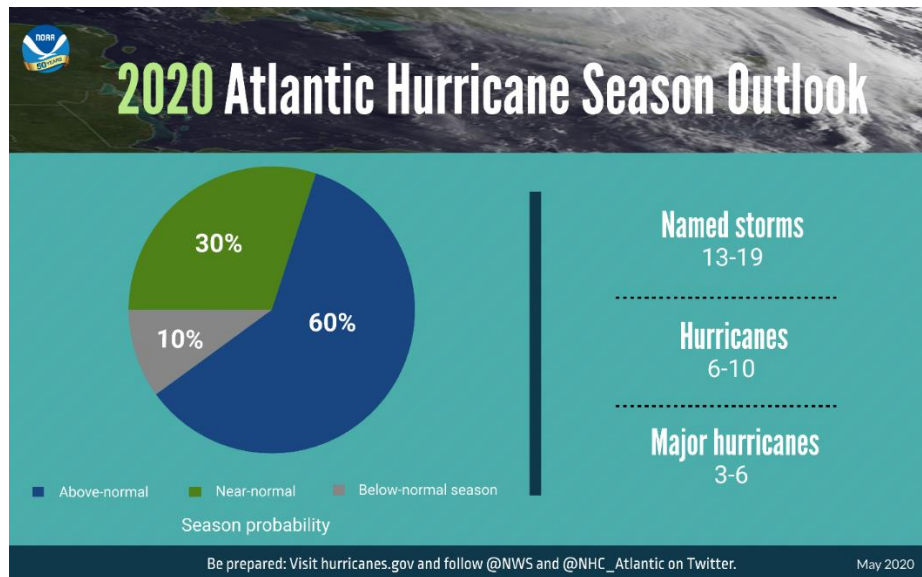


Preparing the Private Sector in St. Kitts and Nevis to Better Manage the Hurricane Season During the COVID -19 Pandemic.

June 16 2020



A summary infographic showing hurricane season probability and numbers of named storms predicted from NOAA's 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook. <https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/busy-atlantic-hurricane-season-predicted-for-2020>

St. Kitts and Nevis has been fortunate over the past 10 years with no major tropical storms or hurricanes adversely impacting the Federation. With an above normal 2020 Atlantic Hurricane Season and given the fact that St. Kitts and Nevis is located within the Atlantic hurricane belt, this makes Federation very susceptible and vulnerable to serious tropical storms and hurricanes. This is further amplified due to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 virus and its major toll on the global economy.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), advises that we should expect a busy Atlantic hurricane season with above-normal activity.

On average, a hurricane season produces 12 named storms some of which 6 evolve into hurricanes. However, this year NOAA predicts 13 to 19 named storms of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes^[i]. To date, three tropical storms have emerged. May saw the formation of two tropical storms- Arthur and Bertha and Cristobal in early June 2020^[ii]. Atlantic tropical storm names for 2020 as published by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are as follows: Arthur, Bertha, Cristobal, Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gonzalo, Hanna, Isaias, Josephine, Kyle, Laura, Marco, Nana, Omar, Paulette, Rene, Sally, Teddy, Vicky and Wilfred^[iii].

June 01 2020 signaled the official commencement of the 2020 Northern Atlantic region hurricane season to November 30. Unlike past hurricane seasons, this season presents a new challenge that will test the resilience of our islands even more than the past storm and hurricane threats as we also contend with an active pandemic- COVID-19. Forecasts for this year also predict a very active hurricane season. This duality of threats, therefore, requires rigorous preparedness and business continuity planning. We urge the public to take a proactive approach to reduce the potential impact of damage, loss to property and lives and illness within their businesses and households. While we continue to hope for the best in periods of such uncertainty, we must always remember the old adage which says “a stitch in time saves nine” we must therefore adequately prepare for the worst.

To date, St. Kitts and Nevis has been able to successfully manage the spread of the initial wave of infections recording 15 confirmed cases all fully recovered. Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Hazel Laws warns of a potential second wave of infection as well as the ever-present risk of spread from unknown A-symptomatic carriers of COVID-19.

The threat of a second wave of COVID-19 during a potentially dangerous hurricane season truly amplifies a myriad of operational risks for businesses. While no country is exempt from the ravages of a natural disaster the location and size of the islands in the ECCU make us very vulnerable.

Disaster preparedness and business continuity planning efforts will increase the manageability of disaster impacts as the major decisions would have been made to ensure business continuity during times of crisis.

Businesses are therefore encouraged to develop their continuity plans to mitigate the risk exposure to COVID- 19 and the hurricane season to help increase their chances of operating and thriving during these difficult and challenging time.

It is therefore critical that the business community strengthens preparations for sustaining their operations throughout the potential duality of impending threats, to ensure a quick return to business following the passage of a storm. In fact, we are sure that your plan is completed and ready to be executed if necessary.

Here are some critical areas to focus on include as part of your disaster preparedness efforts include;

- Develop/review your company's risk management
- Create plans (where they don't exist) and the publication of information that supports business continuity. This includes critical areas such as telecommunications, banking, transportation, electricity and water.
- Remember COVID-19 Virus is around; ensure that all Protocols are in place.
- Where possible, rehearse key components of your Business Continuity Plan (BCP).
- Create an enhanced communication and public awareness strategy which becomes operational well before the beginning of the hurricane season and increase the use of social media in the strategy.
- Educate your team through training, carry out disaster drills and recovery testing.
- Conduct human resource planning and ensuring staff are adequately trained and informed. Maintain and active list of contact information for all of your employees.
- Ensure that your business IT infrastructure is backed up and maintained in more than one location.
- Ensure that your generators are serviced and have sufficient fuel.
- It is extremely important that you have an adequate supply of drinking or portable water.
- Secure your physical business location and its contents.
- Take steps to ensure website security.
- Review insurance policy coverage.
- Place signage within your establishment highlighting emergency contact numbers e.g. NEMA, SKELEC, NEVLEC, Fire Service, Water Department.
- Secure sufficient energy source back up including extra batteries for flashlights, communication devices like mobile phones and computers.
- Stock up a one-month supply of personal protective equipment.
- Alcohol-based sanitizers and cleaning agents.
- Maintain at least one-month supply of nonperishable food.

Understanding your unique vulnerabilities and taking action to mitigate against future negative impacts can truly save your business from complete disruption.

Prepared by the St. Kitts-Nevis Chamber of Industry and Commerce

[i] Busy Atlantic Hurricane predicted for 2020: Multiple climate factors indicate above-normal activity is most likely. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <https://www.noaa.gov/media-release/busy-atlantic-hurricane-season-predicted-for-2020>

[ii] Tropical Cyclone Names- Tropical Cyclone Names- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutnames.shtml> June 14,2020

[iii] Tropical Cyclone Names- Tropical Cyclone Names- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutnames.shtml> June 14,2020

