

TROPICAL WEATHER / HURRICANE PLAN

Title	Tropical Weather / Hurricane Plan
Effective Date	
Responsible Committee	Safety Team
Responsible Committee Chair	TBD / Michelle Pennington
Board of Trustees Chair	TBD / Rev. Dr. Woods Lisenby
Board of Trustees Decision	Approve / Not Approve

PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to carry out procedures to save lives and protect the property of SFUMC in the event of a tropical storm or hurricane.

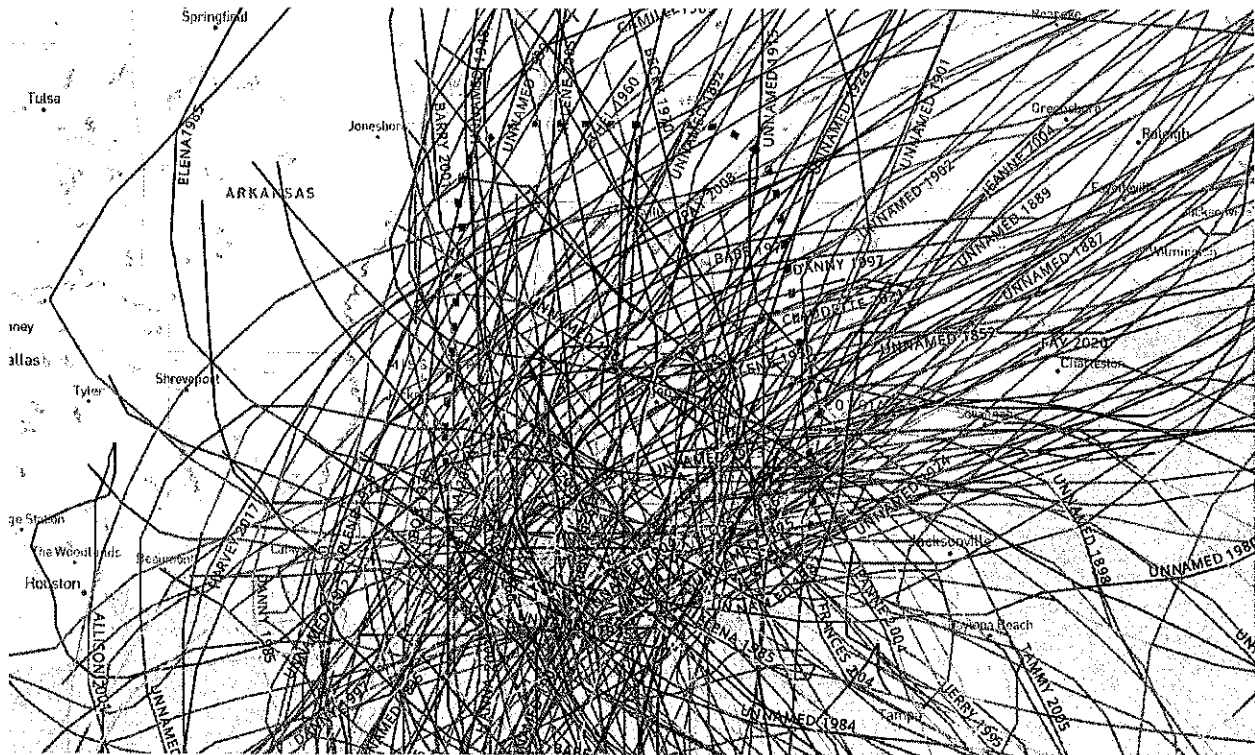
OBJECTIVES

- A. To review or familiarize church leadership with tropical weather basics.
- B. To specify actions to be taken to minimize the impacts of these storms, including defining responsibilities for carrying out these actions.
- C. To provide guidance on what to do after the storm, including communicating with church leadership and the congregation.

BALDWIN COUNTY'S HURRICANE SEASON

Tropical storms and hurricanes are a fact of life for coastal Alabama. In fact, NOAA's Historical Hurricane Tracks for Alabama lists 197 storms from the Unnamed Storm of 1851 through Hurricane Nicole in 2022.

