

SUNCOAST OBSERVER

A quarterly newsletter brought to you by the National Weather Service Tampa Bay Area, FL

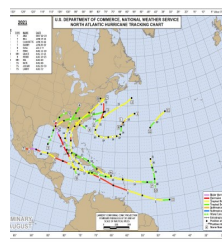
www.weather.gov/tampa

9.22.2021

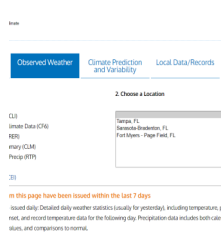
Top stories in this newsletter



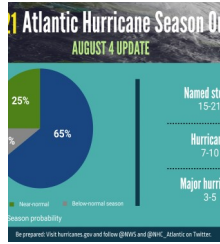
Upcoming Automated Surface Observing System Relocation at SRQ



2021 Hurricane Season So Far



New NWS Climate Services Webpages



Hurricane Season Outlook Updated

Upcoming Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) Relocation at Sarasota-Bradenton Int'l (KSRQ)



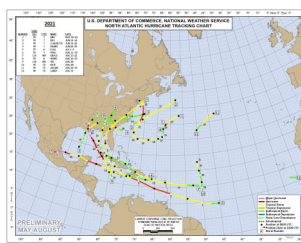
By: Austen Flannery

Technicians and Meteorologists from the National Weather Service (NWS) Tampa Bay Area office met with project engineers from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on September 8th to conduct an on-site survey of new locations for the current ASOS that would be suitable for relocation sometime next year. Current master plans for the airport necessitate this move in order to ensure critical weather information continues to be available for Air Traffic Controllers, pilots, and NWS Meteorologists. The primary concern of the aviation community is safety, and weather conditions often threaten that safety. A basic strength of ASOS is that critical aviation weather parameters are measured where they are needed most: airport runway touchdown zone(s).

The ASOS program is a joint effort of the National Weather Service (NWS), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Department of Defense (DOD). The ASOS systems serves as the nation's primary surface weather observing network. ASOS is designed to support weather forecast activities and aviation operations and, at the same time, support the needs of the meteorological, hydrological, and climatological research communities.

ASOS detects significant changes, disseminating hourly and special observations via the networks. Additionally, ASOS routinely and automatically provides computer-generated voice observations directly to aircraft in the vicinity of airports, using FAA ground-to-air radio. These messages are also available via a telephone dial-in port. ASOS observes, formats, archives and transmits observations automatically. ASOS transmits a special report when conditions exceed preselected weather element thresholds, e.g., the visibility decreases to less than 3 miles.

2021 Hurricane Season So Far



By: Jen Hubbard

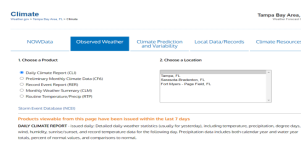
As of this publication, there have been 17 named storms. Ana, Bill, Claudette, Danny, Fred, Julian, Kate, Mindy, Odette, Peter, and Rose were tropical storms. Elsa, Henri, and Nicholas reached hurricane strength. And Grace, Ida, and Larry reached Major Hurricane status.

Locally, Hurricane Elsa has been the main storm impacting the area so far this season. Elsa was the earliest-forming fifth named storm on record, and the earliest hurricane in the Caribbean Sea. It formed in the Atlantic as a tropical storm on July 1st, and moved northwestward into the Caribbean Sea as it intensified to a hurricane over the next few days. It made landfall in Cuba on July 5th and then emerged into the Gulf of Mexico as a tropical storm. As it lifted north-northeastward, it paralleled our west Florida coastline, and briefly re-intensified to a hurricane as it was due-west of Tampa Bay on July 7th, before weakening back down to a tropical storm before making landfall just to the north of our area in Steinhatchee. After making landfall, Elsa then raced to the northeast and became extratropical on July 9th. Locally, the main impact from Elsa was the rainfall. Just over 11 inches of rain fell in Punta Gorda in Charlotte county, with a large area of southwest Florida getting 6 to 10 inches of rain and causing significant flooding across the area. Much of the coastline also saw 1 to 3 feet of storm surge, with tropical storm force winds impacting the coastal regions from Tampa Bay north.

