

Caribbean should prepare for landslides and flooding

Date: February 15, 2016

News Outlet: Nation News (Barbados)

URL: <http://www.nationnews.com/nationnews/news/77908/caribbean-prepare-landslides-flooding>

BRIDGETOWN – The drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 to early 2015 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season; but in their place the Caribbean should prepare for the risks of landslides and flash floods.

This is the warning from Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) in its latest seasonal climate forecast.

The forecast comes after many months of warmer and drier than average conditions in the Caribbean fuelled by El Niño, a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which has implications for weather patterns around the world, including drought in many regions.

After the forecasted weakening of El Niño, its counterpart La Niña (a cooling of the Pacific) may take over and affect the region in the latter part of 2016. If the change takes place, it is likely to result in higher than normal rainfall and stronger storm systems.

While near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flash floods, once rains return excessive amounts.

“Limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils,” says Adrian Trotman, Agrometeorologist and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH.

“As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding.”

Trotman says that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts, from three to six months in advance.

“We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts.”

On February 17 at 4 p.m., CIMH will host a press conference at the Savannah Hotel in Bridgetown, Barbados to discuss what the forecast means for the Caribbean, and in particular how its early climate warning information products can help the region’s six climate-sensitive sectors (agriculture, disaster management, energy, health, tourism and water) prepare for and adapt to what is expected to be a more intense wet/hurricane season.

This press conference will be facilitated by the well-known journalist and BBC World presenter David Eades, who is visiting the region as part of an international initiative sponsored by the World Meteorological Organisation to highlight how climate forecasting services are being used to boost business and economic opportunities in all Small Island Developing States. (PR)

Caribbean countries urged to brace for floods

Date: February 16, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Observer (Jamaica)

URL: <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/C-bean-countries-urged-to-brace-for-floods>

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (CMC) – The Barbados-based Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) is warning regional countries that they should brace themselves for floods as the drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season.

CIMH said this latest forecast comes after many months of “warmer and drier than average conditions in the Caribbean fuelled by El Niño, a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which has implications for weather patterns around the world, including drought in many regions”.

CIMH said that after the forecasted weakening of El Niño, its counterpart La Niña “a cooling of the Pacific may take over and affect the region in the latter part of 2016.

“If the change in circumstance takes place, it is likely to result in higher than normal rainfall and stronger storm systems,” the CIMH said in its latest forecast, which it said will be further discussed at a news conference here on Wednesday.

It said that while near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, “CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flash floods, once rains return excessive amounts.

Agrometeorologist and CIMH Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology, Adrian Trotman, said “limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils.

“As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding,” Trotman said, adding that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can now make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts up to three to six months in advance.

“We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts.”

CIMH said it will host the news conference to “discuss what the forecast means for the Caribbean, and in particular how its early climate warning information products can help the region’s six climate-sensitive sectors -- agriculture, disaster management, energy, health, tourism and water – prepare for and adapt to what is expected to be a more intense wet / hurricane season”.

Met officials: Flooding may follow drought in 2016

Date: February 16, 2016

News Outlet: Antigua Observer (Antigua)

URL: <http://antiguaobserver.com/met-officials-flooding-may-follow-drought-in-2016/>

Even as Met officials forecast that the long-running drought will end this year, they're warning that the long-awaited rain could spell trouble for Antigua and Barbuda.

Dr Cedric Van Meerbeeck, a climatologist at the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology has said that the earth is so parched that showers could cause flooding.

"We are quite sure that the type of drought that you've seen in Antigua over the past two years will come to an end sometime this year. Now, what we're not sure of is how much rain will fall and how fast will it fall.

"What we want ideally is that after the drought, there would be a gradual resumption of the rain. We don't want too much rain at one time," he said.

Dr Van Meerbeeck said that the ideal situation would be more rainfall after the initial showers moisten the surface allowing for better absorption. That's the time he said that would be ideal for replenishing water reservoirs.

"What we know is that the situation that is ongoing now, the drought now, is largely the effect of an El Niño, which is the warming of the Equatorial Pacific Ocean, which in our region translates to less rain for many of our seasons," he explained, adding that the condition is expected to change within months.

