

Earth Science Hurricanes

A tropical cyclone is a very strong **tropical**¹ storm that starts in the ocean waters near the **equator**.² The storm moves its way toward where the air is cooler, which is usually away from the equator. The wind gets stronger, and the rain gets heavier. The “**eye of the storm**” is located in the center of the storm. It is the storm’s calmest part. There is little to no rain in the eye, and it can spread across 20 miles. The winds around the eye can blow as much as 200 miles per hour. They have the ability to uproot trees. They can also blow glass out of windows.

Depending on the location of a tropical cyclone, it is known as a hurricane, a typhoon, or a cyclone. Hurricanes are tropical cyclones that develop over the eastern Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean. The Atlantic hurricane season starts on June 1 and ends on November 30. During this time in the United States, tropical storms or hurricanes may make landfall in the Southeast.

When a storm becomes as big as a tropical storm, it receives a name. The names of storms have already been decided and listed. They follow an alphabetical order and alternate between male and female names. For example, the first named storm in an Atlantic hurricane season may be Ana, then Bill, Claudette, Danny, Erika, etc.

¹ **tropical** – coming from the warm parts of the earth near the equator

² **equator** – the imaginary line that runs horizontally around the center of the earth

Hurricanes can last up to 14 days long. They travel for thousands of miles across the ocean. Sometimes hurricanes reach land. When a hurricane makes landfall, conditions become very dangerous for people in the hurricane's path. For example, hurricanes can cause floods and **mudslides**.³ Houses close to the shore can be wiped out, and the people who live there can be in grave danger.

³ **mudslide** – a natural event when wet, soft earth flows down a hill, somewhat like an avalanche