NOAA's Historical Hurricane Tracks for Alabama, 1851-2022



coast.noaa.gov/hurricanes

We are not guaranteed a hurricane every year. Nor are we guaranteed to *not* have a hurricane every year. Hurricane season is June 1 – November 30, and season forecasts are generally released by Colorado State University in April. As of the time of this writing, 2024 is expected to be a busy year:

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Forecast for 2024 Hurricane Activity

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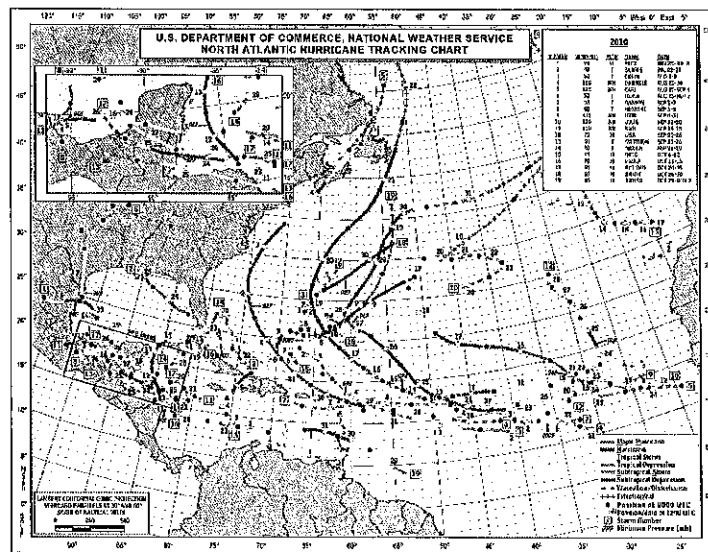
Forecast Parameters	CSU Forecast for 2024*	Average for 1991-2020
Named Storms	23	14.4
Named Storm Days	115	69.4
Hurricanes	11	7.2
Hurricane Days	45	27.0
Major Hurricanes	5	3.2
Major Hurricane Days	13	7.4
Accumulated Cyclone Energy (ACE)+	210	123
ACE West of 60 degrees longitude	125	73

*CSU released its first seasonal forecast for 2024 on Thursday, April 4.

+A measure of a named storm's potential for wind and storm surge destruction defined as the sum of the square of a named storm's maximum wind speed (in 10^4 knots²) for each 6-hour period of its existence.

<https://tropical.colostate.edu/forecasting.html>

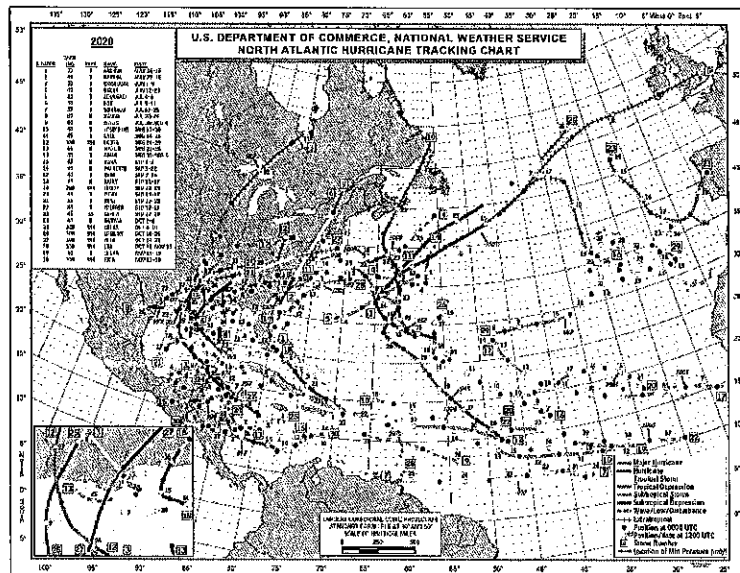
But busy can come in different forms. The season might be busy as in 2010 busy, where storms were generally away from the Gulf Coast:



<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tracks/tracks-at-2010.png>

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Or we could have been as busy as in 2020, where the Gulf Coast got slammed:



<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tracks/tracks-at-2020.png>

In any case, we need to be prepared to act in such a way to minimize the impacts of these storms as best as possible.

TROPICAL WEATHER TERMINOLOGY

The following are tropical weather terms as defined by the National Hurricane Center:

Tropical Cyclone: A rotating, organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has a closed low-level circulation. Rotates counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere.

Tropical Depression: A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 38 mph (33 knots) or less.

Tropical Storm: A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph (34 to 63 knots).

Hurricane: A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 74 mph (64 knots) or higher.

Major Hurricane: A tropical cyclone with maximum sustained winds of 111 mph (96 knots) or higher, corresponding to a Category 3, 4, or 5 on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale.

Storm Surge: An abnormal rise of water generated by a storm's winds. Can reach heights well over 20 feet and can span hundreds of miles of coastline.

Storm Tide: The water level rise during a storm due to the combination of storm surge and the astronomical tide.

