

# NOAA's 2026 Hurricane Season Forecast Is Out. Here's What It Says — and What Naples Should Actually Do About It.

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## The Official Numbers

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NOAA released its 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook on Thursday with a forecast calling for 13 to 19 named storms, 6 to 10 hurricanes, and 3 to 5 major hurricanes. NOAA placed a 60% chance of an above-normal season.

The NOAA forecast reflects a tension that has defined the entire 2026 pre-season forecasting debate: while El Niño is expected to increase wind shear and suppress storm development during the second half of the season, Atlantic Ocean temperatures remain above average and provide significant fuel for any storms that do form.

That dynamic, a suppressive atmosphere fighting a warm ocean, is why forecasters are not in full agreement this year and why the NOAA numbers are notably higher than what Colorado State University and Tropical Storm Risk have projected.

## The Full Forecast Picture

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Four major forecast groups, four different answers:

Forecaster	Named Storms	Hurricanes	Major Hurricanes
NOAA	13–19	6–10	3–5
Colorado State (CSU)	13	6	2
Tropical Storm Risk	12	5	1
AccuWeather	11–16	4–7	2–4
University of Arizona	20	9	4

The University of Arizona is the lone above-average outlier, citing similarities to the 2023 season when strong El Niño conditions coexisted with sea surface temperatures warm enough to fuel major storm development, anyway.

## **What the Numbers Mean for Florida Specifically**

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The storm count is not the number Naples residents should focus on. The landfall probability is.

Colorado State University calculated the probability of at least one major hurricane making landfall along the East Coast, including Peninsula Florida, south and east of Cedar Key, at 15%. The historical average for that stretch is 21%. For the Gulf Coast from the Florida Panhandle westward, CSU put the probability at 20%, against a historical average of 27%.

The Naples Daily News article calculates that combining the Gulf Coast and Peninsula Florida data points puts Florida's overall major hurricane landfall risk at approximately 12%, below the historical norms but not zero. Not close to zero.

As CSU senior research scientist Phil Klotzbach put it, while the outlook points to lower odds of landfall, these numbers do not eliminate the risk coastal residents face every year. Even in quieter seasons, a single landfalling hurricane can cause significant damage.

## **Why "Below Average" Doesn't Mean "Safe"**

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History is worth reading carefully here.

The 1992 hurricane season had just seven named storms. One of them was Hurricane Andrew, a Category 5 that destroyed 63,000 homes in South Florida. The 2004 season developed during El Niño conditions and still produced four hurricane landfalls in Florida.

Ian in 2022 was not a product of an extremely active season. It was one well-placed storm that found warm Gulf water at the wrong moment and intensified to Category 4 before slamming into Lee County with Naples directly in its path.

Seasonal forecasts tell you how many storms are likely to form. They don't tell you where any individual storm goes. For Naples and Collier County, one storm on the right track is all it takes to cause significant damage.

## **El Niño — What It Actually Does**

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El Niño events are known to increase wind shear across the Atlantic basin, which disrupts the organization of developing cyclones. Additionally, water temperatures where the seeds for

tropical disturbances begin in the eastern and central Atlantic are not expected to be as warm, potentially impacting the lifespan and intensity of storms.

The practical effect of El Niño is fewer storms forming and fewer of those reaching major hurricane strength. The suppressive effect tends to be strongest in the Caribbean and the western Atlantic. The Gulf of Mexico is slightly more insulated from El Niño's influence, meaning Gulf storms, when they form, can still intensify even in suppressed seasons.



## A New Feature This Season

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Weather watchers will notice a change to NHC forecast products this season. The forecast cone will now include inland Tropical Storm and Hurricane Watches and Warnings, rather than focusing solely on coastal alerts. Research indicates that including inland alerts helps better communicate a tropical cyclone's wide-ranging risks, which can spread hundreds of miles inland.



## June 1 Is 12 Days Away. Here's What to Do Now.

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Whether the season turns out to be quiet or not, the preparation window is the same. A few things worth doing before June 1:

**Check your flood insurance.** The National Flood Insurance Program has a 30-day waiting period before coverage activates. If you haven't reviewed your policy since Jan, do it now.

**Know your evacuation zone.** Collier County's zones are updated at [colliercountyfl.gov](http://colliercountyfl.gov). Know yours before you need them.

**Build your kit.** A minimum of 72 hours of water per person, medications, important documents in waterproof storage, a battery or hand-crank radio, phone chargers, and backup power.

**Follow the season.** The National Hurricane Center begins issuing Tropical Weather Outlooks daily on June 1. Track active weather at [nhc.noaa.gov](http://nhc.noaa.gov) or through the free NHC app.