The climatologist said near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean with the wet season beginning in May, about a month earlier than usual.

Caribbean warned about rain-related disasters after drought ends mid-year

Date: February 16, 2016

News Outlet: Demerara Waves (Guyana)

URL: <http://demerarawaves.com/2016/02/16/caribbean-warned-about-rain-related-disasters-after-drought-ends-mid-year/>

The drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 / early 2015 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season. But in their place we should prepare for the risks of landslides and flashfloods, as the rains return.

Officially, the Caribbean's hurricane season starts on 1st June.

This is the key warning from regional climate services provider the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) in its latest seasonal climate forecast. The forecast comes after many months of warmer and drier than average conditions in the Caribbean fueled by El Niño, a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which has implications for weather patterns around the world, including drought in many regions.

After the forecast weakening of El Niño, its counterpart La Niña (a cooling of the Pacific) may take over and affect the region in the latter part of 2016. If the change in circumstance takes place, it is likely to result in higher than normal rainfall and stronger storm systems.

While near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flashfloods, once rains return excessive amounts.

"Limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils," explains Adrian Trotman, Agrometeorologist and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH. "As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding."

Mr. Trotman says that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can now make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts up to three to six months in advance.

"We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts," he says.

On February 17th at 4.00pm, CIMH will host a press conference at the Savannah Hotel in Bridgetown, Barbados to discuss what the forecast means for the Caribbean, and in particular how its early climate warning information products can help the region's six climate-sensitive sectors (agriculture, disaster management, energy, health, tourism and water) prepare for and adapt to what is expected to be a more intense wet / hurricane season.

This press conference will be facilitated by the well-known journalist and BBC World presenter, Mr. David Eades, who is visiting the region as part of an international initiative sponsored by the World Meteorological Organization to highlight how climate forecasting services are being used to boost business and economic opportunities in all Small Island Developing States.

As a regional climate services provider, the Caribbean Regional Climate Centre (RCC) at CIMH offers several user-defined climate products and services to inform risk-based decision making in climate-sensitive sectors at the national and regional levels. The RCC also hosts the Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum (CariCOF), a World Meteorological Organization-sanctioned network of regional meteorologists and users of climate information who meet bi-annually to

discuss real-time seasonal forecasts, develop climate early warning systems and produce credible and authoritative regional climate outlook products — such as the Caribbean Drought Bulletin and the CariCOF Drought Outlook, which have been informing the region during the current record-breaking drought.

CariCOFs are the Caribbean's version of Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs), which are active in several parts of the world and critical for the development and effectiveness of early warning systems in that they provide real-time seasonal climate forecasts and interpretation.

An overview of the forecasted drought alleviation and subsequent increase in rainfall is available through CIMH's CariCOF Caribbean Climate Outlook Newsletter, a climate information product that summarizes recent and expected seasonal climate events. Detailed information on the current drought situation is published in the Caribbean Drought Bulletin.

Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology forecasts end of Caribbean drought

Date: February 16, 2016

News Outlet: The Montserrat Reporter (Montserrat)

URL: <http://www.themontserratreporter.com/22960-2/>

Bridgetown, Barbados (February 15, 2016) — The drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 / early 2015 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season. But in their place we should prepare for the risks of landslides and flashfloods, as the rains return.

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“Limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils,” explains Adrian Trotman, Agrometeorologist and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH. “As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding.”

Mr. Trotman says that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can now make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts up to three to six months in advance.

“We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts,” he says.

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Region urged to brace for floods

Date: February 17, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Observer (Jamaica)

URL: http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Region-urged-to-brace-for-floods--drought_51942

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (CMC) — The Barbados-based Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) is warning regional countries that they should brace themselves for floods as the drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 are expected to subside by the start of the 2016 Hurricane Season.

CIMH said this latest forecast comes after many months of “warmer-and-drier than average conditions in the Caribbean fueled by El Niño, a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which has implications for weather patterns around the world, including drought in many regions”.

CIMH said that after the forecasted weakening of El Niño [and] its counterpart La Niña, “a cooling of the Pacific may take over and affect the region in the latter part of 2016.

