

Risk Control

AN ABOVE AVERAGE HURRICANE SEASON?

Unfortunately, Yes.

It looks like NOAA's Climate Prediction Center got it right with the recent arrival of Tropical Storm Isaias. Isaias became the earliest-forming "1" – named storm formed in a season filled with other early-forming named storms.

In May, NOAA issued its 2020 forecast – a 60% chance of an above normal season with 13 to 19 names storms, including 3 to 6 major (category 3, 4 or 5) storms during the season. During an average season, there are 12 named storms and 3 major hurricanes. There are several climate factors cited for this prediction, including, warmer ocean waters, less vertical wind shear and weaker Atlantic trade winds.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Red Cross all publish information and resource documents regarding hurricane preparedness and response – links to these websites are listed below. The challenge this year is, how do COVID-19 safety requirements and recommendations from the CDC and other agencies affect disaster preparedness? Community shelters, large scale evacuations and food distributions are problematic given social distancing recommendations and other mandates.

For construction firms, a hurricane, severe winds or flooding can severely damage buildings and other structures that are uncompleted and exposed to the elements. If your operations were affected by Tropical Storm Isaias, take some time and see if your plans need to be updated or changed.

Here are several recommendations for protecting jobsites against high winds, rain, flooding and possible collapses. For example:

- Move equipment and vehicles to safer areas.
- Move or secure chemicals and solvents that could leach into flood waters or onto surrounding areas.
- Make sure the company has enough supplies on hand to tie down and secure work and materials.
- Maintain up-to-date inventories of materials and supplies will make it easier to identify lost property in the event of a loss.
- Empty dumpsters, and remove property that can become airborne during a hurricane – such as light weight fences and screens, portable bathrooms, lighting and signage.
- Update or compile a list of vendors and suppliers that can remove debris, pump-out water, supply generators and sandbags and help with emergency repairs. Keep a file with contact information for employees, insurance agent, landlord and local municipal officials. Lists should be digital and hardcopy.
- Make sure "Smart" devices are operational and employees know what to do in the event an alarm is sent. For example, water leak detectors, low water detectors, intrusion alarms.

Resources

American Red Cross - Hurricane Safety

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/hurricane.html>

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) – Natural Disasters and Severe Weather

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/index.html>

U.S. Department of Labor – Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) – Worker Safety and Health Resources for Hurricane and Flood Cleanup and Recovery

https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergencypreparedness/worker_sh_resources_hurricanes_floods.html