

BEACH NEWS

American Shore & Beach Preservation Association

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Notorious nor'easters take over for hurricanes during the winter

FORT MYERS, FL - Although tropical storms get all the glory in the summer, there is another type of storm that wreaks havoc on American shorelines during the winter - nor'easters.

Each year between 25 and 30 nor'easters impact the eastern seaboard of the U.S., while only four-to-five tropical storms impact the coast, according to Robert Dolan, Ph.D., a professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia.

These wild winter weather events are notorious for producing heavy snow and rain and huge damaging waves that crash onto Atlantic beaches, often causing beach erosion, coastal flooding and structural damage. Surprisingly, Dolan says, the most powerful wind from a nor'easter can actually exceed that of a hurricane.

Nor'easters are most prevalent between October and April, when tropical storms are taking a break from their active season, which runs from June through November.

"Another interesting point about super nor'easters is that they are, as a rule, larger than the average tropical storms, which means they impact a larger segment of the coast," Dolan explained. "And the duration of a nor'easter is two to three times longer than that of a tropical storm. Hurricanes are generally more compact and move a lot faster."

Although nor'easters are quite common in the winter, only a few are usually strong enough to cause big problems inland. Over the years, there have been a few notorious nor'easters, including the "Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962" and the "Blizzard of 1993" that caused snow, tornadoes and flooding from Alabama, Georgia and Florida all the way up to Maine. At its peak, the storm reached from Canada to Central America. Damage estimates range from \$3 billion to \$6 billion.

"Although we don't take much pleasure in the implications of these storms, both tropical and middle latitude storms play a very important role in balancing the heat budget of the planet," Dolan said. "They are a necessary evil with a job to do. But hold onto your hats," Dolan says, "because we are moving into the 2009 severe nor'easter season as we speak!"

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ABOUT ASBPA: Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) represents the scientific, technical and political interests along the coast in an effort to shape national research and policy concerning shore and beach management and restoration. ASBPA strives to engage in a factual debate on coastal issues and economics that will foster sound, far-sighted and economical development and preservation of our beaches; thereby aiding in placing their beliefs within the reach of the

largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation. For additional information about ASBPA, please visit www.asbpa.org/about_us/about_us_history.htm.

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