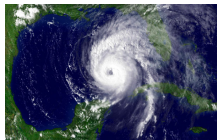


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



Over the next few years, tornadoes and tropical storms in the Gulf of Mexico could increase their sizes and intensities tremendously  
NOAA

## [Gulf of Mexico Could Be in Serious Danger](#)

*Scientists are currently conducting an extensive study of the area*

After the last disastrous hurricane seasons, the federal government has begun taking steps towards determining the seriousness of the situation the United States will be facing over the next few decades. Global warming and climate change are believed to be the main "perpetrator" behind the intensified tornadoes and tropical storms that struck America these last two years. As repairs after the last storm are underway, teams of scientists are rushing into the Gulf of Mexico area, to collect data that might help prevent such disasters from reoccurring.

This study is a huge effort on the part of several federal agencies, as well as the insurance and energy industries, all led by National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), based in Boulder, Colorado. The main goal of the initiative is for the government to be able to warn coastal communities, drilling operations, as well military commanders of the dangers posed by incoming tropical storms. Program Director Cliff Jacobs of the National Science Foundation (NSF)'s Division of Atmospheric Sciences said "The outcome of this research will shed light on the relationship between global warming and hurricanes, and will better inform decisions by government and industry."

Refineries and off-shore drilling platforms are particularly sensitive to hurricanes, especially considering that more than a quarter of U.S. petroleum-production facilities are located in the Gulf of Mexico. On the other hand, major urban centers, like New Orleans, are situated exactly in the middle of the so-called "tornado alley." The damages Hurricane Katrina caused now serve as a reminder to the devastations that storms can cause in civilian populations, if warnings are not issued on time.

The target of the project is set to 2055. By then, authorities hope to have already created a sustainable and feasible early warning system. But closer to home, the goal for the next few years is to determine exactly if and how global warming and climate change affect the entire east-coast area of the U.S., with special emphasis on the Gulf itself.