



Hurricanes, Typhoons, and Cyclones: One Storm, Many Names

In some places the storms are called hurricanes, in other places typhoons and, in still other places, cyclones. Near Japan and China, the storm is called a typhoon. If it's in the Atlantic Ocean (like near Florida), we call it a hurricane. If it's around India or Australia, it's called a cyclone.

No matter which name is used, these storms form in the same way and look the same.

This kind of storm starts with really warm ocean water that is as warm as a bathtub. This warm water heats up the air above it, making it rise. As this warm air goes up, more air rushes in below to replace it. The Earth's movement makes this air start spinning, like water going down a drain. At the center of the spinning wind and heavy rain is a calm area called the eye of the storm.

The storm starts with strong winds and heavy rain. The winds blow at very high speeds. The wind pushes a huge wall of water onto land. This wall of water is called a storm surge.

Then comes a calm period. This is the eye of the storm. If you're in the eye of the storm, it might seem safe. It might last 15 minutes or up to an hour. The sky might even clear up. But the storm is not over. The second half of the storm hits right after. The winds and heavy rain return.

These storms, called hurricanes in the southeastern United States, have caused a lot of damage. Hurricane Katrina (2005) was the most destructive hurricane in recent American history, causing great harm to people and property. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 also caused serious damage. Because of what we learned from Hurricane Katrina, we got better at evacuating people and responding to emergencies during hurricanes like Harvey.