

# Hurricane Preparedness and Action Plan

Latin America and the Caribbean

Every year, many businesses think about hurricane preparedness and the actions they could take in order to protect their property, assets, and people in case a hurricane or tropical storm should strike. However, many of those companies fail to take the preventative and preparatory measures that could reduce the severity of a loss and reduce the burden when it comes to filing an insurance claim.



### Get ready now!

The Atlantic hurricane season officially begins on June 1 and runs through November 30 each year. Although the peak of the season is generally from August to October, it is better to be prepared from the start of the season, since a hurricane or tropical storm can hit at any time during that period (and sometimes even before or after!).

The effects of a hurricane or tropical storm can be felt inland, not just along the coast. Inland flooding can occur, even if you are not physically in a recognized flood zone. Furthermore, hurricanes and tropical storms that make landfall could generate tornadoes, so precautions are also needed to protect structures and personnel from these events.

### What happened last year?

The 2023 Atlantic hurricane season was extremely active – in fact it was the fourth most active Atlantic hurricane season since records began - with 20 named storms (winds of 39 mph or more), of which 7 became hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or more), and 3 of which were classified as major hurricanes (winds of 111 mph or more / Category 3 and above) – see Figure 1.

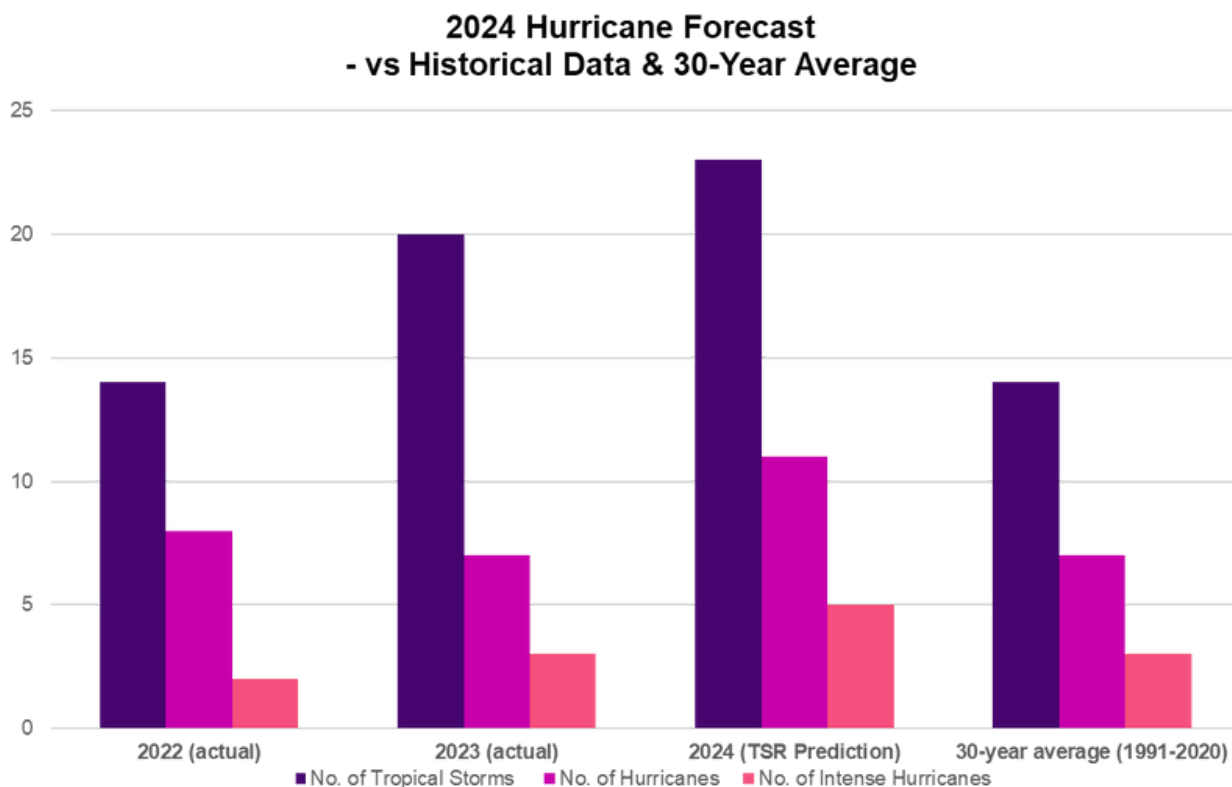
It is worthy of note too that, despite the 2023–24 El Niño event, which typically results in reduced storm activity in the Atlantic, 2023 recorded the most storms for an El Niño year on record.

For context, the NOAA 30-year (1991–2020) average is for 14 named tropical storms, 7 hurricanes, and 3 major hurricanes.

### 2024 season forecast

Information obtained from Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) suggests that the North Atlantic hurricane season activity in 2024 will be “hyper active” and “around 70% above the 1991-2020 30-year norm”. Given that the meteorological research points to the current El Niño phenomenon transitioning to La Niña between April and July 2024, it is expected that storm strength and frequency will increase.

