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MEDIA RELEASE

2013–2014 Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook for Tonga

Summary

The tropical cyclone (TC) activity expected in the 2013/14 TC Season to affect Tonga is likely to be **average** to **above average**. This means that Tonga could expect 1 to 2 cyclones this season of which 1 may reach or exceed Category 3 status (or classified a Severe Tropical Cyclone).

Background information

The official 2013/14 TC Season began on 1st of November 2013, and will end on 30th April, 2014. It should be noted that tropical cyclones have occasionally formed outside this period e.g. Tropical Cyclone “Keli” which affected North Tonga in June 1997. The peak time for the occurrence of tropical cyclones in Tonga is from January to March with most events occurring in February.

Assessments of the current El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) indicate a neutral phase (neither El Nino nor La Nina) with global models suggesting that neutral conditions will continue to prevail during the current cyclone season. Warmer than average seas surface temperature persists near the South Pacific Convergence Zone (SPCZ) and near average elsewhere.

On record, about 1.88 cyclones affect Tonga during El Nino, 1.63 during La Nina and 1.64 during neutral years. The current atmospheric and ocean conditions prevailing over the South West Pacific indicate similar characteristic to 5 tropical cyclone seasons in the past (refer Table 1). The average data for these years indicate that the chance of a tropical cyclone occurring in Tonga this season is **high** with a range of about 1 to 2 TC events likely to affect the group. It is also evident that during these years, almost 90% of the TC's that affected Tonga were **severe**.

About 4 to 8 TC's are expected to form this season in the South Pacific (From the Equator to 25°S and from 160°E to 120°W). Most of the systems are expected to form around and west of the Dateline between 5° and 15° South. Subsequently, tracks of TC's likely to affect Tonga this season are likely to be from the North to West quadrant of the Island chain. For tropical cyclones passing close to the Country, associated active cloud and rainbands may bring heavy rain and squally conditions with possible flooding and sea flooding of low-lying coastal areas.

It should also be noted that non-TC's and tropical depressions have caused lost of life and property in the past. It is therefore critical that all communities in Tonga take heed of the warnings and alerts and act responsibly, to save lives and property.

Similar seasons to 2013/14	No of cyclones that occurred in the South Pacific	No that hit Tonga	No that hit Tonga that were Severe (>Cat3)
1981/82	6	1	1 (TC Issac)
1984/85	9	2	1 (TC Eric)
1990/91	2	2	2 (TC Val & TC Sina)
1996/97	11	2	2 (TC Hina & TC Keli)
2001/02	5	1	1 (TC Waka)
Average	6.6	1.6	1.4

Table 1 : The pre-cyclone season atmosphere and ocean conditions for 2013-2014 is similar to 5 seasons in the past (1981/82, 1984/85, 1990/91, 1996/97 and 2001/02)

Use of this Information

*The information given here should be used for guidance only and not to be used for making decisions that would affect safety or put lives at risk. It is a 6 months outlook for the season and will contain some inconsistencies. Response to specific tropical cyclone events as they occur during the season should be paramount and not be influenced by this outlook. **In fact make it a rule to check the weather forecast at least once a day this TC Season!** The likely number of TCs here is indicative only. It is expected that the total number of TCs will be in the vicinity of the numbers listed and not necessarily within the given range.*

For further information on the 2013-2014 Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook for Tonga, please contact the MET OFFICE at 35355.



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