alabama coast is approximately 30 years. Keep in mind that just because Alabama has not historically seen a Category 4 or Category 5 hurricane, the premise that Alabama will not see a storm that strong is misleading. Take measures now to be prepared!

Top Five Costliest U.S. Hurricanes (Affecting Alabama)	
Ivan	2004
Opal	1995
Georges	1998
Frederic	1979
Elena	1985

