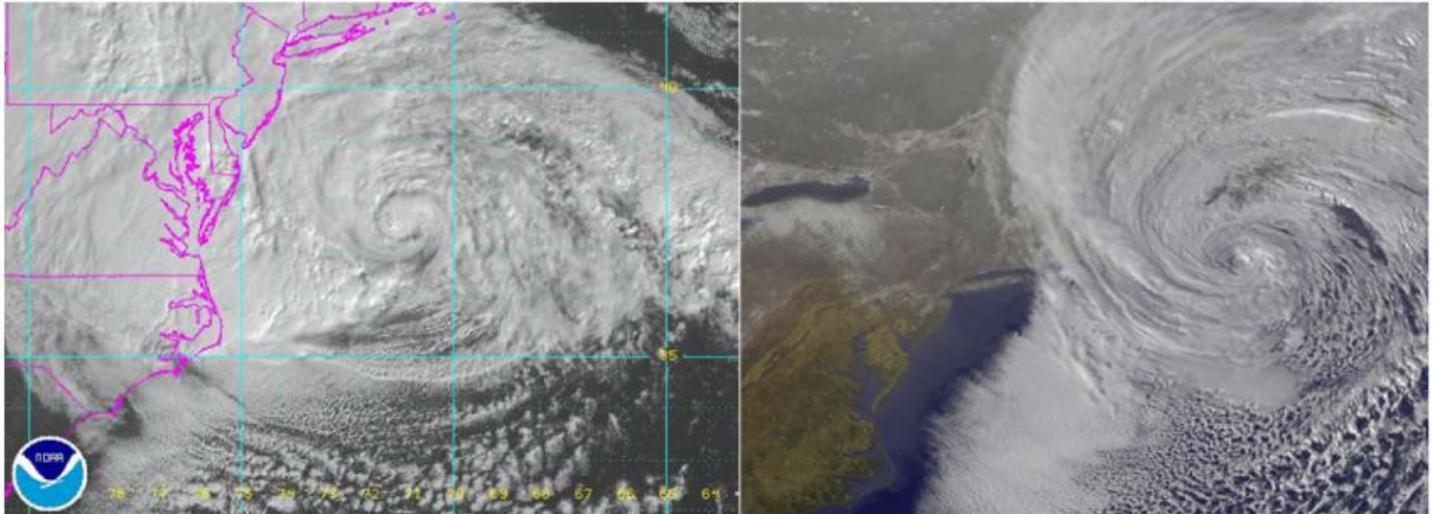


# Nor'easters vs Hurricanes: Both destructive with similarities, but also big differences

[pressofatlanticcity.com/weather/weathercenter/hurricanes/nor-easters-vs-hurricanes-both-destructive-with-similarities-but-also/article\\_e0641e8e-74f7-11e6-9fb4-e79aa3ec2b1e.html](http://pressofatlanticcity.com/weather/weathercenter/hurricanes/nor-easters-vs-hurricanes-both-destructive-with-similarities-but-also/article_e0641e8e-74f7-11e6-9fb4-e79aa3ec2b1e.html)

By DAN SKELDON, Press meteorologist

9/7/2016



Left: Hurricane Sandy, right: February 8-9, 2013 Nor'easter. Source: NOAA/NASA

One strikes hard and fast in the summer.

The other is more prolonged, favors the winter, but can be just as destructive.

Hurricanes and Nor'easters have struck South Jersey for centuries, both with the proven ability to cause death and destruction. While the two storms possess some similarities to each other, the differences are also significant, as each storm varies in the types and severity of its impact on South Jersey.

Season:

Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30 each year, and peaks in late August through September. While Sandy struck in late October, August 15 through September 30 is the most likely window for South Jersey to feel the direct or indirect impact from a hurricane.

There is no official start and end date for Nor'easter season, but they can generally strike from as early as October to as late as May. The strongest Nor'easters usually occur during the winter months, with November through March typically bringing the most formidable threats from coastal storms.

Timing:

Hurricanes hit hard and fast, Nor'easters do their dirty work over a more prolonged and gradual rate. When hurricanes come up the East Coast, they usually accelerate, picking up speed as they get caught up in the jet stream. That means most hurricanes strike in a day, sometimes less, but usually not much longer. Because the water off of South Jersey is colder, hurricanes slowly weaken as they arrive. The prevailing weather pattern and water temperatures together mean that there is really no possibility of a slow-moving hurricane stalling off of our coast and inflicting damage for days. The core of a hurricane (with hurricane force winds) will strike quickly but

intensely, usually lasting for two to six hours.

Nor'easters will strike slow and steadily, having the ability to stall off our coast as they are immune to colder water temperatures. A stalling coastal storm can last for days, sometimes as many as three to five, continuously battering the coast with winds, waves, tidal flooding, and beach erosion. While Nor'easters may not be as intense as hurricanes, they are capable of inflicting the same damage a hurricane will do in one day, but instead spread out over several days.

Winds:

A hurricane will always pack the stronger winds. By definition, a hurricane has winds of at least 74 miles-per-hour. South Jersey could be hit by a Category One, Two, or Three hurricane, which means conceivably that the peak winds a hurricane could bring to the area would be about 115 miles-per-hour. However, gusts could be even higher.

Only the strongest Nor'easter is capable of producing hurricane force winds, and even then, it would likely be only wind gusts, not sustained winds. Nevertheless, Nor'easters can bring damaging winds to South Jersey. Typical winds from coastal storms can range from 30 to 60 miles-per-hour.

Storm surge:

Because a hurricane is stronger, it can bring a greater storm surge into South Jersey. A Category 3 hurricane could produce a 10 foot storm surge. Sandy, a Category 1 storm, brought a 2 to 5 foot storm surge to South Jersey, and a much greater surge to our north. Because of the quick speed of a hurricane, normally it's only one or occasionally two high tides that will experience the worst surge.

Nor'easters again will make up in duration what they lack in intensity. Because they can stall, sometimes for days at a time, as many as six or seven high tide cycles can be impacted. Water can remain trapped in the back bays for days, as the surge slowly builds with each successive high tide.

Warnings:

The National Hurricane Center is responsible for issuing watches and warnings for tropical storms and hurricanes. These warnings can cause evacuations to be issued for parts of the South Jersey shore if the forecast is dire enough.

The National Weather Service in Mount Holly handles warnings for Nor'easters, and will issue coastal flood advisories and warnings, wind advisories and high wind warnings, high surf advisories, and flood warnings for South Jersey as needed during a coastal storm. Evacuations due to Nor'easters are rare, though do happen occasionally on a localized basis.