

## HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

# What is a Hurricane?

A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone - an organized rotating weather system that develops in the tropics. Hurricanes rotate counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere.

Tropical cyclones are classified as follows:

- Ⓒ **Tropical Depression**—an organized system of persistent clouds and thunderstorms with a closed low-level circulation and maximum sustained winds of 38 mph (33 knots) or less.
- Ⓒ **Tropical Storm**—an organized system of strong thunderstorms with a well defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph (34-63 knots).
- Ⓒ **Hurricane**—an intense tropical weather system with a well defined circulation and sustained winds of 74 mph (64 knots) or higher. In the western North Pacific, hurricanes are called typhoons, and similar storms in the Indian Ocean are called cyclones.

## Hurricane Impacts

### Storm Surge

Storm surge is a large dome of water often 50 to 100 miles wide that sweeps across the coastline near where a hurricane makes landfall. The surge of high water topped by waves is devastating. The stronger the hurricane and the shallower the offshore water, the higher the surge will be. Along the immediate coast, storm surge is the greatest threat to life and property.

### Storm Tide

The storm tide is the combination of the storm surge and the astronomical tide. If the storm surge arrives at high tide, the water height will be even greater. For example, as a hurricane moves ashore, a 15-foot surge added to the 2-foot high tide creates a storm tide of 17 feet. This mound of water, topped by battering waves, moves ashore along an area of the coastline as much as 100 miles wide. The combination of the storm surge, battering waves and high winds is deadly and causes great property damage.

Information about Hurricanes, and up to the minute forecasts about specific storms threatening the coast of the US visit The National Weather Service - <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare>