“If the change in circumstance takes place, it is likely to result in higher than normal rainfall and stronger storm systems,” the CIMH said in its latest forecast, which it said will be further discussed at a news conference here on Wednesday.

It said that while near to above average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, “CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flash floods, once rains return excessive amounts.”

Agrometeorologist and CIMH Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology Adrian Trotman, said “limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils.

“As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil which increases the risk of flooding,” Trotman said, adding that recent advances in climate forecasting services for the Caribbean now means that government planners and other bodies can now make important decisions based on seasonal forecasts from three to as much as six months in advance.

“We know that advanced warning of an extreme event like a hurricane can help us to be more prepared. The same now applies for longer-term climatic events and this means that the sooner we can have an early warning of changing conditions the longer time we have to prepare and be more effective at mitigating those impacts.”

CIMH said it will host the news conference to “discuss what the forecast means for the Caribbean, and in particular how its early climate warning information products can help the region’s six climate-sensitive sectors — agriculture, disaster management, energy, health, tourism and water — prepare for and adapt to what is expected to be a more intense wet/hurricane season”.

Brace to go from droughts to hurricanes

Date: February 17, 2016

News Outlet: Loop Barbados (Barbados)

URL: <http://www.loopnewsbarbados.com/content/brace-go-droughts-hurricanes>

Rains are expected to quench the parched Caribbean between April and June, but if La Niña occurs as well, an active 2016 hurricane season is forecasted.

The nature of La Niña however, will dictate the intensity of the wet season and how devastating the hurricane season will be.

During a press conference held at the Savannah Hotel under the aegis of the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) today, it was forecast that a hurricane season characterised by high activity might be on the books for the region.

Going from a dry spell to an overly wet forecast is the prediction at present, subject to change depending on the behaviour of La Niña, according to Agrometeorologist and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH, Adrian Trotman.

He said, "Most recent information has predicted, that it's highly likely that as we move into hurricane season to have an end to that driving force El Niño that causes these dry conditions in the Caribbean region, and as we move into the hurricane season it is quite likely that we will have a reverse of the conditions as the El Niño weakens, the La Niña which is the opposite effect...and tends to give the Caribbean region high rainfall events, is likely to develop during the course of 2016."

He reminded that El Niño largely limited hurricanes in 2015, but explained that "the La Niña will help to build and develop hurricanes over the 2016 period possibly."

Trotman reiterated that a reversal of conditions, "perhaps an enhancement in rainfall and hurricane activity" is most likely.

However he stressed that high hurricane activity does not mean more hurricanes, it does not speak to categories of systems, though a tropical wave could bring more intense rainfall even if it does not develop into a hurricane.

Therefore he urged citizens throughout the region to prepare by listening to monthly updates by the CIMH. He promised that at the end of May the CIMH will release another outlook for down to November.

Meanwhile, as the drought continues presently, Trotman encouraged, "This period of dryness will continue for the next few months and it means that we have to continue to be on our guard with respect to low water availability, continuing to capture water, continue to conserve and continue to mitigate the impacts of a continued dry period."

Met Office And Fire Brigade Partner To Identify Fire Triggers

Date: February 18, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Gleaner (Jamaica)

URL: <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20160218/met-office-and-fire-brigade-partner-identify-fire-triggers>

The Meteorological Service of Jamaica has partnered with the Jamaica Fire Brigade to identify fire triggers, which will facilitate early warning for bush fires.

As a result it is expected that there will be a drastic decrease in the number of bush fires that usually occur during the dry season.

Several hectares of forest have been damaged as a result of the spate of forest fires primarily in the Mavis Bank community in St Andrew and parts of St Thomas in previous years.

Meteorological Technician at the Met Service, Glenroy Brown, says though the prediction is that the drought will subside, there is still need for in-depth work to be done to mitigate against the devastating effects of forest fires.

According to him, they plan to monitor conditions daily, identify the triggers for bush fires and send out early warnings to the fire department in addition to residents who live in these vulnerable communities.

He says coffee farmers in particular, will begin to see changes in the quality of their yields, due to work being done to improve weather forecasting.

Brown says scientists will be able to predict when an outbreak of the coffee leaf rust disease is likely to occur and prevent an actual outbreak through early intervention.

