



# METEOROLOGICAL SERVICE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES & ARUBA

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## PRESS RELEASE

### NOVEMBER 2009: ONE HURRICANE AND VERY DRY

#### **Hurricane Season:**

The final month (November) of the 2009 hurricane season was, after a very quiet October, rather active. Hurricane *Ida*, because of floods and strong winds caused many casualties and material damage in Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. Especially in El Salvador, *Ida* caused as it interacted with another disturbance, more than 180 casualties as a result of heavy rains that led to deadly mudslides.

With the final weakening of *Ida* on November 10, the 2009 hurricane season reached its apparent end. Eleven tropical cyclones developed during this season and nine of these reached tropical storm intensity. Three of these reached hurricane strength and two of these (Bill and Fred) became major hurricanes (category three or more). This became the quietest season since 1997 and just like this year, that one was also an El Niño year.

As far as the islands of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba are concerned, it was a rather tranquil season. In spite of this, a Tropical Storm Watch had to be issued for tropical storm *Ana's* threat and a Tropical Storm Warning was also issued for tropical storm *Erika*. In both cases however, these watches and warnings were discontinued when both systems weakened, before reaching the eastern Caribbean Area. Hurricane Bill, because of breaking swells, temporarily caused rough seas and locally some coastal flooding due to high surf in St. Maarten.

#### **Rainfall:**

Especially in the ABC Islands, most of the days in November 2009 were dry. Therefore, last month was one of the driest November months of the past fifty years in these islands. In the period between November 10 and 23, large sections of these islands didn't receive any measurable rain. Because of this drought and also a lack of cloudiness and wind, the air temperature was noticeably higher than normal during both daytime and nighttime. The average air temperature at Hato Airport in Curaçao during November 2009 was 28.8°C, while the long term average between 1971 and 2000 was 28.0°C. The average maximum temperature during the past month was 32.1°C. This a full degree above the average of 31.1 degrees. The average low temperature was 26.6°C and this too is exactly one degree above the long term average low for the month (25.6°C).

Only 28.1 mm of rain was measured at Hato Airport during November 2009. This is 71% below the long term average of 96.7 mm for this location. In some other sections of Curaçao the drought was even worse. In Van Engelen, for instance, an amount of only 13.8 mm was measured during this same period. This is 90% below the November average of 131 mm for this station.

In November 2009, an amount of only 14.6 mm of rain was measured at the Queen Beatrix Airport in Aruba. This is about 80% below the November average of 71.4 mm. An amount of 16.4 mm of rain was measured at Flamingo Airport in Bonaire and this is about 83% below the long-term average of 95.9 mm. It was even drier at the Agriculture and Fishery Service (LVV) in Lagun Hill, where only 8.4 mm was measured.

The SSS Islands also received an amount of rain which was well below average. At the Juliana Airport in St. Maarten, a monthly sum of 73.7 mm (2.90 inches) was measured during November 2009. This is 51% below the long term average of 149.3 mm (5.88 inches).

#### **El Niño:**

The reason that most locations got less rain than normal is still the presence of a moderate El Niño. This phenomenon, in which the sea water temperature is higher than normal in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean, leads to, among others, a surge in the upper-level winds over the Caribbean Area. This on its turn often leads to a suppression of active shower producing clouds, which again causes a suppression of the hurricane activity in this region. That again causes a drier than normal rainy season in the ABC Islands.

The rainfall outlook for the ABC Islands for the coming months is still below average, as a result of El Niño's influence. The latest forecast indicates that the chance of normal or below normal rainfall is still expected to be about 75% during the period of December 2009 to February 2010. For the SSS Islands, an average rainfall amount is also still in the forecast in this same period. A preliminary outlook continues to indicate that El Niño will diminish gradually during the second quarter of 2010. That should then lead to a decrease in the drought over the southern Caribbean Area and northern South America.

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