The predictions (revised upwards as of December 2023) for the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season from Tropical Storm Risk are for 23 tropical (named) storms and 11 hurricanes, of which 5 could be major / intense hurricanes (Cat 3 or higher).



Source: NOAA and Tropical Storm Risk.com

Figure 1 shows projections of named tropical storms, hurricanes, and major hurricanes for 2024, compared to the NOAA 30-year average (1991 to 2020) and actual statistics for the 2022 and 2023 Atlantic hurricane seasons.

TSR forecasts will be available online on their website:

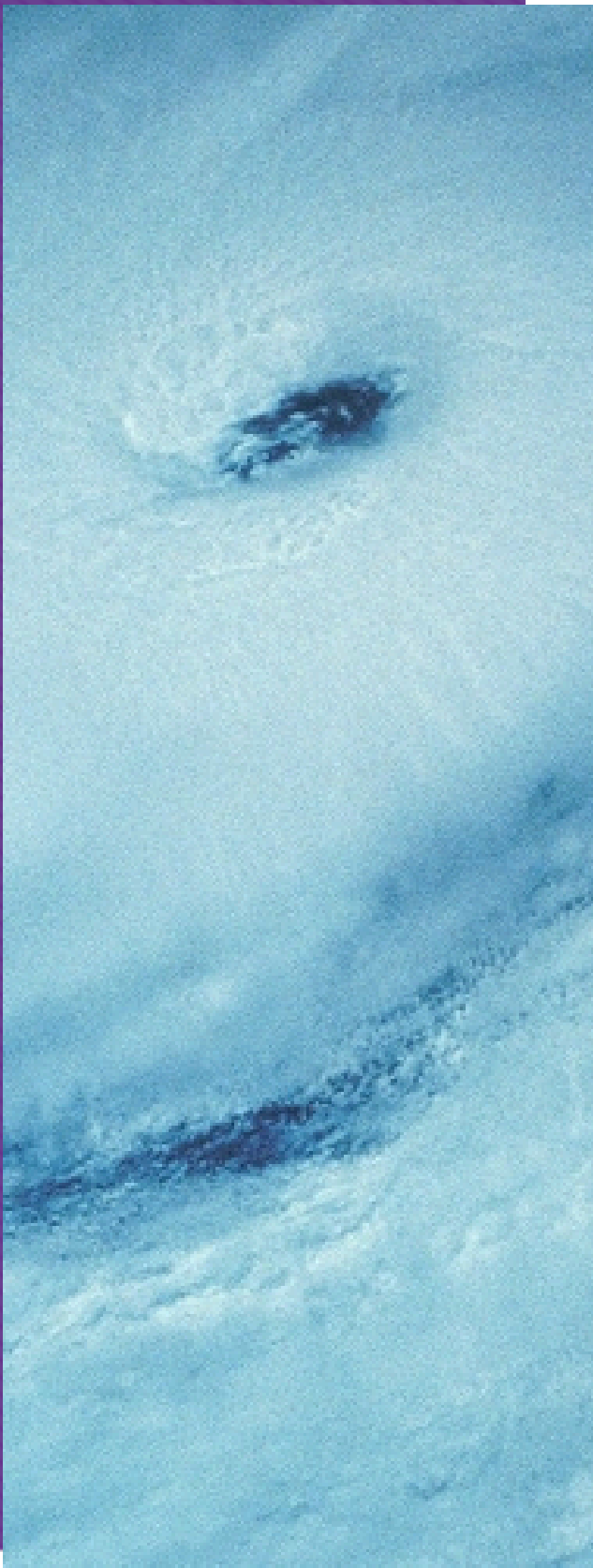
<https://www.tropicalstormrisk.com>

Further research and forecasting for the forthcoming 2024 hurricane season is published by the Colorado State University (CSU). In the coming months CSU's Tropical Weather & Climate Research team will publish updated forecasts scheduled for June 11, July 9, and August 6. These updated forecasts will be available on their website: <https://tropical.colostate.edu/forecasting.html>

### How to get your property or workplace ready?

At the beginning of each hurricane season, go over any existing emergency response plans you have developed. These plans should detail the actions you will take in the event of an emergency and usually include:

- Up-to-date contact information for employees, partners and suppliers.
- A pre-appointed group of employees who will perform specific tasks to prepare in case of any event (emergency response team).
- Communication procedures.
- A list of necessary items and materials.



For properties you own, you would need to assemble your emergency response team to discuss employee availability and procedures to follow in the event of a tropical storm or hurricane warning. For leased facilities, you would need to work with the landlord to ensure you have the right materials and procedures to get ready the best way possible.

To prepare a specific property or structure in case of a hurricane, please consider that the buildings located next to an open area of land, where the wind can blow unobstructed (such as nearby fields, large bodies of water, parking lots and airport runways) are likely to be damaged by wind blowing at full force.

