STRICT EMBARGO: NOT FOR USE BEFORE 23.59HRS MONDAY 4 DECEMBER 2000.
SCIENCE, ENVIRONMENT, INSURANCE AND CITY EDITORS.

TROPICAL STORM RISK CONSORTIUM ANNOUNCES FORECAST FOR US HURRICANE STRIKES IN 2001

Atlantic hurricane activity and the numbers of hurricanes striking US shores between June and November 2001 are anticipated to be 20% above average, a team of UK scientists said today.

Dr Mark Saunders, Dr Paul Rockett and Dr Tony Hamilton of the Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre at University College London (UCL) have developed innovative long-range predictions for Atlantic and US landfalling tropical cyclone activity.

Using a similar model the UCL team accurately predicted in December 1998 that the 1999 Atlantic hurricane season and US strike total would both be above average. In December 1999 the team also correctly called for the 2000 Atlantic season to be less active than in 1999. Rigorous hindcast testing over 15 years shows that the UCL team's prior November forecasts have 10-15% skill (better than chance) in predicting the following year's Atlantic basin hurricane numbers, and 10% skill in predicting the number of US tropical cyclone strikes.

The UCL forecasts are prepared using advanced statistical methods and historical climate data back to 1950. The model exploits the long-range predictability of tropical Atlantic and Pacific sea surface temperatures (SSTs), and Caribbean trade winds. The key factors behind the forecast of above average hurricane activity in 2001 are the enhancing effect of the weaker than normal Caribbean trade winds anticipated for August-September 2001, and the enhancing effect of the warmer than normal north Atlantic SSTs anticipated for August-September 2001.

Hurricanes rank above earthquakes and floods as the United States' costliest natural disaster. The US hurricane damage bill for 1926-1999 is estimated to be £3.6 billion per year (2000$). However, substantial year-to-year variability exists in US hurricane losses. For example, in 1999 and 1997 the losses were £5.7 billion and just £0.1 billion respectively.

The UCL team's work is now central to a new venture called *TropicalStormRisk.com (TSR)* which commences today. TSR will issue long-range forecasts (out to a year ahead) for tropical cyclone activity in the Atlantic, NW Pacific and SW Pacific ocean basins, as well as preparing seasonal predictions for tropical cyclone strikes on the US, Caribbean, Japan and Queensland (Australia) coasts. These forecasts and their timing are designed to benefit society, business and government by reducing - through the available lead time - the risk, uncertainty and financial volatility associated with varying active and inactive storm seasons.

The TSR consortium comprises leading UK insurance industry experts and scientists at the forefront of seasonal weather forecasting. The TSR insurance expertise is drawn from the UK compos-

ite and life company CGNU Group, the Royal and Sun Alliance insurance company, and Benfield Greig a leading independent global reinsurance and risk advisory group. The TSR scientific grouping brings together climate physicists, meteorologists and statisticians at UCL and the Met. Office.

Karen Dutton, manager of Consultancy Business at the Met Office, praised the scientists efforts saying the Met Office are always keen to exploit science and develop services which bring benefits to its many customers.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

Forecast Numbers:

	US Landfalling 2001			**Atlantic Total Numbers 2001**		
	Intense Hurricanes	Hurricanes	Tropical Storms	Intense Hurricanes	Hurricanes	Tropical Storms
Ave. no. 1950-2000	0.6	1.5	3.0	2.5	5.9	9.5
Actual no. 2000	0	0	2	3	8	14
Forecast no. 2001	0.8	1.8	3.3	3.4	6.9	10.6

Key: Intense Hurricane = Sustained Wind > 95 Knots = Category 3 to 5
Hurricane = Sustained Wind > 63 Knots = Category 1 to 5
Tropical Storm = Sustained Wind > 33 Knots

The full forecast may be viewed as a PDF download at the *TropicalStormRisk.com* web site:
http://www.TropicalStormRisk.com