



PRESS RELEASE

THE 2014 HURRICANE SEASON HAS ENDED

As some experts, especially in the United States, had expected the 2014 Hurricane Season became a season with relatively little activity. Late 2013, the experts at the Colorado State University already had foreseen this lack of activity. The main reason was that it was expected that the sea surface temperature in the equatorial part of the eastern and central Pacific Ocean would be higher than average. This phenomenon, known as *El Niño*, was forecast to cause especially during the second half of 2014 strong upper-level winds, which would limit the development of tropical cyclones over the Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico.

It took exactly one month, before the first tropical cyclone of the season developed, just east of the east coast of the state of Florida. After Tropical Depression *One* formed on July 1, it intensified a day later and was classified as Tropical Storm *Arthur*. Less than 24 hours later, *Arthur* became a hurricane and then moved over the coast of North Carolina, where this system inflicted some damage. *Arthur* then moved further in a north to northeast direction and on July 5 this system weakened just off the coast of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia.

After that, the second tropical depression of the season developed over the Atlantic Ocean on June 21, midway between the west coast of Africa and the eastern Caribbean. After two days this system weakened again. During the evening of July 31 Tropical Storm *Bertha* developed over the western tropical Atlantic Ocean at a distance of several hundred kilometers east of the eastern islands of the Caribbean Area. This system entered the eastern Caribbean during the evening of August 1, just north of Martinique and then passed at a safe distance south of Sint Eustatius and Saba. Therefore, it was not necessary to issue watches or warnings for these islands. Three days later, *Bertha* briefly became a hurricane, but weakened within a day back to a tropical storm.

The next systems, Hurricane *Cristobal* over the western Atlantic Ocean, between August 23 and 29 and Tropical Storm *Dolly* over the Gulf of Mexico between September 1 and 3, were not of significance to the islands in the Caribbean. The same applies to Hurricane *Edouard* over the middle of the Atlantic between September 11 and 19 and Hurricane *Fay*, which was active over the western Atlantic between October 10 and 13.

The next tropical cyclone, Hurricane *Gonzalo* did have a significant impact on the SSS Islands. This system developed on October 12 from a tropical wave, at a distance of several hundred kilometers east of Guadeloupe. The Meteorological Department Curaçao, in close coordination with the National Hurricane Center in Miami, immediately issued a Tropical Storm Warning for St. Eustatius and Saba. Within a day Gonzalo intensified rapidly from a weak low pressure area to a hurricane. This system became a (category 1) hurricane when its center passed very close to St. Maarten. The effect of *Gonzalo* on Sint Eustatius and Saba was much less than on St. Maarten and there was hardly any damage on the first two islands. The strongest wind gust, that was measured at the Roosevelt Airport on St. Eustatius was 83 km/hour. At the Juliana Airport in St. Maarten, the highest measured wind gust was 128 km/hour. Two days after *Gonzalo* moved near the SSS Islands, this system became a major hurricane over the western Atlantic Ocean. It passed near Bermuda during the evening of October 17, but only minor damage was reported on this island.

The last tropical storm of the season was *Hannah* that developed over the far western Caribbean Sea on October 28, just east of Honduras near the border with Nicaragua. Within a few hours after *Hanna* formed, this system made landfall and weakened quickly thereafter.

During the 2014 hurricane season a total of eight tropical storms developed over the Atlantic Basin. Six of these reached hurricane strength and two became major hurricanes (category 3 or more). The accumulated energy of all these systems together was only 63% of the average for the period between 1981 and 2010.

Although the hurricane season has officially ended, the Meteorological Department Curaçao will continue to monitor the weather in our region for the development of disturbances. In case that is necessary, warnings will be issued for both the public and local authorities on the islands for which this service is responsible.

On the picture (next page) part of the damage caused by Hurricane *Gonzalo* in Sint Maarten can be seen.

