

HISTORY OF HURRICANE NAMES



For several hundred years many hurricanes in the West Indies were named after the particular Saint's Day on which the hurricane occurred. Ivan R. Tannehill describes in his book *Hurricanes* the major tropical storms of recorded history and mentioned many hurricanes named after saints. For example, there was hurricane **Santa Ana**, which struck **Puerto Rico** with exceptional violence on July 26, 1825, and San Felipe (the first) and San Felipe (the second), which hit Puerto Rico on September 13 in both **1876** and **1928**.

Tannehill also tells of Clement Wragge, an Australian meteorologist who began giving woman's names to tropical storms before the end of the 19th century.

An early example of the use of woman's name for a storm was in the novel *Storm* by **George R. Stewart**, published by Random House in **1941**, and since filmed

by **Walt Disney**. During **World War II** this practice became widespread in weather map discussions among forecasters, especially Air Force and Navy meteorologists who plotted the movements of storms over the wide expanses of the **Pacific Ocean**.

In 1953, the **United States** abandoned as confusing a two-year old plan to name storms by phonetic alphabet (**Able, Baker, Charlie**) when a new, international phonetic alphabet was introduced. That year, this nation's weather services began using female names for storms.

The practice of naming hurricanes solely after women came to an end in **1978** when men's and women's names were included in the **Eastern North Pacific** storm lists. In **1979**, male and female names were included in the lists for **Atlantic** and **Gulf of Mexico**.

PRESENT PROCEDURE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC, CARRIBBEAN AND GULF OF MEXICO

The **National Hurricane Center** near **Miami, Florida**, keeps a constant watch on oceanic storm-breeding areas

for tropical disturbances, which may herald the formation of a hurricane. If a disturbance intensifies into a tropical storm – with rotary circulation and wind speed about 39 miles per hour – the center will give the storm a name. A separate set is used for each year beginning with the first name of the set. After the sets have all been used, they will be used again. The 1990 set for example will be used again to name storms in 1996. The letters **Q, U, X, Y** and **Z** are not included because of the scarcity of names beginning with those letters.

The name list have an international flavour because hurricanes affect other nations and are tracked by the public and weather services of countries other than the **United States**. Names for those lists are selected from library sources and agreed upon by nations involved during international meetings of the **World Meteorological Organization**.

WHY HURRICANES ARE NAMED

Experience shows that the use of short, distinctive given names in written as



well as in spoken communications in quicker, and less subjected to error than the older more cumbersome latitude – longitude identification method. These advantages are especially important in exchanging detailed storm information between hundred of widely scattered stations, airports, coastal bases, and ships at sea.

The use of easily remembered names greatly reduces confusion when two or more tropical storms occur at the same time. For example, one hurricane can be moving slowly westward in the gulf of Mexico, while at exactly the same time another hurricane can be moving rapidly northward along the Atlantic coast.

In the past, confusion and false rumours have arisen when storm advisories broadcast from one radio station were mistaken for warnings concerning an entirely different storm located hundreds of miles away.

**Weather Information
is available all day
and all night at**

454-3452