Brown provided the information in an interview with **The Gleaner** the Climate and Weather Forecasting Training held in Barbados on Wednesday.

The training was hosted by the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology in Barbados.

Brace for heavy rains this year – meteorologist

Date: February 19, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Observer (Jamaica)

URL: <http://www.jamaicaobserver.com/news/Brace-for-heavy-rains-this-year---meteorologist>

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados (CMC) — After months of lower than average rainfall that has left reservoirs across the Caribbean dry, forecasters are predicting heavy rains later in 2016 that could lead to floods and landslides.

Adrian Trotman, agro meteorologist and chief of applied meteorology and climatology at the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), told a press conference on Wednesday that over the last year, his agency has been providing information relative to a deficit in rainfall across the region.

This continued for some time during 2015, until there was some relief towards the end of August to about early December in some Caribbean countries. “But we have yet again gone into a period of below normal rainfall, where the brief relief didn’t actually take us out of the very dry conditions that we have been experiencing in the Caribbean for the past year, and, in some cases, as early as 2014.” Trotman told regional journalists that things are looking up with the latest forecast suggesting that this period of dryness will continue until April or May before the rains return.

He said the region has to continue to be on its guard with respect to low water availability, conservation and mitigation of the impact of the drought. “However, on the other hand, our most recent information is suggesting that what is taking place in the Pacific [Ocean], ... we are highly likely now, as we move into the hurricane season, to have an end to that dry wind force — the El Niño, which causes these dry conditions in the Caribbean region. “And, as we move into the hurricane season, we quite likely will have a reverse of the condition.”

He said the La Niña, the opposite effect in the Pacific that tends to give the Caribbean high rainfall, is likely to develop during 2016. Trotman explained that in 2015, the development of hurricanes was largely inhibited despite the impacts of Tropical Storm Erika on Dominica and Joaquin on the Bahamas.

“The region had very low cyclone energy in 2015, he said, adding that the La Niña should develop — as more global scientists believe will happen — does the opposite. It will help to build and develop hurricanes over the 2016 period, possible.” He said that, in light of the forecast, he would continue to ask that Caribbean residents pay attention to the CIMH’s monthly updates, adding that the agency will release its June to November outlook at the end of May.

“As we move to wetter condition after in the year. The likelihood of high activity regarding hurricanes is a real one — something opposite to what we have been experiencing over the last year. “Whether we have the La Niña event or how strong that event will be will help to determine what takes place across the region,” he added.

Trotman said in Jamaica the dry season would not be as intense as in the rest of the Caribbean, noting that even now, in the northwestern Caribbean there is already a lot of rainfall. “And if we switch now to the La Niña, these areas will have extended period of above normal rainfall, where their dry season could almost look like a small wet season.” Cédric Van Meerbeeck, who leads forecasting at the CIMH, said the agency is hoping that the rains will come back progressively.

“First, you need to allow the soil to suck in the moisture, and then, progressively, refill our water reservoirs. ... What we are warning against is the possibility, especially in the La Niña, that the rains will come back too fast.” Van Meerbeeck said that when this happens, the region is confronted with the threat of flooding.

“Now, nobody wants flooding,” he said, even as he noted that some areas of the various Caribbean countries are more vulnerable to flooding. “What we are saying now is, yes, the rains will come back; but, what we would be able to say in the

next few months is how fast and how strong they will come back and then, thereby increase our preparedness for the hazard, which is flooding.”

From the regional disaster management perspective, Ronald Jackson, executive director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), said that his agency promotes education and awareness as a year-round activity.

“What we would like to see, what we are promoting and working towards is where press conferences of this nature would hear us hearing from CIMH — the scientists and the meteorologists — about what is forecast, predicted, but evaluating whether the plans that we have promoted, advanced, asked to be adopted, supported the adoption of, are implanted, how well they are implanted and what else we need to do to ensure that they keep our activities in dealing with the potential for flood or drought scenarios at the standard which we require.”

Jackson said CDEMA is hoping to see greater investments in the areas of operational readiness, contingency planning, better use of the science that is being provided, and better understanding of the products available to stakeholders.

