



NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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U.S. hurricane forecasters embark to Mexico & Caribbean on preparedness mission *Public invited to tour Air Force Reserve "Hurricane Hunter" aircraft*

NOAA and the U.S. Air Force Reserve will host a series of public events from March 12 to 17 in six communities in Mexico and the Caribbean to encourage residents to prepare for the 2012 hurricane season which begins June 1.

U.S. National Hurricane Center Director Bill Read; Senior Hurricane Specialist Lixion Avila; Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch meteorologist Gladys Rubio; and Air Force Reservists from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS), 403rd Wing, Keesler Air Force Base will educate residents of vulnerable communities about hurricane preparedness. Tours of the Air Force Reserve Command's WC-130J "Hurricane Hunter" will offer an opportunity to learn how scientists collect hurricane information.

"We are in an active hurricane era. While 2011 was not as catastrophic as recent seasons, the Caribbean and Latin America still experienced tragic loss of life from flooding caused by hurricanes," said Read. "This tour is an opportunity for us to educate coastal communities about what they need to do to prepare for a hurricane. Preparation will reduce the human and economic toll."

Utilizing 10 state-of-the-art WC-130J aircraft, military air crews fly directly into the core of tropical cyclones to gather critical weather data. The data are sent in real time via satellite from the aircraft directly to the National Hurricane Center for analysis and use by hurricane forecasters.

"2012 will mark the 68th year the Air Force Reserve Command has been supporting the National Hurricane Center and the United States Hurricane Warning Program," said Lt. Col. Sean Pierce, 53rd WRS director of operations.

During the 2011 hurricane season, the 53rd WRS flew 88 missions and 13 investigative flights over the Atlantic for the National Hurricane Center. It also flew four missions over the eastern North Pacific.

Locations and times for public tours are listed below (all times are local):

- March 12, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Campeche Intl. Airport, Campeche, Mexico
- March 13, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Chetumal Intl. Airport, Chetumal, Mexico
- March 14, noon to 3 p.m. – Limon Intl. Airport, Limon, Costa Rica

- March 15, 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. – Juan Santa Maria Intl. Airport, San Jose, Costa Rica
- March 16, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. – Princess Juliana Intl. Airport, San Maartin
- March 17, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. – Isla Grande Airport, San Juan, Puerto Rico

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Working with partners, NOAA's National Weather Service is building a Weather-Ready Nation to support community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. Visit us online at weather.gov and on [Facebook](#).

On the Web:

NOAA National Hurricane Center: <http://www.hurricanes.gov>

403rd Wing/53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron: <http://www.403wg.afrc.af.mil/>

Weather-Ready Nation: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/>

Ready.gov: <http://www.ready.gov/>

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