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Abstract
Google trends and Google Insights are two freely available, searchable databases that track the normalized interest in specific search queries. Using these databases, this poster examines search patterns related to hurricanes. Searching the word "hurricane" using Google Trends shows a predictable seasonal pattern. Yearly spikes in hurricane searches appear to be related to the severity of the storms making landfall. Google Hot Trends can also be used to track the most searched topics on a particular day. Google Insights can be used to compare interest in certain topics among geographic areas. During September and August, 2008, which included the landfalls of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, search interest for the term "hurricane" was higher for Louisiana than Texas for nearly the whole two-month period, including the days preceding Ike's landfall. The difference in search interest for "Hurricane Ike" between Texas and Louisiana appeared to be related to changes in track forecast.

Implications and Limitations
Individuals often seek additional information before making a hurricane evacuation decision (e.g. Miletti and Darlington, 1997). Because Google captures 64.6% of the search engine market with ~7 billion searches (based on Nielsen data in Whitney, 2009), it is likely at least a portion of hurricane information seekers are using Google to find that additional information. Google searches have been used to track phenomena such as flu outbreaks (Ginsberg, et al, 2009). The current research is limited to only publicly available data. However, given access to actual (as opposed to normalized) search volume data, it may be possible to uncover the types of information that stimulate additional searching as well as show the additional information individuals seek.