Caribbean journalists gain insight into ways to report climate forecasting

Date: February 19, 2016

News Outlet: Antigua Observer (Antigua)

URL: <http://antiguaobserver.com/caribbean-journalists-gain-insight-into-ways-to-report-climate-forecasting/>

Thirteen journalists from across the region gathered for a one-day workshop in Barbados, as part of an international initiative sponsored by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), to show how climate forecasting services are being used to boost business and economic opportunities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The workshop attempted to help the media personnel better interpret the jargon behind climatology and to relay that information in a way that will benefit the people who operate in climate-sensitive sectors, like farming and agriculture.

Facilitator of the workshop, BBC World's, David Eades told journalists that the idea is to draw out parts of the information that affect people directly.

"There is no end to the stories related to climate forecasting or climate change issues," the hard stuff Eades said is getting the stories out before the disaster happens.

He told his audience, sometimes it's as simple as reaching out to their colleagues and keeping in contact with linkages.

Meanwhile, featured speaker and Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), Adrian Trotman said that while experts are aware that the message needs to be communicated, they are not necessarily the best people to do so.

"We are trained to be scientists, to work on how to use equations, to use graphs, to use diagrams to use maps, that's our training. "We were trained to produce scientific information", Trotman explained.

He admitted, however, that after being in the field for more than 20 years, he now understands the importance of communicating the message.

"To be able to help people, the people have to hear the message; the people have to hear why it's important to them" he said.

What assisted his public communication, Trotman said, was his involvement in integrated groups which allowed him to be far more than just a scientist.

Drought and flood warnings issued for Caribbean

Date: February 19, 2016

News Outlet: Amandala (Belize)

URL: <http://amandala.com.bz/news/drought-flood-warnings-issued-caribbean/>

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Feb. 19, 2016—There is a sharp contrast between drought and flood conditions, but it appears that an extended drought across our region could create flood concerns once the rains return in full force. This week the Barbados-based Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH) called on regional countries to brace themselves for floods, as the drought conditions which have affected the region since late 2014 are expected to subside by the start of this year's hurricane season.

Whereas many other countries in our region continue to grapple with drought conditions and water shortages, heavy rains during the latter part of 2015 have eased drought conditions in Belize. However, Belize may get hotter and drier weather in the coming months. The institute reports that Belize has a 60% chance that its maximum temperatures will be above normal and a 45% chance that it will get less rain than normal for the period February to March 2016.

Generally speaking, the warmer and drier conditions experienced across the Caribbean have been attributed to El Niño, the warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific which saw cyclone activity suppressed in the Caribbean basin and the Atlantic. However, as El Niño wears off and the Pacific cools, the Caribbean could be impacted, possibly by higher than normal rainfall and stronger cyclones, CIMH relayed.

The CIMH advises that areas experiencing long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flash floods, once rains return in excessive amounts. The possibility of flooding in parts of the Caribbean which had been affected by drought was the key warning from the institute when it issued its latest seasonal climate forecast.

Adrian Trotman, Chief of Applied Meteorology and Climatology at CIMH explained that, "Limited rainfall over the last few months has left many parts of the Caribbean with dry, compacted soils. As a result, heavy rainfall will not be easily absorbed by affected soil, which increases the risk of flooding."

The Caribbean Climate Outlook Forum published by the Caribbean Regional Climate Centre, housed at the Institute, gave an overview of the regional picture. It said that drought conditions are expected in most places up to May.

"Currently, most islands are in long-term drought. These places suffer water shortages. Some are also in short-term drought," the outlook said, adding that drought has been alleviated in Belize.

The National Meteorological Service in Belize says that, "Because of the above normal rainfall that occurred in October, November and December of 2015, the drought situation has eased off over the entire country thru to April of 2016."

It added, though, that "In the long-term, there is still concern for drought in the southwest and central coast of the country through to the end of July 2016."

There are drought warnings and similar alerts for Barbados, the Guyanas, the southern Leeward Islands, and Trinidad & Tobago. The long-term concern is that existing water shortages may worsen throughout the first half of 2016, with drought relief not in sight for the remainder of the dry season.

