

Hurricane Season: Why Alabamians Need to be Prepared

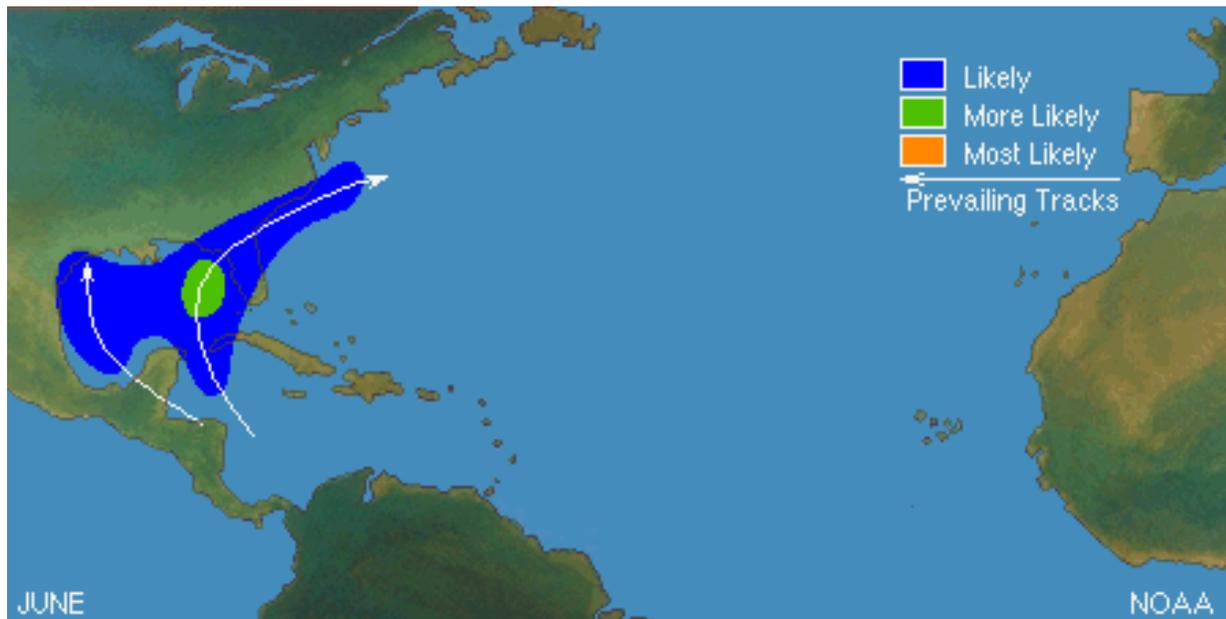
By Meteorologist Jim Stefkovich

Let's spend some time talking about the upcoming hurricane season and why it's important for ALL of us in Alabama to be prepared.

The Atlantic Hurricane season runs from June 1st to November 30th. The official tropical season forecast by the National Hurricane Center (NHC) will come out during the last week of May. It is very important **NOT** to focus on the forecast numbers. The forecast does **NOT** indicate when or where a storm will strike. In 1992, only six named storms occurred, well below the season average. However, one of them was Hurricane Andrew, which was in the top five ever recorded both in strength at landfall (165 mph) and damage related costs (over 26 billion dollars).

