



Home (/) > Brain Candy (/brain-candy)
> Our Planet (/brain-candy/our-world)



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All About Hurricanes

Sep 20, 2018

Hurricanes are what scientists call "**strong tropical cyclones**." They're a large, rotating (/article/5207-the-science-of-skateboarding) system of clouds, wind and thunderstorm activity that **wreaks havoc** wherever it goes. Get the goods on one of the most **damaging and deadliest** natural disasters (/quiz/4883-quiz-test-your-natural-disaster-knowledge) of the world.

What is a Hurricane?

A hurricane, tropical cyclone, or typhoon is a **severe tropical storm** that forms in the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico ([/article/515-travel-exploring-mexico](#)) or Pacific Ocean. When large areas of the ocean ([/article/5316-overview-of-oceans](#)) **become heated**, the air pressure over that area drops, causing **thunderstorms** ([/article/435-weather-when-lightning-strikes](#)), incredible waves ([/article/2410-get-involved-with-surfing](#)) and violent winds that start at 74 mph. Hurricanes rotate in a **counter-clockwise direction** around an "eye." When they come onto land, the torrential rains, winds and waves can **damage buildings, trees and cars**. In the US, the official Atlantic hurricane season is from June 1 to November 30, and the Pacific hurricane season runs from May 15 to November 30. However, hurricanes can **happen at any time** of the year.

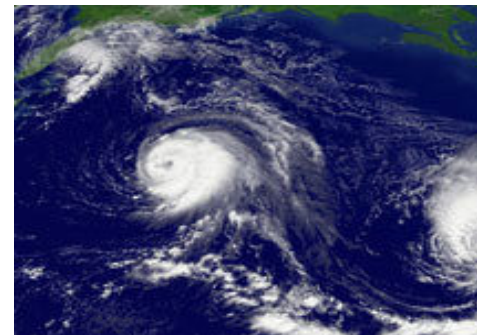
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Deadliest Hurricane of All Time

- Hurricane Andrew.
- Hurricane Isadore.
- The Great Galveston Hurricane.



This is what a Hurricane looks like from above

Hurricane Classification

Based on their **wind speeds** ([/article/1317-wind-energy](#)) and damage potential, hurricanes are ranked according to the **Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale**. It starts at one (lowest winds) and goes up to five (highest winds).

- **Category One** - 74-95 mph winds.
- **Category Two** - 96-110 mph winds.
- **Category Three** - 111-130 mph winds.
- **Category Four** - 131-155 mph winds.
- **Category Five** - Winds greater than 155 mph.

Hurricane Classification Chart

The Naming Process

A tropical storm is given a name once its winds reach **40 mph**. In keeping with the English practice ([/article/3942-guy-fawkes-day](#)) of referring to inanimate objects (like cars

● The hurricane of 1812.

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and boats) as female, hurricanes were **named after girls**. The first storm of the year was assigned a name beginning with the letter "A," the second with a "B" and so on. However, guys' names (/article/1622-celebs-real-names) were introduced in 1979 and now, the names are **alternated**. Some hurricanes names are Andrew, Fran and Hugo.



Hurricane Katrina

On August 24, 2005, a Category One hurricane formed in the Atlantic Ocean and hit Miami, FL, causing **major flooding**, loss of power (/article/1477-geothermal-energy) to more than one million residents, and 11 deaths. This hurricane, named Katrina, later became a Category 5, with winds of **175 mph**, and hit Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky and may even reach parts of Canada. Nearly 2,000 people died as cities were **flooded** (/article/824-

when-it-rains-it-pours), buildings were destroyed and hundreds of thousands of residents were forced to **flee their homes**. Hurricane Katrina was one of the four **fiercest US storms** ever seen.

Terms to Know

- **Hurricane Watch** - A hurricane is possible within **36 hours**. You should stay tuned to the radio (/entertainment/music) or television (/entertainment/tv) for more information.
- **Hurricane Warning** - A hurricane with winds of 74 mph is expected within **24 hours**. You may have to prepare to **evacuate your home**.

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