



Australian Tropical Cyclone Activity in 2007/8 Forecast to be Most Active in 9 Years

TSR's start-of-season outlook predicts activity will be 10-20% above norm making the 2007/8 season the most active for basin tropical storm numbers since 1998/99

London, 9 November 2007 – Inhabitants of Australia and nearby islands should prepare for some rough weather ahead with the 2007/8 tropical cyclone season expected to be the most active since 1998/99, leading weather experts say.

Tropical Storm Risk (TSR), the award-winning consortium of experts on insurance, risk management and seasonal climate forecasting led by the Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre at University College London, has issued its start-of-season forecast for Australian-region tropical cyclone activity in 2007/8. The forecast spans the Australian tropical cyclone season which lasts from 1 November to 30 April and is based on data available through the end of October 2007.

TSR anticipates 5 or 6 tropical storm strikes on Australia in 2007/8. For the Australian region as a whole (100°E to 170°E), TSR anticipates 13 tropical storms, with 7 of these developing into severe tropical cyclones. The prediction includes a 64% probability that Australian-region tropical storm numbers in 2007/8 will be in the top one-third of years historically, a 32% probability they will be in the middle one-third of historical years and only a 4% chance they will be in the lowest one-third of years historically. Five of the last six years (including 2006/7) have seen below-norm tropical storm activity around Australia.

“The main climate factor influencing our start-of-season forecast for Australian-region tropical storm activity in 2007/8 is the occurrence of La Nina conditions in the tropical Pacific. Currently sea surface temperatures in the key region 150°W-160°E, 5°S-5°N are the coldest since 1999. La Nina (cold) conditions in this region lead to below-norm atmospheric vertical wind shear over the Australian region during Austral summer; a condition favouring above-norm tropical storm activity” said Professor Mark Saunders, TSR’s lead scientist and Head of Weather and Climate Extremes at the Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre.

TSR has an impressive forecast track record for Australian-region basin cyclone activity. Their pre-season outlooks issued in early November correctly predicted that basin numbers of tropical storms and severe tropical cyclones would be below-norm in 2001/2, 2002/3, 2003/4, 2004/5, and 2006/7, and near-average in 2005/6.

Tropical storms can be a costly disaster for the northern half of Australia and adjacent southwest Pacific islands. For example, three severe tropical cyclones (Monica, Glenda and Larry) struck Australia in 2005/6. Monica hit a sparsely populated area but Glenda caused US \$ 400 million in damage. Tropical cyclone Larry left 7,000 homeless and 50,000 homes without power. It also destroyed 90% of the local Queensland banana crop and caused an insured loss of US \$ 425 million (Swiss Re, Sigma, No 2/2007).

TSR forecasts may be accessed through the website www.tropicalstormrisk.com.

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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 world's leading independent reinsurance and risk 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.

Tropical Storm Risk has won two major insurance industry awards during the past three years. In 2006 TSR was awarded the prestigious Risk Management Award at the British Insurance Awards, and in 2004 won the British Insurance Award for London Market Innovation of the Year. www.tropicalstormrisk.com

About Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre:

Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre is sponsored by Benfield, the world's leading independent reinsurance and risk intermediary. With over sixty researchers and practitioners, the Benfield UCL Hazard Research Centre is Europe's leading multidisciplinary academic hazard research centre and comprises three groups: Geological Hazards, Weather and Climate Extremes, and Disaster Studies and Management. The Centre is based at University College London, which along with Oxford and Cambridge, is in the global top ten of the THES-QS World University Rankings 2007. www.benfieldhrc.org