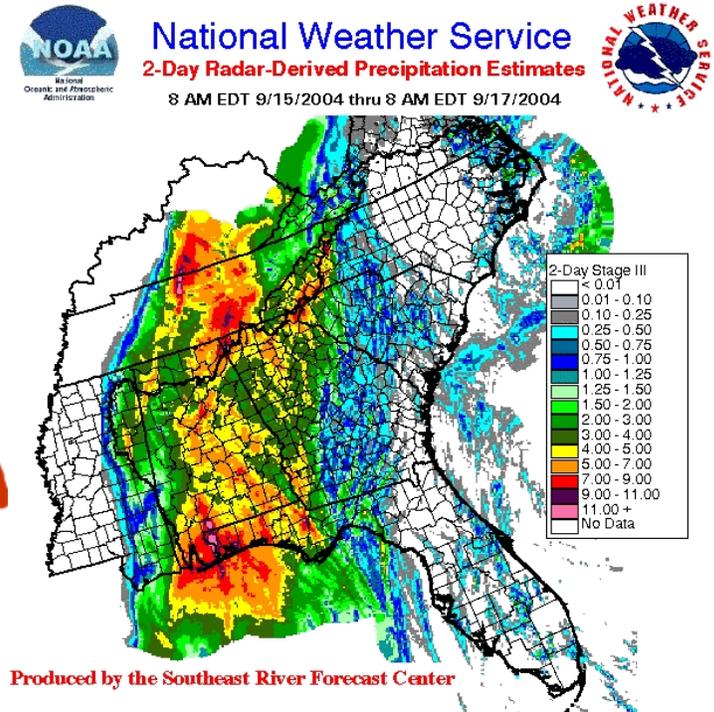
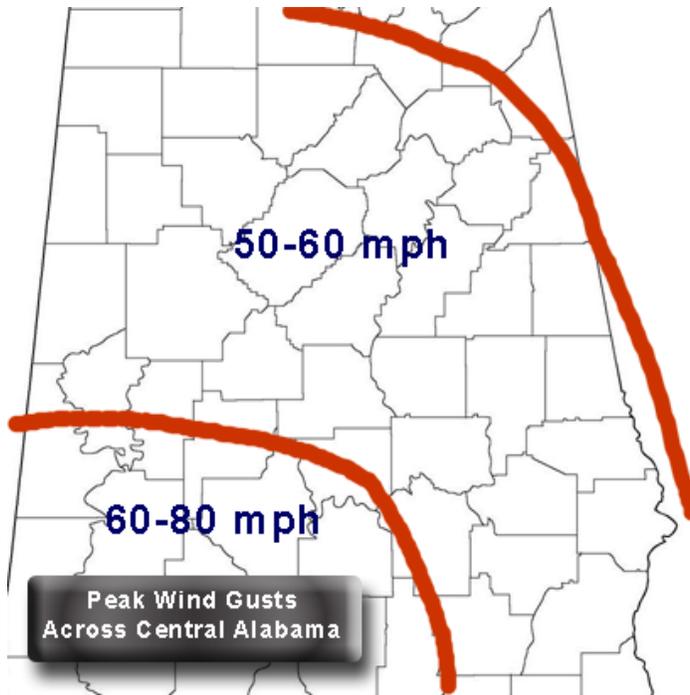
What's the lesson? No one should look at the NHC forecast and decide not to be ready if the forecast is for an "average" or "below average" year. It only takes one storm hitting our state to produce deadly consequences.

NOW is the time to become prepared. As you can see from the graphic below, storms early in the hurricane season tend to form in and near the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, they can form very quickly, giving less time between formation and landfall than storms that form in the Atlantic and then move into the Gulf of Mexico.



Do you need to prepare if you live well inland? **ABSOLUTELY!** Hurricane Ivan had a direct strike on Alabama in 2004. As you can see from the graphic below, 60-80 mph wind gusts occurred as far north as a Demopolis-Montgomery line, with 50-60 mph gusts northward to the TN line. For comparison, a severe thunderstorm warning from the National Weather Service is issued if winds will reach 58 mph or higher.

These types of wind gusts over a large area will down numerous trees on homes, power lines and roads as well as produce other types of damage. In addition, numerous tornadoes can also occur. Hurricane Ivan produced over 100 tornadoes all the way to the state of Virginia!



Finally, between 5-10 inches of rain fell across the northern and central sections of the state, producing significant flash flooding. Almost 30% of hurricane fatalities are due to freshwater flooding.

In summary, now is the time to be prepared for the 2017 hurricane season. Remember, it's not just a coastal problem. All of Alabama can be affected in various ways from tropical systems. Finally, it doesn't take a major storm to produce major impacts.

Next, let's discuss what you need to do to be prepared.