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Another Active Atlantic Hurricane Season Forecasted for 2004 by TSR Consortium

***Four tropical storms – two of them hurricanes – anticipated to
strike U.S. shores***

London, 5th December 2003—Inhabitants of the U.S. East Coast and Caribbean should brace themselves for another active Atlantic hurricane season next year, leading weather experts say.

Tropical Storm Risk (TSR), the consortium of experts on insurance, risk management and seasonal climate forecasting led by the Benfield Hazard Research Centre at University College London, today issued projections for yet another above average Atlantic hurricane season in 2004. The Atlantic hurricane season lasts from 1 June to 30 November.

TSR anticipates four tropical storm strikes on the U.S. in 2004 of which two will be hurricanes. Two tropical storm hits, including one hurricane, are foreseen for the Caribbean Lesser Antilles. For the Atlantic basin as a whole, TSR expects 13 tropical storms, with seven of these being hurricanes and three intense hurricanes. TSR's first extended range forecast for 2004 indicates a high likelihood (70%) of an above-average season, a 20% probability of a near-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season.

“Based on current and projected climate signals we anticipate Atlantic basin tropical cyclone activity being about 140 percent of average in 2004” said Dr. Mark Saunders, the TSR lead scientist. “The two main climate factors influencing our hurricane forecast for 2004 are the expected values in August and September 2004 for (a) the speed of the trade winds which blow westward across the tropical Atlantic and Caribbean Sea and (b) the temperature of the sea waters between West Africa and the Caribbean where many hurricanes develop.” TSR anticipates weaker than normal trades and warmer than normal waters in 2004; conditions which both favour an above-average hurricane season.

While the damage from U.S. striking tropical storms and hurricanes between 2000 and 2003 has not been excessive, Saunders warns against future complacency. “Historically one in four of all Atlantic hurricanes have struck the U.S.” he said. “However, over the past four years this ratio has fallen to just one in nine. This situation must soon correct itself and when it does we will witness far greater damage and disruption.”

TSR has an impressive forecast track record. Recent long-range forecast successes include those for the 2002 and 2003 Atlantic hurricane seasons, the 2002 and 2003 Northwest Pacific typhoon seasons, and for the 2001/2 and 2002/3 Australian-region tropical cyclone seasons. For the 2004 Atlantic hurricane season TSR will be issuing monthly updated seasonal forecasts through to early August 2004. These will include the release of an improved model for predicting US landfalling hurricane wind energy. TSR forecasts can be accessed through TSR's website www.tropicalstormrisk.com.

Hurricanes rank above earthquakes and floods as the U.S.'s most expensive natural disaster. The average damage bill per year from hurricane strikes on the continental US 1950-2002 is estimated to be US \$ 4.9 billion (2002).

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For further information please contact:

Ansi Vallens
Signals & Strategies
New York
Tel: +1 518 392 4238
ansivallens@taconic.net

Chris Gatland/David Bogg
Benfield
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7578 7485/+44 (0) 20 7522 4016
chris.gatland@benfieldgroup.com
david.bogg@benfieldgroup.com

Mark Saunders
Lead Scientist, TSR Consortium, Benfield Hazard Research Centre
Tel: +44 (0) 1483 204187
mas@mssl.ucl.ac.uk

Notes to Editors:

About Tropical Storm Risk (TSR):

Founded in 2000, Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) offers a leading resource for forecasting the risk from tropical storms worldwide. The venture provides innovative forecast products to increase risk awareness and to help decision making within the (re)insurance industry, other business sectors, government and society. The TSR consortium is co-sponsored by Benfield, the leading independent reinsurance intermediary, Royal & Sun Alliance, the global insurance group, and Crawford & Company, a global claims management solutions company. The TSR scientific grouping brings together climate physicists, meteorologists and statisticians at University College London and the Met Office.

About Benfield Hazard Research Centre:

Benfield Hazard Research Centre is sponsored by Benfield, the world's leading independent reinsurance intermediary and risk advisory business. Benfield's customers include many of the world's major insurance and reinsurance companies as well as Government entities and global corporations. Benfield employs over 1,700 people based in over 30 locations worldwide.
www.benfieldgroup.com

With over forty researchers and practitioners, the Benfield Hazard Research Centre is Europe's leading multidisciplinary academic hazard research centre and comprises three groups: Geological Hazards, Meteorological Hazards and Seasonal Forecasting, and Disaster Studies and Management. The Centre is based at University College London, which along with Oxford and Cambridge, is one of the UK's top three multi-faculty teaching and research institutions.
www.benfieldhrc.org