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MEDIA RELEASE

MODERATE CHANCES FOR TROPICAL CYCLONES THIS SEASON IN FIJI

With tropical cyclone season approaching, the Fiji Meteorological Service has released its annual Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook which predicts that there are moderate chances that Fiji will experience tropical cyclone activity this year.

As many as two tropical cyclones can be expected in Fiji this season – together with associated heavy rainstorms – with one possibly reaching or exceeding Category 3. There is a high probability that these cyclones will pass close to, or over, the northern and eastern parts of Fiji.

The Permanent Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport, Commander Francis Kean, stressed that these are predictions based on weather modelling, not actual forecasts.

However, Mr. Kean said that it is critical that communities across Fiji act responsibly and pay close attention to all weather updates issued by the Fiji Meteorological Service and Government.

“It is very important that Fijians are quick to heed warnings and take the necessary precautions in order to save lives and protect property,” he said.

Mr. Kean explained that the Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre based in Nadi is responsible for monitoring cyclone activity in a specific area of the Pacific, known as its Area of Responsibility or AOR.

“The RSMC’s AOR includes Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Tuvalu, Tokelau, Independent Samoa, American Samoa, Wallis and Futuna, Tonga, Niue, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia,” he said

Mr. Kean said that there are higher than average chances that severe tropical cyclones will affect the region this season.

“Six to ten tropical cyclones are expected to occur within the AOR in the 2014/15 season, with two to four predicted to reach Category 3 and one to two predicted to reach Category 4 or 5,” he said.

Mr. Kean stressed again that these are predictions to give the public a general idea about what to expect for the upcoming cyclone season and not definite numbers.

“It is expected that the total number of tropical cyclones will be in the vicinity of the values listed, and not necessarily within the given ranges,” he said.

Mr. Kean said that based on the latest information tropical cyclone activity for Wallis and Fortuna, Tuvalu, Samoa, Niue, Tonga, Southern Cook Islands, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu is predicted to be high; cyclone activity for Fiji, New Caledonia, Northern Cook Islands and French Polynesia is predicted to be moderate; and cyclone activity for Tokelau is predicted to be low.

He added that the chances of **severe** cyclones are high this season for Tuvalu, Samoa, Niue, Tonga, Southern Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands; moderate for Fiji, New Caledonia, Northern Cook Islands and French Polynesia; and low for Kiribati, Tokelau and Wallis and Fortuna.

Mr. Kean said that in seasons similar to the current one most of the cyclones originate just east of the Dateline.

“The current El Niño Southern Oscillation conditions, the existence of a warm pool of sea surface and the sub-surface temperature anomalies in the region all point to a cyclone genesis trough for the 2014/15 season near and east of the Dateline,” he said.

The official 2014/15 tropical cyclone season begins on 1 November 2014 and ends on 30 April 2015, although cyclones can form in months outside of this period. The peak period for cyclones in the region is usually from January to March.

A detailed version of the 2014/15 Tropical Cyclone Season Outlook issued by the Fiji Meteorological Service is available on its website, www.met.gov.fj.

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