Tropical Storm Watch: Tropical Storm conditions are POSSIBLE in the specified area of the Watch, usually within 48 hours. Issued by National Weather Service Mobile.

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Tropical Storm Warning: Tropical Storm conditions are EXPECTED in the specified area of the Warning, usually within 36 hours. Issued by National Weather Service Mobile.

Hurricane Watch: Hurricane conditions are POSSIBLE within the specified area of the Watch. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the Watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the onset of tropical storm force winds. Prepare to take immediate action to protect your family and property in case a Hurricane Warning is issued. Issued by National Weather Service Mobile.

Hurricane Warning: Hurricane conditions are EXPECTED somewhere within the specified area of the Warning. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the Warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the onset of tropical storm force winds. Can remain in effect when dangerously high water and waves continue, even though winds may be less than hurricane force. Complete all storm preparations and evacuate if directed by local officials. Issued by National Weather Service Mobile.

Extreme Wind Warning: Extreme sustained surface winds of 115 mph (110 knots) or greater from a MAJOR HURRICANE (Category 3, 4 or 5) are EXPECTED within the hour. Usually associated with the eyewall of a hurricane. Take shelter in an interior portion of your initial hurricane shelter. Issued by National Weather Service Mobile.

MAJOR HAZARDS ASSOCIATED WITH HURRICANES

The following are major hazards associated with hurricanes as indicated by the National Hurricane Center:

- storm surge and storm tide
- heavy rainfall and inland flooding
- high winds
- rip currents
- tornadoes

HURRICANE CLASSIFICATIONS: THE SAFFIR-SIMPSON HURRICANE WIND SCALE

The following is a summary of the Saffir-Simpson Scale as depicted on the National Hurricane Center website. For a more complete description of possible damages per category as well as a brief animation of damage as the scale increases, please visit <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php>.

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Hurricane Category	Wind Speed	Summary of Damages
1	74-95 mph (64-82 kt)	Very dangerous winds will produce some damage.
2	96-110 mph (83-95 kt)	Extremely dangerous winds will cause extensive damage.
3	111-129 mph (96-112 kt)	Devastating damage will occur.
4	130-156 mph (113-136 kt)	Catastrophic damage will occur.
5	157+ mph (137+ kt)	Catastrophic damage will occur.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOR THE CAMPUSES OF SFUMC

Location	Geographical Information	Altitude
Main Campus	30.66899, -87.90719	122.9 ft
West Campus	30.66628, -87.909733	121.2 ft

CHURCH OPERATIONAL STATUS

Staff and congregants are encouraged to check the following to receive the latest messages on church operational status:

- Church Office: 251-626-1334
- www.spanishfortumc.org
- Facebook: Spanish Fort UMC
- X (formerly known as Twitter): @spanishfortumc

Note: SFUMC facilities will not be used as community shelters during tropical storm or hurricane conditions.

PERSONAL INFORMATION FOR HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

A number of resources are available to help you prepare for hurricanes and other tropical weather. Some general steps you can take to prepare include writing or reviewing your family emergency plan, putting an emergency kit together for your family and for your pets, reviewing your insurance policies, and securing your home.

For more details regarding the steps listed above, please visit the following resources:

- <https://baldwincountyal.gov/departments/emergency-management-agency/prepare-plan>
 - This site includes links to multiple resources for general preparedness; family, home, and special needs; pets and livestock; and more.

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- <https://www.weather.gov/safety/hurricane-plan>
- <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>
- <https://www.ready.gov/pets>
- <https://www.rivierautilities.com/safety/hurricane-safety> (includes generator safety)
- <https://www.baldwinemc.com/outages-safety/storm-center/> (includes storm safety, graphics, and videos)

EMERGENCY KIT

The old saying used to be, “The first 72 are on you,” meaning, make sure you and your family can take care of yourselves the first 72 hours after a storm.

Events of the last couple of years have caused some to rethink that. Now, the advice commonly given is to make sure you and your family can take care of yourselves the first five (5) to seven (7) days after a storm.

The links on the previous page provide checklists for various kits. Whatever you decide to put in your kit, keep it someplace where you can grab it and go quickly.

EVACUATION ROUTES

If you decide to evacuate, it is your responsibility to choose the route that will work best for you. The following website provides maps and other information such as Baldwin County evacuation routes, major roads in the county, and an explanation of the Alabama Department of Transportation’s (ALDOT) Contraflow Plan (i.e., reversing southbound traffic north to speed traffic flow) to help you to make your evacuation route decision.

<https://baldwincountyal.gov/departments/emergency-management-agency/ema-evacuation>

Note: Only the governor can issue a mandatory evacuation. Likewise, although a number of agencies can offer their input in the decision-making process regarding enacting the Contraflow Plan, only the governor can issue the order to do so.

