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2010 PROGRAMME

Friends of the Environment - 3rd March, 2010
70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain - 18th June, 2010
Hurricane Awareness - 28th September, 2010
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THE ISLANDS OF THE BAHAMAS
"IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER"
The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has the role of the hurricane committee was expanded to include the concept of comprehensive disaster management. The Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) programme has been introduced to the family islands where representatives have been asked to prepare disaster response plans.

NEMA is a coordinating agency which activates the Emergency Operations Centre when a disaster hits.

NEMA is now a recognized acronym in The Bahamas. It is hoped that the efforts and the Agency will encourage the citizens and residents of the country to be prepared for disasters.

Rainfall

The word hurricane evokes violent wind, yet some of the worst tropical cyclone catastrophes are caused by torrential rain. Tropical Storm Noel over Exuma in 2007 caused heavy rainfall reaching a record level of 15 inches (380mm) Four factors determine how much rain will fall, the amount of water vapor in the air, topography, the vertical extent and duration of the updraft. Hurricane Noel in 2007 and hurricane Wilma in 2005 caused heavy flooding which lead to fatalities in Exuma and Freeport respectively. Rain may extend outward for hundreds of miles from the centre of the hurricane and may last for several days after the hurricane has passed. An average of 10 to 15 inches of rain falls over coastal areas during the passage of a well-developed hurricane, but over 20 inches may have been recorded in the Bahamas.

Storm or Tidal Surge

Violent hurricane winds may produce storm surges of up to 45 feet high at sea, and storm surges of over twenty feet may crash against shore at speeds of up to 40 mph. Long swells may move outwards from the eye of a hurricane for more that 1,000 miles. These long swells are often the first visible signs of an approaching hurricane and are known as the Storm Surge. A storm surge, also called a hurricane surge, is the abnormal rise in sea level caused by wind and pressure forces of a hurricane. It can be extremely devastating, and is a major cause of damage and greatest danger to life during the passage of a hurricane. It is estimated that 75% of all hurricane-related deaths and injuries are caused by the storm surge. The storm surge, a moving wall a water weighing millions of tons, acts like a gigantic bulldozer destroying anything in its path. If it arrives at the same time as a high tide, the water height will be even greater. The shape of the shoreline and the ocean floor has a great deal to do with a storm surge's magnitude. The more gradual the floor slopes, the less volume of water there will be. If the surge can displace the water and move it further inland the water is displaced. This dome of water can be up to 40 to 60 miles long as it moves onto the shoreline.

Winds

Of all the tropical cyclone damaging agents, strong winds are perhaps the best understood. Damaging winds will accompany any hurricane, no matter what category is. The strongest hurricanes have the most potential for wind damage to occur. The fierce winds may reach 200 mph. The strongest winds reported in the Bahamas were Hurricane Andrew in 1992 (150mph), the Great Bahamas Hurricane of 1926 (150mph), and the Great Bahaman Hurricane of 1929 (140mph). Wind speeds are greatest near the surface around the central calm or eye.

The force of the wind can quickly decimate the tree population, bring down power lines and utility poles, knock over signs, and may be strong enough to destroy some buildings. Flying debris can also cause damage, injuries and death.

Reconnaissance Aircraft

Reconnaissance Aircraft or Hurricane Hunters are manned aircraft that fly directly into the hurricane. Hurricane Madison, a specially modified Boeing 747SP, has revolutionized the way forecasters' ability to detect early signs of tropical cyclones, but satellites cannot determine the interior barometric pressure of a hurricane, nor provide accurate wind speed information. This can only be done by flying a reconnaissance aircraft into the hurricane.

The 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, better known as "Air Force Hurricane Hunters", is a United States Air Force squadron based in Biloxi, Mississippi, that flies missions into hurricanes and weather systems for research purposes and observation.

HURRICANE AW A R E N E S S