Major Hurricane Ida has definitely been the most destructive and impactful storm to hit the contiguous US this season. It started with its landfall near Port Fourchon, Louisiana on Sunday, August 29th as a strong category 4 hurricane, and coincidentally on the 16th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. This storm tied for the strongest Louisiana hurricane landfall. Officially, winds of 120kts or 138 mph were recorded in Dulac, and winds up to 130 mph were recorded in C-MAN stations just offshore. Areas of coastal Mississippi, such as Kiln and Biloxi, received well over 13 inches of rain, and numerous rivers across southern LA and MS went into moderate or major flood status from all of the heavy rainfall across the region. Storm surge was estimated at 9 to 14 feet, with reports of the Mississippi River flowing backwards at some points during the storm. There were also several tornadoes that occurred during the landfall. All of these factors combined caused quite the devastation along the Gulf coast and lead to numerous deaths and hundreds of injuries. Ida kept moving on however through the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys, bringing flooding rains and tornadic activity all the way up into the New England region by September 1st and 2nd as the now extratropical system interacted with a front. A tornado outbreak combined with a major flash flood event across portions of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, causing more extensive damage and additional fatalities and numerous injuries. While the extent of Ida's destruction is still being assessed, it is likely to go down in the record books and be retired.

Let's hope the rest of the season's storms remain fish storms, as we've seen with the latest few.

New NWS Climate Services Webpages



By: Paul Close

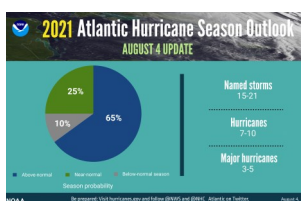
On August 26, 2021, the National Weather Service migrated its climate data website to a new server with better web stability. While this is a positive step, users are now redirected from the old climate data site and should update their bookmarks.

The public is used to accessing preliminary past weather data via weather.gov under the "Past Weather" tab. The link from the "Past Weather" tab has been automatically redirected to a new landing page with a map of Weather Forecast Office's (WFO) County Warning Areas on <https://www.weather.gov/wrh/Climate>. Users can select locations on the map which takes them to the local WFO to search the database for the climate data they are seeking. These new pages are also accessible from any WFO home page by going to the "Climate and Past Weather" link.

The content and functionalities have minimal differences. Climate data users will now be able to access the full 5 years of data via the "Observed Weather" tab, including latest CLI, CF6, RER, CLM, and RTP products.

For a short user video on the new Climate pages visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8RRF45BTy-8>

Hurricane Season Outlook Updated



By: Jen Hubbard

The Hurricane Season Outlook was updated at the beginning of August. Conditions remain conducive for an above-average hurricane season, with the probabilities increasing slightly to 65%. As a result, the number of named storms (winds of 39 mph or greater) has increased a bit to 15-21, including now 7-10 hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or greater), and 3-5 of those becoming a major hurricane (winds of 111 mph or greater or a Category 3 or higher).

This updated outlook included the 5 named storms that had formed at the point of the August 4th update, and at the point of this publication, 16 named storms had formed. Hurricane Elsa was the earliest 5th named storm on record. A mix of oceanic and atmospheric conditions favor above-average activity for the remainder of the hurricane season. Warm sea surface temperatures, reduced vertical wind shear, enhanced west African monsoon, and an ongoing warm phase of the Atlantic Multi-Decadal Oscillation.

It is important to remember though, that it only takes one storm to change your life. So it is very important to be prepared. Know your zone, have a plan, and make sure your preparedness kit is in order. Visit [ready.gov](https://www.weather.gov/ready) if you need assistance with any of this.