

# Rethinking hurricanes

Another hurricane season is upon us and the people of the Cayman Islands undoubtedly care more than ever after Hurricane Ivan's terrifying visit last year.

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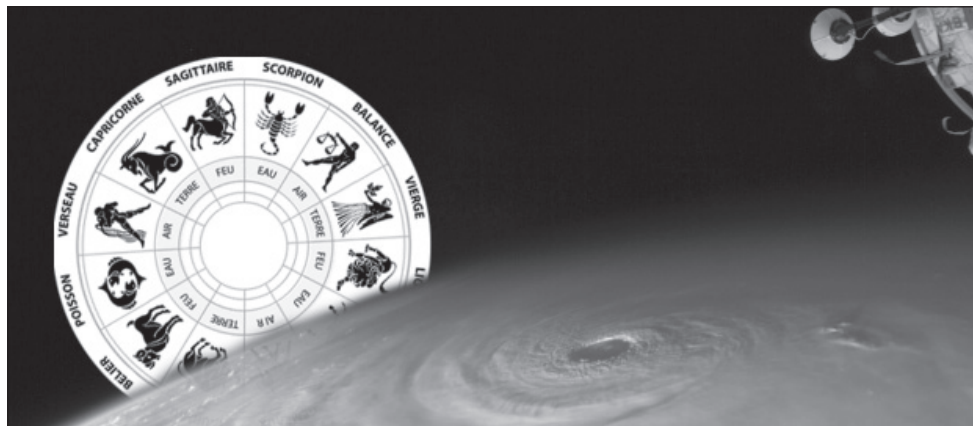
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A pair of UK scientists recently announced that they have developed a better method for predicting the path and intensity of hurricanes. It was accurate 74 percent of the time in tests, they say.

If their model holds up, science may have served us well once again. But wait, shouldn't we consider other forms of prediction and protection? There are, after all, more popular ways than science to predict the future. Why aren't we giving these alternative methods a chance instead of always relying on boring evidence and observation?

Astrology, for example, can predict a bad day with ease and a category 5 hurricane certainly qualifies as a bad day for anyone hammered by it. So why bother with satellites and meteorologists when we can hire a single astrologer to chart our future? Probably the majority of people in the Cayman Islands believe astrology is valid, so why not read the stars to figure out the day and the hour when the next big hurricane will hit us? Failing to exploit this information seems criminally negligent to me.

We also must rethink Cayman's strict building codes. Why are we spending so much time and money trying to make our homes safe from hurricanes with concrete walls and hurricane straps? Feng shui can do the same thing just by rearranging furniture. Believers



**SCIENCE VS. SUPERSTITION.** Is science the best way we have to cope with hurricanes in the Cayman Islands? Perhaps not, according to the beliefs of many. *Photo art: NASA/ISS/Guy P. Harrison*

say this ancient system of energy alignment brings success to a home's occupants. If true, then it should be able to protect against the 150 mph winds and 10-foot waves that threaten the success of a home's occupants. It's a lot easier to reposition the couch and coffee table than it is to board up windows so let's get busy and start rewriting Cayman's building codes with a new emphasis on furniture placement. Maybe numerology can help, too.

There is also a lot of concern about medical needs during and after a major hurricane. First of all, why are we committed to doctors and nurses? Yes, they are trained in the use of a system called medical science that seems to work pretty well most of the time, but why bother when so many people in the Cayman Islands say there are more effective ways to treat the sick and injured? Perhaps we should wean ourselves off antibiotics, vaccines and surgical procedures and go a different route. So what if medical science has saved countless millions of lives around the world? That doesn't prove anything.

If a flying shingle hits you in the head during a hurricane, don't panic and run off to the hospital like a sissy. Get

a professional to tap on your forehead or crack your back. And don't forget crystals. Believers swear they can heal a variety of injuries.

If you get an infection or contract cholera in the post-hurricane muck, it's not the end of the world, just drink some homeopathic water. Despite having no significant ingredients, a lot of people say the stuff works wonders.

While these alternative methods are often as expensive as or more expensive than what medical science offers, they do save a lot of money when you factor in the low educational and training needs of the practitioners. Infrastructure is also significantly less than a typical hospital. Often little more than a cash register is needed to provide these cures to the public.

Best of all, however, we need never risk personal injury or loss of property from hurricanes in the first place. We can avoid the whole mess by listening to psychics. You may not have heard, but these special people can predict the future. No, really, that's what they do. It's their job.

If we are going to be killed by a hurricane or lose our homes to one, surely any average psychic can warn us well in advance.

They can tell us if we need to evacuate or sell our doomed house months in advance of the hurricane's arrival. Obviously, our government needs to hire some psychics immediately.

Why have we been listening to scientists anyway? Those nerds actually admit that they can't predict hurricanes with perfect accuracy. Psychics, on the other hand, can see a new lover or a raise at work coming. If they can do that, don't you think they will see a 300-mile-wide hurricane on its way?

Considering the many alternatives available, the Cayman Islands government clearly needs to rethink its approach to hurricane safety. A huge portion of our population believes in astrology, feng shui, anti-science medical cures, psychic predictions, and other supernatural wonders. Don't these citizens have a right to be protected by means they say work?

If, however, these systems don't work, then why do we look the other way while so many people continue to waste time and money believing in them?

Perhaps it is not the science behind hurricane prediction and preparation that needs new attention, but the gullibility of our population.