Urgent actions needed to mitigate landslides and flooding

Date: February 20, 2016

News Outlet: Jamaica Gleaner (Jamaica)

URL: <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20160220/urgent-action-needed-mitigate-landslides-and-flooding>

While average rainfall is expected to ease the drought across the Caribbean later this year, experts are warning that areas which experienced long-term dryness will be more susceptible to hazards such as landslides and flash floods. Last year, Jamaica experienced what was considered one of the worst droughts in five years. This resulted in severe water woes in many communities across Jamaica, particularly the Corporate Area.

Adrian Trotman, chief of applied meteorology and climatology at the Caribbean Institute of Meteorology and Hydrology, who was addressing journalists at a press conference in Barbados, advised that countries across the region should prepare for extreme wet conditions.

DRY CONDITIONS

"The dry conditions will continue up to maybe April or May, however, on the other hand, the most recent information is suggesting that what is taking place in the Pacific, as we speak, will result in a reverse of conditions as we enter into the hurricane season," Trotman said.

"As the El Niño weakens, the La Niña should build and develop hurricanes over the 2016 period. We suggest that you listen to the updates because the reverse from dry to wet is a real one," the climate expert advised.

It is with this in mind that Ronald Jackson, executive director of the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, urged the Government of Jamaica, in particular, to quickly build on its mitigation strategies and prepare in advance.

"Many of the member states, Jamaica included, are in locations that you have to pay attention to by virtue of their topography and other environmental factors," he told The Gleaner.

"I think we have to look at the necessity of management plans. You have to develop management strategies that speak to how you will deal with these specific situations. I think this information has come at a critical time, not only for the meteorologists, but also for the planners and sector leaders to plan ahead," he continued.

Jackson said, "We will have to look at the vulnerable areas and the communities that are of greatest concern and begin to strategise. Looking at the short, medium and the long terms will be of greatest importance."

February 22, 2016

More forecasters

Date: February 22, 2016

News Outlet: Grenada Broadcasting Network

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSHtWwApk8Y>

The role of journalists

Date: February 22, 2016

News Outlet: Grenada Broadcasting Network

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXqDrHdDbg>

Prepare for Hazardous Weather

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THE dry conditions are an inconvenience to many householders and farmers. With less rainfall on the island, it means reservoirs are increasingly put under pressure, leading to water shortages or outages. However, based on forecasters' data, we are told that higher amounts of rainfall are expected in the latter stages of 2016. We must, therefore, be adequately prepared to deal with the expected deluge if it appears.

Dry conditions have been a headache in the Caribbean for at least a year (in some cases for two years), but forecasters have noted that this will soon be alleviated. It has been predicted that from around the end of this month and moving into the traditional rainy season, more consistent rainfall is to return. This is especially true as La Niña is forecast to develop during 2016.

What that means, if the predictions are accurate, is that the rains will come back; however, they may come back with a vengeance and bring along an increased likelihood of hurricane activity. In February during a press conference held by the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology (CIMH), officials were at pains to warn against this potential development. More rainfall might sound like a relief now, especially if reservoirs are once again full and farmers are happy. However, the reality can be far more catastrophic if we don't adequately plan ahead.

The threat of flooding, in particular, is one we must take seriously in the region. 2013's fatal Christmas Eve floods in St. Vincent are a recent reminder of the power of too much rain in a short space of time. In Barbados we have had our issues over the years with flooding, including having to close schools or other institutions and experiencing heavy damage as a result.

One very large and topical issue we must consider is garbage. It is no secret that some Barbadians are infinitely uncaring of their surroundings. And the recent fines of persons caught illegally dumping suggest Government is finally clamping down on the matter in a more serious way. Yet, that fails to address the often wild bits of refuse blowing about on a daily basis in places like schools or recreational areas. A general clean-up of all areas, especially those that are prone to flooding, is required.

In addition, the public must be reminded of the various tips for dealing with bad weather. Despite efforts over the years by state officials, it seems the average person still is not aware of just how dangerous flooding can be. The Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency's website is an excellent resource from which to learn about all disasters faced by the Caribbean, especially during the hurricane season.

Only God knows what will happen, and at best, there may be no severe rainfall. At the very least however, as was suggested at the press conference, it pays to follow the updates from CIMH each month, especially given the fact that at the end of May, the agency is set to release an outlook for the rest of the year.