

2005 HURRICANE SEASON – **The Barbadian Experience**

The 2005 Atlantic hurricane season was a record-breaking one, and represents the busiest and most destructive in history, with tropical cyclone activity well above the average for the last 40 years. By the end of November the region had seen a record 26 named storms. Zeta, the last named storm, brought the number for calendar year to an unprecedented twenty-seven

The pattern, which started in June, with the formation of two named tropical storms, continued throughout the season. This was followed by a July of unprecedented tropical cyclone activity with the development of a record five named storms. In addition, two major hurricanes, Dennis and Emily, developed during the month, and this tied a record set in 1916. By the end of July the formation of seven named storms represented a record level of activity for this period.

The development of five named storms, including two of which attained hurricane strength, during the month of August saw the continuation of above average activity. The formation of twelve named storms and four hurricanes represented activity well above the long-term average.

September 2005 saw the doubling of the long-term averages with totals of seventeen named storms and nine hurricanes by the end of the month. This tied the record for the number of named storms, established in 1933, and was one short of the most hurricane formations for the same period.

During the month of October six tropical cyclones formed, with four of them reaching hurricane strength. By the end of the month records for the most named storms and hurricanes in a single year were established, and for the first time since the current naming system was implemented, all 21 names were exhausted. With one more month left in the 2005 hurricane season 23 named storms, including 13 hurricanes and 7 major hurricanes have developed, and for the first time, the contingency arrangement for naming had to be utilized.

As the period of heightened hurricane activity, beginning in 1995 continues, the potential for higher levels of catastrophic destruction and major loss of life in small and vulnerable nations, it necessary that we develop and foster a culture of natural disaster mitigation and prevention within our borders. Predicted to be multi-decadal in length this period of enhanced hurricane activity is likely to be a major factor in our lives during the early part of the 21st century.

Barbados was directly affected by tropical storm Emily during the second week of July. Tropical storm force winds were briefly experienced on the island; damage was minimal in Barbados, and little rainfall was recorded. Emily reached hurricane intensity before affecting Grenada on the night of July 13.

Weather conditions were quite unsettled from early in the year. January 2005 proved to be the wettest January on record, and this was followed by rainfall totals for May and June, which exceeded the historical averages by significant amounts. A number of

significant rainfall events were recorded on the island during May and June and minor flood events resulted in some measure of disruption. A wet August preceded a below average rainfall for September

The period from October to November produced more inclement weather across the island. Frequent outbreaks of moderate to heavy rain resulted in some localized flooding in parts of the island during the month of October. The inclement weather has continued well into November when more serious and widespread flooding occurred. Rather unsettled weather conditions have persisted into the third week of the month, and saturated earth conditions made the accumulation of water a routine occurrence. Frequent torrential downpours caused regular flood events in parts of the island and consequential hardships and disruptions to small sectors of the population.