

Highlights of the 2006 Hurricane Season in Barbados

The Atlantic hurricane season of 2006 represents a mild and uneventful experience for Barbados. After the record-breaking activity of 2005, this year must be regarded as one of below-normal tropical cyclone activity. Nine (9) named storms formed, five of which reached hurricane intensity and of these, two were classified as major hurricanes. The period from October to November was non-productive and little interest was generated as the season, influenced by a developing El Niño, came to a standstill.

The season peaked in September when four hurricanes developed and slightly above normal tropical cyclone activity was experienced. None of these systems posed a threat to Barbados.

On August 24th, a developing depression generated inclement weather in Barbados and some of the neighbouring islands. The system produced rainfall amounts of 90.0 mm or more in some parts of the islands and wind gusts in excess of storm force at two locations. The depression was upgraded to tropical storm Ernesto the following morning.

During the month of October, the weather was generally unstable, and some significant rainfall events were recorded. These unsettled conditions continued into the month November, and a number of tropical downpours were recorded across the island. Some of these resulted in localized flooding in parts of the island. The rapid accumulation of run-off from the heavy showers produced flash flooding in Bridgetown and suburban areas. In cases the run-off overwhelmed the drainage systems, and inundation quickly resulted.

Despite the periodic moderate to heavy downpours, rainfall totals for the first eleven months of the year remain below the historical average. The significant shortfall, which was experienced during the period, March to July, is yet to be made up.

Another feature of the year's weather was the persistent high temperature regime of 32.0 °C or more. During the peak of the wet season, August to October, these extreme temperatures were recorded on five-one days, with the pattern persisting for six consecutive days on two occasions.

Naturally, this local experience has continued to fuel the debate over and given credence to the "global warming" perception. Although no deaths were directly attributable to the persistent elevated temperatures, significant amounts of time, energy and resources were expended in creating a cooler and more comfortable environment for the people affected.
