NWS Tampa Bay Participates in Hurricane Tabletop Exercise with Port Tampa Bay

By: Dustin Norman

For the 9th year in a row, Port Tampa Bay, Florida’s largest port, and the Tampa Bay Area’s National Weather Service (NWS) office presented a hurricane tabletop exercise with the goal of sharpening the preparedness and response actions of Port tenants along with local, state, and federal partners. This year’s exercise was held virtually with 162 registrants across an extensive range of professions.

NWS Tampa Meteorologist-in-Charge Brian LaMarre started the day by providing a brief 2020 hurricane season overview and highlighted the collaborative partnerships with Port Tampa Bay and local and state emergency management agencies. For the 9th year in a row, Port Tampa Bay, Florida’s largest port, was afforded the privilege to be invited year after year to co-host a fundamental Weather Ready Nation initiative such as the Port Tampa Bay Hurricane Tabletop Exercise.

Lightning Safety

By: Dan Noah

Lightning is fascinating to watch, but also extremely dangerous. It kills or injures hundreds of people every year in the United States. It’s important to understand the dangers associated with this weather phenomenon and what you need to do to stay safe when thunderstorms threaten. There is no safe place outside when thunderstorms are in the area. If you hear thunder, you are likely within striking distance of the storm. Just remember, “When Thunder Roars, Go Inside!” Too many people wait for too long to get to a safe place when thunderstorms approach. These effectively delayed actions lead to many of the lightning deaths and injuries in the U.S.

In 2001, the United States averaged 55 deaths per year based on the previous 10 years. That average has now dropped to 25 deaths per year despite an increase of 16% in the U.S. population. The decrease in lightning deaths can be largely attributed to increased awareness of the dangers of lightning, better lightning safety policies and guidelines, and better medical attention for victims.

While these results are encouraging, at least 643 people died as a result of lightning strikes during the 10-year period from 2001 to 2020, and 2 more have been killed already this year by lightning.

Lightning safety tips and resources can be found at https://weather.gov/safety/lightning.

Weather Workouts Sessions Return

By: Tony Hurt

In lieu of our typical Integrated Warning Team Workshops due to COVID-19 restrictions, the Tampa Bay Area WFO hosted a series of online, virtual IWTs for the first time. These “Weather Workouts” were held each Tuesday of the month and included a variety of topics such as Fire Weather, El Niño and La Niña, NWS Damage Surveys, and Forecast Models. Meteorologists in the office learned to prepare and produce worktop exercises for many of our esteemed EM partners over the course of each 30-minute session. Presentations were recorded and saved to our office webpage for future reference and viewing, essential in maintaining and cultivating our NWS/ partner relationships.

In light of the success of the initial Weather Workouts, the TBW WFO decided to organize another round of sessions for the month of July, covering topics ranging from Areal and Flash Flooding, to Hurricanes and Summer Sea Breeze Thunderstorms. For more, see our NWS Tampa Bay Weather Workouts page: https://www.weather.gov/tampa/workouts.

Hurricane Season Outlook and New Normals

By: Jen Hubbard

The forecast for the Atlantic Hurricane Season is for 13-20 named storms to form (winds of 39 mph or greater). 6-10 of those becoming a hurricane (winds of 74 mph or greater), and then 3-5 of those becoming a major hurricane (winds of 111 mph or greater or a Category 3 or higher). There is a 60% chance of an above normal season. And those normals have just been recalculated for the 30 year period 1990-2020, and the new normals are slightly higher, with an average season having 14 named storms, 7 of which becoming hurricanes, and 3 of those becoming major hurricanes.

The above average season is expected due to several factors. First, the El Niño Southern Oscillation is in a neutral phase, and may move into a La Niña phase by the end of the hurricane season, both of which support higher tropical activity. Predicted warmer ocean temperatures, tropical deep convection, and increased moisture in the continents due to a more frequent delivery of significant impacts to Port operations. In addition, there was also an extremely active Central Pacific Pacific Ocean, which is felt in the western North Atlantic, and increased moisture in the continents due to a more frequent delivery of significant impacts to Port operations.

There have been several improvements to modeling systems as well as observation systems, such as with the use of drones, which are expected to improve the modeling of the hurricane season.

It is important to remember though, that it only takes one storm to change your life. So it is very important to be prepared. Kill your zone, have a plan, and make sure your preparedness kit is in order. Visit ready.gov if you need assistance with any of this.