



After Accurate Forecasts 2003-5, TSR Predicts Another Active Atlantic Hurricane Season in 2006

Extended outlook predicts Atlantic basin and U.S. landfalling hurricane activity will be 60% above norm in 2006

London, 6 December 2005 -- Tropical Storm Risk (TSR), the award-winning forecasting consortium, today warned that the United States and Caribbean should brace themselves for yet another active Atlantic hurricane season in 2006. TSR's long-range forecast anticipates Atlantic basin and U.S. landfalling hurricane activity being 60 percent above the 1950-2005 norm next season.

According to TSR, whose long-range outlooks for the exceptionally active 2004 and 2005 hurricane season and active 2003 hurricane seasons proved accurate, it is 81% likely that U.S. landfalling hurricane activity in 2006 will be in the top one-third of years historically.

TSR's long-range hurricane prediction includes:

- A 79% probability of an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season, a 15% probability of a near-normal season and only a 6% chance of a below-normal season.
- 16 tropical storms for the Atlantic basin as a whole, with eight of these being hurricanes and four intense hurricanes.
- A 81% probability of above-normal U.S. landfalling hurricane activity, a 15% likelihood of a near-normal season and only a 4% chance of a below-normal season.
- Five tropical storm strikes on the U.S., of which two will be hurricanes.
- Two tropical storm hits, including one hurricane, on the Caribbean Lesser Antilles.

The two main climate factors influencing the TSR hurricane forecast for 2006 are the expected values in August and September for the speed of trade winds which blow westward across the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean Sea and the temperature of the sea waters between west Africa and the Caribbean where many hurricanes develop. The former influences cyclonic vorticity (the spinning up of storms) while the latter provides heat and moisture to power incipient storms. TSR anticipates weaker than normal trades and warmer than normal waters in 2006: conditions which both favour an above-average hurricane season.

Professor Mark Saunders, the TSR lead scientist and Head of Seasonal Forecasting and Meteorological Hazards at the Benfield Hazard Research Centre at University College London, urged ongoing vigilance on the part of governments and individual citizens:

“We are witnessing record levels of Atlantic and U.S. landfalling hurricane activity. The years 2003 to 2005 have seen the highest three-year total number of U.S. hurricane landfalls (11) since 1900 and the highest three-year total number of North Atlantic hurricanes (30) since reliable records began in 1950. Based on current and projected climate signals this high activity looks set to continue through 2006.”

However, he counselled against over-reaction to the exceptional losses from the Gulf of Mexico in 2005:

“Despite the forecast for another active hurricane season in 2006, the chance of seeing as many as five intense hurricanes in the Gulf (as happened in 2005) is extremely remote. No other year since 1950 has recorded more than two intense Gulf hurricanes. Thus despite the forecast, we are most unlikely to see a repeat of the Gulf devastation witnessed in 2005.”

Hurricanes rank as the U.S.'s most expensive natural disaster and are responsible for eight of the 10 most costly catastrophes to affect the country. The average annual total and insured losses from hurricane strikes on the continental U.S. 1950-2005 are estimated to be U.S. \$ 8.0 and U.S. \$ 4.2 billion respectively at 2005 prices and exposures. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from 1 June to 30 November.

TSR forecasts may be accessed through the website www.tropicalstormrisk.com.

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Notes to Editors:

About Tropical Storm Risk (TSR):

Founded in 2000, Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) offers a leading resource for forecasting the risk from tropical storms worldwide. The venture provides innovative forecast products to benefit risk awareness and decision making in (re)insurance, other business sectors, government and society. The TSR consortium is co-sponsored by Benfield, the leading independent reinsurance intermediary, Royal & Sun Alliance, the global insurance group, and Crawford & Company, a global claims management solutions company. The TSR scientific grouping brings together climate physicists, meteorologists and statisticians at University College London and the Met Office. www.tropicalstormrisk.com

In 2004 Tropical Storm Risk won the prestigious British Insurance Award for London Market Innovation of the Year. Recent innovations include a breakthrough in the seasonal prediction of hurricane activity reaching the coast of the U.S., the first demonstration of the business relevance of seasonal U.S. hurricane forecasts, and the introduction of forecast windspeed probabilities for tropical cyclones worldwide. TSR provides tropical storm alert feeds to Reuters AlertNet (www.alertnet.org), the humanitarian news portal, and to the United Nations World Food Programme (<http://www.hewsworld.org>).

About Benfield Hazard Research Centre:

Benfield Hazard Research Centre is sponsored by Benfield, the leading independent reinsurance intermediary and risk advisory business. Benfield's customers include many of the world's major insurance and reinsurance companies as well as government entities and global corporations. Benfield employs over 1,700 people based in over 35 locations worldwide and is listed on the London Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol BFD. www.benfieldgroup.com

With sixty researchers and practitioners, the Benfield Hazard Research Centre is Europe's leading multidisciplinary academic hazard research centre and comprises three groups: Geological Hazards, Meteorological Hazards and Seasonal Forecasting, and Disaster Studies and Management. The Centre is based at University College London, which along with Oxford and Cambridge, is one of the UK's top three multi-faculty teaching and research institutions. www.benfieldhrc.org