

# Glass Shops Prepare for an Active Hurricane Season

by Megan Headley

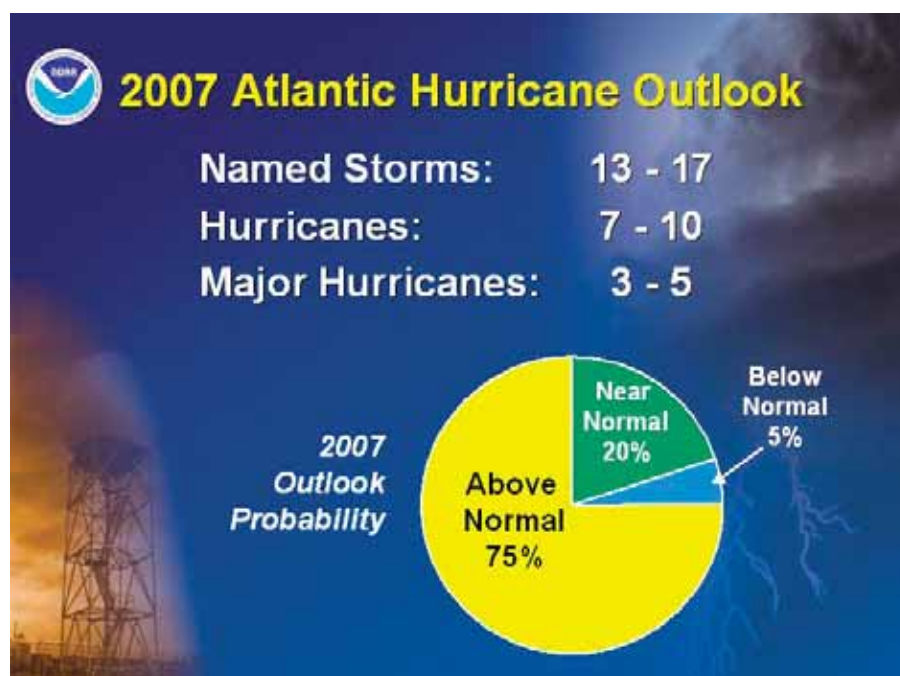
**W**ith experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center predicting a 75-percent chance that the Atlantic hurricane season will be above normal in 2007, there's sure to be demand for the services that glass shops provide along the East and Gulf Coasts.

"For the 2007 Atlantic hurricane season, NOAA scientists predict 13 to 17 named storms, with seven to ten becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher," says retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator.

With the start of hurricane season having passed on June 1, NOAA is recommending individuals and businesses located in hurricane-prone regions to begin their preparation plans.

"With expectations for an active season, it is critically important that people who live in East and Gulf coastal areas, as well as the Caribbean, be prepared," says Bill Proenza, NOAA National Hurricane Center director. "Now is the time to update your hurricane plan, not when the storm is bearing down on you."

For some glass shops, preparation may mean stocking additional inventory, hiring extra staff or extending shop hours to account for the summer demand. Other shop owners may



**The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration suggests this year's hurricane season may keep glass shops busy.**

see this preparation as effort wasted on events that may never come to fruition—such as occurred with last year's predictions for an active season in 2006.

Paula Odom, office manager of A-1 Glass Co. in Beaumont, Texas, recalls stocking additional inventory for Hurricane Rita, which hit the Gulf Coast in September 2005.

"For Rita we did prepare, we got plywood, lots of extra product," Odom says.

"We do try to keep a little extra

inventory," says Gene Moore, owner of Gene's Glass & Screen in Cocoa, Fla. "That is a prime concern."

However, Moore says that the additional inventory can bring its own challenges.

"We can't stock an awful lot of stuff because we are limited for space, and every business has this problem," Moore says. "The logistics of having material on hand or available right away is the worst problem there is."

There's also the challenge that glass shops are just as vulnerable to

fierce storms as the customers whose glass they hope to replace.

"If you pile up too much [inventory] you might not have it after the storm," says Diana Sasnett, office manager of A Winchester Glass & Mirror in Pensacola, Fla. "I wouldn't want to have too much and then have it all destroyed."

Shops with multiple locations in a region are lucky in that regard.

"We had [additional inventory] delivered to our Lumberton location because it's a little further north," Odom says, referring to preparation for Rita.

Extra staffing can also prove to be challenging. The demand for skilled labor is a problem the glass industry has been facing for some time, and during the peak demand of hurricane season, it's perhaps more important to have—and yet more difficult to get—an extra pair of competent hands.

"I don't try to get extra people because those extra people don't know what to do," Moore says. "It's very difficult to find skilled people. We've tried it in the past, it doesn't work. We just prepare to work hard."

That's exactly what Odom says the ten employees at A-1 Glass did when Rita struck. She says that the owners never evacuated the city, and by Monday (Rita struck on a Sunday), the shop was open and the owners were back at work.

"There were a lot of long

hours," Odom says. "We worked sunup to sundown for months."

As Odom notes, there was never any thought of doing otherwise.

"That's your job, that's what you've got to do," she says.

The most shop owners can do is prepare the best they can, and then prepare to work hard in the aftermath.

"There's not a whole lot you can do, you just have to go with the punch," Sasnett says.

"This is something that I think every individual has to sit back and look at what they're up against," Moore adds. "Every hurricane season every individual runs out of everything."

"It's a trial and error thing," Odom says.

The thing about predictions is that in the end it's just an educated guess. There's no telling if and where a storm might strike and the amount of damage that might result.

"I think the best advice is to just ride with it and see what happens," Sasnett says. "Just hope for the best."

The Atlantic hurricane season runs through November 30, with peak activity occurring August through October, according to NOAA. ■

## the author



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