



NOAA *Background*

The Retirement of Hurricane Names

Hurricanes that have a severe impact on lives or the economy are remembered generations after the devastation they caused, and some go into weather history. The National Hurricane Center near Miami, Florida, monitors tropical disturbances in the Atlantic and eastern Pacific Oceans which could become a hurricane.

Whenever a hurricane has had a major impact, any country affected by the storm can request that the name of the hurricane be "retired" by agreement of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). Retiring a name actually means that it cannot be reused for at least 10 years, to facilitate historic references, legal actions, insurance claim activities, etc. and avoid public confusion with another storm of the same name. If that happens, a like gender name is selected in English, Spanish or French for Atlantic Storms.

A WORD ABOUT NOAA. . .

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts research and gathers data about the global oceans, atmosphere, space, and sun, and applies this knowledge to science and service that touch the lives of all Americans.

NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas and skies, guides our use and protection of ocean and coastal resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment which sustains us all.

A Commerce Department agency, NOAA provides these services through five major organizations: the National Weather Service, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service, and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research; and numerous special program units. In addition, NOAA research and operational activities are supported by the Nation's seventh uniformed service, the NOAA Corps, a commissioned officer corps of men and women who operate NOAA ships and aircraft, and serve in scientific and administrative posts.

For further information: NOAA Office of Public Affairs, 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Room 6013, Washington, D.C. 20230. Phone: (202) 482-6090.

There is an exception to the retirement rule, however. Before 1979, when the first permanent six-year storm name list began, some storm names were simply not used anymore. For example, in 1966, "Fern" was substituted for "Frieda," and no reason was cited.

Below is a list of Atlantic Ocean retired names, the years the hurricanes occurred, and the areas they affected. There are, however, a great number of destructive storms not included on this list because they occurred before the hurricane naming convention was established in 1950.

Atlantic Storms Retired Into Hurricane History

Agnes (1972§*): Florida, Northeast U.S.

Alicia (1983*): North Texas

Allen (1980*): Antilles, Mexico, South Texas

Andrew (1992*): Bahamas, South Florida, Louisiana

Anita (1977): Mexico

Audrey (1957§*): Louisiana, North Texas

Betsy (1965§*): Bahamas, Southeast Florida, Southeast Louisiana

Beulah (1967*): Antilles, Mexico, South Texas

Bob (1991*): North Carolina & Northeast U.S.

Camille (1969§*): Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama

Carla (1961§*): Texas

Carmen (1974): Mexico, Central Louisiana

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Carol (1954§*): Northeast U.S.
Cesar (1996): Honduras
Celia (1970*): South Texas
Cleo (1964*): Lesser Antilles, Haiti, Cuba, Southeast Florida
Connie (1955§): North Carolina
David (1979): Lesser Antilles, Hispanola, Florida and Eastern U.S.
Diana (1990): Mexico
Diane (1955§*): Mid-Atlantic U.S. & Northeast U.S.
Donna (1960§*): Bahamas, Florida and Eastern U.S.
Dora (1964*): Northeast Florida
Edna (1968)
Elena (1985*): Mississippi, Alabama, Western Florida
Eloise (1975*): Antilles, Northwest Florida, Alabama
Fifi (1974): Yucatan Peninsula, Louisiana
Flora (1963): Haiti, Cuba
Floyd (1999): North Carolina, eastern seaboard
Fran (1996): North Carolina
Frederic (1979*): Alabama and Mississippi
Gilbert (1988): Lesser Antilles, Jamaica, Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico
Gloria (1985*): North Carolina, Northeast U.S.
Hattie (1961): Belize, Guatemala
Hazel (1954§*): Antilles, North and South Carolina
Hilda (1964§*): Louisiana

Hortense (1996)
Hugo (1989*): Antilles, South Carolina
Inez (1966): Lesser Antilles, Hispanola, Cuba, Florida Keys, Mexico
Ione (1955*): North Carolina
Janet (1955): Lesser Antilles, Belize, Mexico
Joan (1988): Curacao, Venezuela, Colombia, Nicaragua (Crossed into the Pacific and became Miriam)
Klaus (1990): Martinique
Lenny (1999): Antilles
Luis (1995)
Marilyn (1995): Bermuda
Mitch (1998): Central America, Nicaragua, Honduras
Opal (1995): Florida Panhandle
Roxanne (1995): Yucatan Peninsula

KEY

§Within the list of top 37 deadliest U.S. hurricanes

* Within the list of the top 31 costliest U.S. hurricanes (in 1990 dollars)

(Measurements only available through 1992 for storms that affected the U.S.)

NOTES:

“Carol” was used again to denote a hurricane in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean in 1965. However, because the name does not appear after that time, it is assumed that the name was retired retrospectively for the damages caused by the 1954 storm of the same name.

The (2001) names “Allison”, “Iris”, and “Michelle” will be proposed for retirement when the World Meteorological Organization’s Regional Association-IV meets in the Spring, 2002. ☺

For more information contact National Hurricane Center public affairs at (305) 229-4404 or visit the NHC Web site at <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov>.

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