On the relationship between West African dust outbreaks and Atlantic hurricane activity

A. Evan (1,2) and A. Heidinger (1,3)
(1) Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, WI, USA, (2) Department of Atmospheric and Oceanic Sciences, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, WI, USA, (4) Office of Research and Applications, NOAA/NESDIS, Madison WI, USA

Recent work has shown a statistical climatological relationship between African dust outbreaks and North Atlantic tropical cyclone frequency and intensity. However, although observational studies have suggested thermodynamic connection between mineral aerosols and tropical cyclones, a definite causal link has yet to be proven. Here I propose that the long-term association between dust storms and tropical cyclones is through the aerosols’ surface radiative forcing. In this presentation I will review some recent advances in understanding the link between dust and hurricanes, present a theoretical framework for how dust and tropical cyclones are connected in the Atlantic climate system, and describe a new model that uses satellite observation of aerosols to quantify the impact dust has on ocean temperature. I will also describe results from this model, which suggests that changes in Atlantic dust cover have a non-negligible impact on ocean temperature, and are partially responsible for the recent upward trend in tropical Atlantic surface temperatures that are often associated with anthropogenic increases in greenhouse gases.