

PRIMARY SOCIAL STUDIES NOTES

HURRICANE WARNING



Betsy, David, Donna, Frances, Jean, Wilma mention these names and older Bahamians will tell you of the hurricanes they remember because of the damage they did in our islands. In one year all the hurricanes are given male names; the next year they are given female names.

Early explorers and the missionaries who came to the Caribbean were told by the people they found here of great storms. They described torrential rainstorms and winds so violent that even the strongest man could not stand upright. Enormous waves destroyed whatever the winds and rain left behind. Every year storms like these kill people, uproot trees and often destroy buildings and property worth billions of dollars. Storms affecting this part of the world are described in different ways according to the speed to the wind.

Type of storm Wind speeds (per hour)

- Tropical disturbance Tropical depression up to 85 km
- Tropical storm 89 – 119 km
- Hurricane 120 km and over

The wind speeds also affect the **storm tide**, which is the height of the tide above its normal level. Hurricanes form far out in the Atlantic, and move quickly westwards across the ocean. The Bahamas islands lie in the path of some storms. The official hurricane season is from June to November, but hurricanes sometimes develop in other months. The people who record and identify the weather pattern are called **meteorologists**. They study the weather every day, and give information to the public by daily weather forecasts issued on radio, on television and in the newspapers.

THESE NOTES ARE TO BE READ ONLY

Our meteorological department, or Met Office, cooperates with the National Hurricane Centre in Coral Gables, Florida, which is in close contact with other Met Offices in the Caribbean. Together the networking Met Offices make sure that we receive early warning of any approaching storms. They use modern computer equipment to provide accurate information. We should always listen carefully to news broadcasts and be prepared to follow instructions promptly when a storm is approaching. Here are some terms you should know:

STORM/HURRICANE ALERT means - An area in The Bahamas might be affected by storm conditions within 60 hours.

HURRICANE WATCH means - Some parts of The Bahamas may experience storm or hurricane conditions with 36 hours.

HURRICANE WARNING means - A hurricane or storm is expected within 24 hours.

At the beginning of the hurricane season, make sure you have **emergency supplies** in your home as shown below.

- When a hurricane alert is announced, you should make the following preparations:
- Check emergency supplies.
- When a hurricane watch is notified for your area:
- Pay close attention to official announcements on the radio and television.
- Fix hurricane shutters to windows on upper floors of multi-floor buildings. Keep the shutters for the ground-floor windows nearby.
- Secure garbage cans, outdoor furniture and other loose items.
- Take down television and radio antennae, and satellite dishes.
- Clean and fill bath tubs and any spare containers with water.
- When a hurricane warning is issued:
- Fix hurricane shutters to all remaining windows.
- Listen to all hurricane warnings on ZNS and other radio stations, and follow any advice given.
- Seek refuge in a special shelter if your home is unsafe.
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During the hurricane: You must stay indoors.

DO NOT GO OUTSIDE UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD IT IS SAFE TO DO SO.

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After the hurricane:

- Seek medical care for anyone injured in the storm.
- Avoid loose dangling wires. Report any you see to The Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC).
- Check the food in the refrigerator. Throw away any that has spoiled.
- Stay away from disaster areas.
- Remove shutters and store them for future use.
- Boil water before drinking. It may be **contaminated** (not clean).

Many organizations do special work before, during and after a hurricane to ensure people's safety.

Some of these are:

- Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC now BPL)
- Bahamas Red Cross
- Bahamas Telecommunications Corporation (BTC/ Batelco)
- Meteorological Department
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Works
- Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF)
- Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF)
- ZNS Radio.

Most of these groups are represented in The Bahamas National Disaster Organization Committee/ **National Emergency Management Agency** (NEMA).

The committee meets before the hurricane season starts, and plans what is to be done if a hurricane should strike The Bahamas. The Bahamas Air Sea Rescue Association (**BASRA**) and CB operators also help the work of this committee.