

# What do I need to know about hurricanes?

Marty Casado Thu, Dec 7, 2006 [Hurricanes](#) 0 11434

The Caribbean and the east coast of Central America is in the hurricane belt. These occur between the months of July and November. Every 10 to 30 years a country may find itself directly in the path of a hurricane as happened in Belize in 1931, 1961, and 1978. The effects, although damaging to lightly constructed buildings and crops, are a natural calamity (as sometimes experienced on the eastern seaboard of the U.S.A.) Earthquakes, tornadoes and other similar natural phenomena are unknown in Belize. Click here for more on hurricanes in Belize.

Generally, international weather authorities estimate that there will be 12 tropical depressions forming in the Gulf to the east and in the Pacific, west of Central America, each year. Four are predicted to be force four or higher due to the residual effects of the 1998 El Nino Pacific Ocean current; which accounts for the one additional tropical depression predicted over last year's eleven. Of course, whether hurricanes will form from tropical depressions or where the hurricanes will track is always at random and the one in 25 year risk ratio of hitting Belize is still in effect, too. Weather watches are in effect at all times in the Cayes - ample warning of impending danger is readily at hand with predictions as long as a week in advance. Plan to leave the Cayes not later than four days before danger is predicted. Not later than three days if on the mainland coast.

San Pedro Town's Board now has an enforced hurricane watch and evacuation plan in place, to ensure that everyone on the island, that wants to leave, can do so before a hurricane has a chance to come on shore. Early evacuation of the Cayes is crucial because, for example, there are over 3,000 San Pedranos and upwards of the same number of visitors or undocumented illegals on the island at peak intervals. During Mitch, many San Pedranos chose not to leave at all. On other Cayes and on the mainland, along the shore, most also opted to stay put.

A hurricane hasn't hit Belize in August in well over 100 years, but the prime storm season arrives in Belize and the Western Caribbean region in September and October. Of the 20 hurricanes that have made landfall in Belize in the past 117 years, 17 of 40% have arrived in September and October. Here are some statistics on hurricanes in Belize.

Number of storms making landfall in Belize since 1899

In the past 117 years since weather records in Belize were formally maintained, Belize has seen the following storm make landfall:

20 hurricanes - average of about 1 hurricane every 6 years

11 tropical storms - average of 1 tropical storm every 10.6 years

11 total hurricanes and tropical storms - average of 1 hurricane or tropical storm every 10.6 years

Of the 20 hurricanes to hit Belize:

6 or 40% were in September (1 every 17.5 September)

6 or 40% were in October (1 every 10.25 October)

2 of 195 seen in July

1 of 256 seen in November

0 of 95 seen in June and August

**Of the 71 total hurricanes and tropical storms:**

7 of 145 seen in June

4 of 95 seen in July

4 of 95 seen in August

19 of 376 seen in September

14 of 276 seen in October

7 of 45 seen in November

**Of the 4 hurricanes in a given year:**

Of the 4 hurricanes in Belize in a given year: 17%

Of the 4 hurricanes in Florida in a given year: 45%

Of the 4 hurricanes on the U.S. Gulf Coast in a given year: 47%

Of the 4 hurricanes on the U.S. East Coast in a given year: 47%

Note, however, that the length of the coast in Belize (less than 200 miles) is much smaller than the length of the coasts of Florida, the Gulf Coast and the East Coast - for example the East Coast of the U.S. is 1,800 miles in length, so it offers a much greater area for storms to strike.

**Most powerful storms to hit Belize:**

Unnamed hurricane, September 9, 1915, Belize City and Northern Cayes, 110 mph, estimated 2,500-3,000 deaths

Hurricane Juan, September 26, 1955, Northern Belize, 107 mph, 16 deaths in Belize

Hurricane Helen, October 31, 1961, Belize City, 140 mph, estimated 225-510 deaths in Belize

Hurricane Carmen, September 2, 1974, distant Northern Belize, 120 mph

Hurricane Mitch, October 27, 1998, skirted Belize to the north, 115 mph

Hurricane Keith, October 1, 2000, Ansonia Caye 120 mph, 2 deaths in Belize

Hurricane Ivo, October 9, 2001, Placencia & San Felipe Belize, 147 mph, 21 deaths in Belize

Source: Belize National Meteorological Service, NOAA, and other weather reports.

(Updated 10, 2006)

For more information on area hurricanes, click here:

<https://ambergriscaye.com/hurricane/>

Online URL:

<https://ambergriscaye.com/help/article/what-do-i-need-to-know-about-hurricanes-22.html>