### **Actions to take in advance, just before and after a storm**

The following list covers useful aspects of hurricane preparedness and post-hurricane damage assessment:

#### **Before the storm**

- Review and update emergency response plans and business continuity/disaster recovery plans.
- Review procedures with emergency organizations or emergency response teams to make sure that positions are filled and that all members are properly trained.
- Check the general condition of the building, especially the roof covering, caulking and drainage. Make repairs, if necessary.
- Get emergency supplies, e.g. plywood for windows, mops, brooms, tarpaulins for key equipment, sandbags, etc.
- Identify key equipment, stocks and supplies, and vital records that will need to be relocated, covered, and/or lifted above the ground level to protect from flood.

- Have materials available to secure outdoor or roof mounted equipment, e.g. cranes, signs, trailers, and HVAC equipment. Check the safety of above-ground tanks, e.g. propane and diesel tanks.
- Monitor television, radio, and the Internet to stay on top of weather condition reports and warnings.

- Test all generators, emergency lighting, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) equipment, and sump pumps to make sure they operate properly.
- Make sure you have your insurance broker's contact details and a copy of your insurance policy handy.

### **Impending storm (actions to take just before)**

- Implement your business continuity and disaster recovery plan.
- Close operations in an orderly manner and as per the emergency stop procedures.
- Check all fire protection equipment, e.g. sprinkler control valves and fire pumps.
- Fuel all fire pumps, generators, company vehicles, equipment (e.g. petrol tools such as chainsaws).
- Install hurricane shutters or plywood over windows and doors.
- Cover computers, machinery, inventory, and supplies with tarpaulins.
- If possible, lift any equipment, finished product or other items located on the floor.
- Secure exterior and/or roof-mounted equipment, such as cranes, signs, trailers and HVAC equipment.
- Disconnect, if necessary, any utilities to reduce the likelihood of fire/explosion.
- Carry out the final inspection of the building and make emergency repairs.
- Pay attention to local partners' advice regarding evacuation orders.

### **After the storm**

If safe, make emergency repairs, starting with salvage procedures to try to prevent further damage.

- **Check the damage:** take photographs and record videos of any damage to both the building(s) and its contents. This is fundamental for the purposes of any insurance claim under your policy.
- Avoid loose or hanging power lines and report it to the utility company, police, or fire department.
- Check for gas leaks before utilities are back in service – check for damage in the electrical system and check for damage in water and sewer pipes.
- Start salvage operations ASAP (take pictures and record videos).
- Clean debris from roofs and property, if it is safe to do so (take pictures and record videos).
- Provide feedback on pre- and post-storm actions to identify strengths and weaknesses, and make the necessary changes to prepare for the next emergency.



## How can WTW help you?

Hurricanes are one of the most destructive weather events on the planet. However, with advance warning and planning, you can take the necessary steps to do everything you can to help mitigate the severity of losses caused by a hurricane.

### **Helping you plan and resolve complex claims resulting from largescale disasters**

WTW has teams of highly qualified experts specialized in disciplines providing solutions to critical problems for our clients. Our Complex Claims Advocacy and Forensic Accounting & Complex Claims (FACC) practice includes: certified public accountants, forensic accountants, property claims consultants, certified fraud examiners, project managers and engineering and construction consultants, and with colleagues working in various offices worldwide, including Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Helping you recover from catastrophic events**

The Claims advocacy team will analyze the policy coverage applicable to the claim and will work on behalf of our clients to ensure a resolution that is consistent with the coverage provided. We use all our expertise and contacts with senior claims staff in the insurance and reinsurance markets to achieve the best possible outcomes for our clients' claims.

The FACC team assists in the preparation and quantification of large and complex insurance claims, including property damage, business interruption, additional expenses, contingent business interruption, and third-party claims. We add value for our clients by quantifying loss amounts, collecting necessary supporting documents, preparing and filing claims on the client's behalf.

Our goal is to maximize recovery within the parameters defined by the insurance policy and we always work together with WTW claims advocates to move quickly through the settlement process and thereby always ensuring the participation of insurance experts in the process.

## Contacts

### **Michael La-Band**

Head of Claims - Latin America & Caribbean

M: + (507) 6989 6346

[michael.laband@wtwco.com](mailto:michael.laband@wtwco.com)

### **Carolina Velasquez**

Claims Manager - Central America & Caribbean (CAC)

M: + 1 (305) 373 8471

[carolina.velasquez2@wtwco.com](mailto:carolina.velasquez2@wtwco.com)

### **Ubaldo Bezies**

Claims Manager - Mexico

M: +52 (55) 5418 2356

[ubaldo.bezies@wtwco.com](mailto:ubaldo.bezies@wtwco.com)

### **Maricarmen Marquez**

LatAm Practice Leader - Forensic Accounting and Complex Claims (FACC)

M: + 1 (305) 773 4204

[maricarmen.marquez@wtwco.com](mailto:maricarmen.marquez@wtwco.com)

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