If you need transportation assistance to a shelter or for evacuating, the Baldwin Regional Area Transportation System (BRATS) or MedStar Emergency Medical Services (depending on your situation) may be able to help. The following website provides more information regarding these services.

<https://baldwincountyal.gov/departments/emergency-management-agency/shelters/transportation-to-shelters>

SFUMC PRE-STORM ACTION ITEMS

December 1-May 31

- Not in hurricane season.
- Update this Tropical Weather / Hurricane Plan.
- Develop or update the Continuity Plan.
- Train all staff on the Tropical Weather / Hurricane Plan.

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- Train all staff on the Continuity Plan.
- Review insurance policy and make any necessary updates.

June 1-November 30

- Hurricane season.
- Prepare personal / family hurricane procedures and readiness kit.
- Update congregant, staff, and pastoral staff contact information.
- Develop or update a Communications Plan to use for staying in touch with congregants, staff, and pastoral staff following the storm.

Tropical Storm / Hurricane Enters the Gulf of Mexico

- Maintain situational awareness. Check the forecast regularly from a local, professionally legitimate source such as local news meteorologists or the National Weather Service. A good website to reference is the National Hurricane Center website at <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>.
- Review and prepare to implement this plan, the Continuity Plan, and personal / family plans.

If South Alabama and / or Northwest Florida Are in the Cone of Uncertainty

- Maintain situational awareness following the steps above.
- Take preliminary steps to secure equipment and records against possible storm damage.
- Secure outdoor items, relocating those that can be relocated indoors to a proper storage location.
- Provide an update of church posturing to the congregation, including encouragement for the congregation's preparations as well.

If a Tropical Storm or Hurricane Watch Is Issued for Our Area

- Maintain situational awareness following the steps above.
- Implement plan procedures, including personal / family plan procedures.
- Store all records.
- Secure all equipment.
- Provide another update of church posturing to the congregation, including encouragement for the congregation's preparations, and how to check on the church's operational status.

If a Tropical Storm or Hurricane Warning Is Issued for Our Area

- The threat is imminent. Provide another update of church posturing to the congregation, including a church closure announcement, continued encouragement for the congregation's preparations, and how to check on the church's operational status.
- Maintain situational awareness following the steps above.

SFUMC POST-STORM ACTION ITEMS

- Go out only when conditions allow and local authorities say it is safe to do so. And when you go out, watch for downed power lines, debris, and other such storm items.
- Walk carefully around the outside of the facilities. Check for structural damage, loose or downed power lines, gas leaks (applies to Fellowship Hall), downed trees, damage to church buses, parking lot damage, and so on.

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- Take pictures of the damage and thoroughly document where it is (building, room number, Main Campus, West Campus, etc.).
- **If you smell gas, or a particular building / space has been damaged by fire, do not enter that building / space.**
- **Do not use candles. Use battery-powered flashlights. If you do enter a building that is safe to enter, turn the flashlight on prior to entering. If you wait until you are inside to turn the flashlight on, the battery could produce a spark that could potentially ignite any leaking gas that is present.**
- If needed, take steps necessary to restore utility and other essential services.
- Provide an update of church posturing to the congregation, including how to check on the church's operational status and other information. Provide updates regularly.
- Activate the Communications Plan and check on congregants, staff, and pastoral staff.
- Request Spanish Fort Police include the church facilities in their patrol to ward off potential looting.
- If needed, contact the insurance company.
- To continue with the rebuilding / restoration process, the Better Business Bureau recommends the following:
 - Research potential businesses.
 - Get all bids in writing.
 - Beware of high-pressure sales.
 - Make sure businesses are licensed.
 - Do not sign over insurance checks to contractors.
- Determine the ability of the church to conduct community ministry and normal operations.
- Upon completing the damage assessment and cleanup, prepare to resume operations as appropriate.
- Resume operations as determined above.

A Note About the Preschool

- If the weather event should happen during the school year, per the SFUM Preschool Parent Handbook, SFUMP will follow Baldwin County Public School closure guidelines.
- Prior to the storm, all picnic tables should be folded and stored in the Preschool hallway. Toys that can be brought inside can be stored in the hallway as well.
- Communication with parents occurs via ClassDojo and email. Following the storm, a Preschool status update should be sent out to parents with a request to contact the Preschool if families have experienced significant damage.

The procedures detailed above are designed to save lives and protect the property of SFUMC in the event of a tropical storm or hurricane. Report concerns to Safety Team members and / or church staff immediately.

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