



September Forecast Update for Australian-Region Tropical Storm Activity in 2011/12

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Forecast Summary

TSR slightly raises its forecast and anticipates the 2011/12 Australian season will see activity about 10% above average.

The TSR (Tropical Storm Risk) early September forecast for Australian-region tropical cyclone activity in 2011/12 anticipates activity about 10% above the 1975/6-2010/11 climate norm. The forecast spans the Australian season from the 1st November 2011 to the 30th April 2012 and is based on data available through the end of August 2011. Our main predictor is the forecast anomaly in October-November Niño 4 sea surface temperature (SST) which we anticipate will be below-average at $-0.39 \pm 0.26^\circ\text{C}$. Since SSTs in this region are linked to vertical wind shear over the Australian region during Austral summer, below-average Niño 4 SST indicates below-average wind shear and above-average tropical storm activity. Thus we expect Australian basin cyclone activity and landfalling numbers to be slightly above-average in 2011/12. Updated forecasts will be issued in early November and early December 2011. The TSR forecast has increased since early July as Niño 4 SSTs are forecast to be cooler than thought previously.

Australian Region Total Numbers Forecast for 2011/12

		Severe Tropical Cyclones	Tropical Storms
TSR Forecast (\pm FE)	2011/12	6.2 (\pm 2.1)	11.8 (\pm 2.8)
36yr Climate Norm (\pm SD)	1975/6-2010/11	5.5 (\pm 2.4)	10.6 (\pm 3.5)
Forecast Skill at this Lead	1975/6-2010/11	18%	37%

Key: Severe Tropical Cyclone	=	1 Minute Sustained Wind > 63Kts	=	Hurricane Category 1 to 5.
Tropical Storm	=	1 Minute Sustained Wind > 33Kts.		
SD	=	Standard Deviation.		
FE (Forecast Error)	=	Standard Deviation of Errors in Simulated Real Time Forecasts 1975/6-2010/11.		
Forecast Skill	=	Percentage Improvement in Mean Square Error Afforded by Cross-Validated Hindcasts 1975/6-2010/11 with 5-year block elimination over Hindcasts Made with the 1975/6-2010/11 Climate Norm.		
Australian Region	=	Southern Hemisphere 100°E to 170°E (Storm Must Form as a Tropical Cyclone Within to Count).		

- Very severe tropical cyclones (hurricane category 3-5) are not forecast due to data reliability problems in the historical record.
- Our Australian-region (100°E to 170°E), while slightly non-standard, is selected to provide the best overview for tropical cyclone activity around the whole of Australia.

There is a 54% probability that Australian-region tropical storm numbers in 2010/11 will be above average (defined as more than 11 tropical storms), a 34% likelihood they will be near normal (defined as between 9 and 11 tropical storms) and only a 12% chance they will be below normal (defined as less than 9 tropical storms). The 1975/6-2010/11 climatology probabilities for each category are 39% (above-normal), 28% (near-normal) and 33% (below-normal).

Australian Landfalling Numbers in 2011/12

		Tropical Storms
TSR Forecast (\pm FE)	2011/12	4.9 (\pm 1.9)
Average (\pm SD)	1975/6-2010/11	4.5 (\pm 2.0)
Forecast Skill at this Lead	1975/6-2010/11	10%

Key: Landfalling Region = Northern Australian coast from Perth around to Brisbane.

- Severe tropical cyclone strikes are not forecast due to their low occurrence rate and to their lack of correlation with tropical storm strike numbers.

There is a 37% probability that Australian tropical storm strike numbers in 2011/12 will be above average (defined as more than 5 landfalling tropical storms), a 39% likelihood they will be near normal (defined as 4 or 5 landfalling tropical storms) and a 24% chance they will be below normal (defined as less than 4 landfalling tropical storms). The 1975/6-2010/11 climatology probabilities for each category are 22% (above-normal), 45% (near-normal) and 33% (below-normal).

Predictors and Key Influences for 2010/11

Our model exploits the predictability of tropical SSTs. Anomalous patterns of SST are the primary source of tropical atmosphere forcing at seasonal and interannual timescales. The predictors in our model for Australian-region tropical storm numbers are:

1. The forecast October-November SST for the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Niño 4 region 5°N-5°S, 150°W-160°E. (Main predictor for leads up to November).
2. The observed October-November SST for the Niño 4 region. (Main predictor for December forecast).

Australian-region severe tropical cyclones and landfalling tropical storm numbers are forecast by thinning from the total tropical storm numbers.

The Niño 4 forecast comes from an in-house multi-ensemble extension of the Knaff and Landsea (1997) ENSO-CLIPER model (Lloyd-Hughes et al, 2004).

The key factor behind our forecast for Australian-region tropical storm activity in 2011/12 being slightly above-average is the anticipated slight enhancing effect of early austral summer SSTs in the Niño 4 region. Below-norm SSTs in this region lead to below-average atmospheric vertical wind shear over the Australian region during Austral summer; a condition favouring above-average tropical storm activity. Our current forecast SST anomaly (1975-2010 climatology) for October-November 2011 Niño 4 SST is $-0.39 \pm 0.26^\circ\text{C}$ (down from July's value of $-0.03 \pm 0.44^\circ\text{C}$). The forecast skill for this predictor at this lead is 88% (assessed using cross-validated hindcasts over the period 1975-2010).

Further Information

Further information on the TSR forecast methodology and on TSR in general, may be obtained from the TSR website (<http://www.tropicalstormrisk.com>). Forecast updates for Australian-region tropical storm activity in 2011/12 will be issued by TSR on the 7th November 2011 and 6th December 2011.



Appendix - Predictions from Previous Months

1. Australian Region Total Numbers

a) Deterministic forecasts

Australian Region Total Numbers 2011/12			
		Tropical Storms	Severe Tropical Cyclones
Average Number (\pm SD) (1975/6-2010/11)		10.6 (\pm 3.5)	5.5 (\pm 2.4)
TSR Forecasts (\pm FE)	8 Sep 2011	11.8 (\pm 2.8)	6.2 (\pm 2.1)
	4 July 2011	10.6 (\pm 2.9)	5.5 (\pm 2.2)
	11 May 2011	11.2 (\pm 3.3)	5.9 (\pm 2.3)

b) Probabilistic forecasts

Australian Region Tropical Storm Numbers 2011/12				
		Tercile Probabilities		
		below normal	normal	above normal
Climatology 1975/6-2010/11		33	28	39
TSR Forecasts	8 Sep 2011	12	34	54
	4 July 2011	24	38	38
	11 May 2011	21	33	46

2. Australian Landfalling Numbers

a) Deterministic forecasts

Australian Landfalling Numbers 2011/12		
		Tropical Storms
Average Number (\pm SD) (1975/6-2010/11)		4.4 (\pm 2.0)
TSR Forecasts (\pm FE)	8 Sep 2011	4.9 (\pm 1.9)
	4 July 2011	4.4 (\pm 2.0)
	11 May 2011	4.7 (\pm 2.0)

b) Probabilistic forecasts

Australian Landfalling Numbers 2011/12				
		Tercile Probabilities		
		below normal	normal	above normal
Climatology 1975/6-2010/11		33	45	22
TSR Forecasts	8 Sep 2011	24	39	37
	4 July 2011	31	39	29
	11 May 2011	28	39	33