

by Ralph Lee Scott

Hurricane Web Sites

In last fall's *Wired* column, you read about the Federal Emergency Management Administration and the National Hurricane Center Web sites. In this column, we will explore current hurricane Web sites. During active storms, some of these regular sites can be slow, so I will suggest alternative sites that often are easier to access and have much the same information.

A quick source of current weather information for the United States is *Unisys Weather* <www.weather.unisys.com>, a large Web site maintained by the Unisys Corporation. Click on the left hand bar reading "Hurricane Data" to access an archives page from which you can select the Atlantic 2000 season storms. Each storm is listed, along with a tracking map and detailed storm data: type (Latitude, Long., Date, Time, Wind Speed, Pressure, Status {TS, Hurricane 1-5}).

Another big weather Web site is Ohio State University's *Buckeye Weather* or *OSU Weather* <asp1.sbs.ohio-state.edu>. This site has a "Tropical Weather" link to re-broadcasts of the following National Hurricane Center products: Tropical Weather Outlook, Tropical Weather Discussion, NCEP Tropical Desk, Monthly Tropical Weather Summary, Satellite Imagery, Aircraft Reconnaissance Information, Prior Season Summaries, and Current Weather Surface Plots. *Buckeye Weather*, while a good source of information, is occasionally down due to funding or hacker attack, sometimes slow to post bulletins, and hard to log on to when there is a major United States landfall hurricane. When this happens, move to a similar site in Hawaii.

The University of Hawaii Department of Meteorology <lumahai.soest.hawaii.edu> has a sort of mirror site for "Mainland Weather" and "Tropical Weather." Hawaii has of course, more information on Pacific Typhoons (from the Joint Typhoon Warning Center), but also features a Web page on the Atlantic Ocean that has the latest GEOS-8 Satellite Imagery and re-broadcasts of the National Hurricane Center Bulletins for the North Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico. Often when mainland United States sites are slow, Hawaii responds quickly.

If there is a major East Coast storm, the National Weather Service Office in Corpus Christi, Texas, has an excellent Web site <www.srh.noaa.gov/crp/tropical>. I like the site because the most needed information is on one page

and the navigation bars on the left take you right where you want to go. For example, there are bar links to Coastal Observations, Tropical Outlook, Atlantic IR, Gulf Water Vapor, Sector Dvorak IR.

Texas also has the excellent KHOU-TV Web site: <www.khou.com>. This site is updated by the former Director of the National Hurricane Center, Dr. Neil Frank, and has a great graphic presence. Storm text advisories and position maps are hyperlinked with other hurricane resources as graphic links on the opening page. There is also a "Galveston Beachcam" for real time Gulf weather viewing. This site is a good one to go to when there is an East Coast hurricane, especially with the up-to-date commentary from Dr. Frank. Texas storms tend to slow the site down, so you might want to look elsewhere in the event of Gulf of Mexico disturbances.

The National Hurricane Center site was reviewed by *Wired* in the Fall 1999 issue of *North Carolina Libraries*; however, the site has been updated since then. The Center has made some improvements in arrangement and added a couple of graphics to the main page. I find the site somewhat clunky to use, however, and hard to understand. The information is not presented in the same clear graphic manner as the KHOU site. When you can get to the site, it loads fast but access is a major problem, especially when Coral Gables, the site location, is under a storm warning. The site is mirrored automatically, but access is difficult during active storms.

Another good Florida site is *Hurricane Central* <www.sun-sentinel.com/storm>. This site has a lots of good news releases and current information. For example, a current article is "Hurricane Shelter for Pets: A Doggone Dilemma." The article deals with evacuation issues in densely populated areas where companion animals are common. The current solution is large outdoor evacuation areas (like fairgrounds) located outside coastal zones that can accommodate animals and their owners. While this site obviously has a Florida focus, it has good graphics and is very up to date.

The Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Center at U.S. Naval Base Norfolk <www.nlmoc.navy.mil> and its new mirror site <www4.nlmoc.navy.mil> have a "Tropical Cyclone" link, which includes Hurricane Warnings and Ar-

chives, Current Tropical Discussions and Analysis, Forecasting Aids, Storm Track Data, along with current conditions. The Norfolk Sortie Conditions are of major interest. When the Atlantic Fleet sorties because of a storm, you know it must be time to batten down the North Carolina hatches!

Closer to home, the Emergency Management Division of the North Carolina Department of Crime Control and Public Safety has an excellent Web site: <www.dem.dcc.state.nc.us>. Current weather bulletins are posted, along with storm response situation reports. This site is updated regularly and seems to be accessible during needed times. WRAL <www.wral-tv.com/weather> has good links to hurricane information and their main NC Hurricane Web site *Stormtrack 2000*. Other media in the state also have hurricane information pages, for example WECT in Wilmington <<http://www.wect.com/>>.

North Carolina also has a Web page <www.ncstormsurge.com> with basic information about projected storm surges in specific counties. This project is run in part by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Wilmington District. This year FEMA has a new Tropical Storm Watch Page (which was also reviewed in the Fall 1999 *North Carolina Libraries* issue) at <www.fema.gov/fema/trop.htm>. This site has the usual links to current storm data and current interest articles (example: "Now is Good Time to Buy Flood Insurance FEMA Says").

For a comprehensive hurricane technical weather page link, I recommend the Hurricane Hunters Web site <www.hurricanehunters.com>. A new, commercial weather site is *The Weather Guys* at <www.weatherguys.com>. This site is free and allows you to sign up for an e-mail subscription to text NOAA weather bulletins.

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