



Hurricane Milton

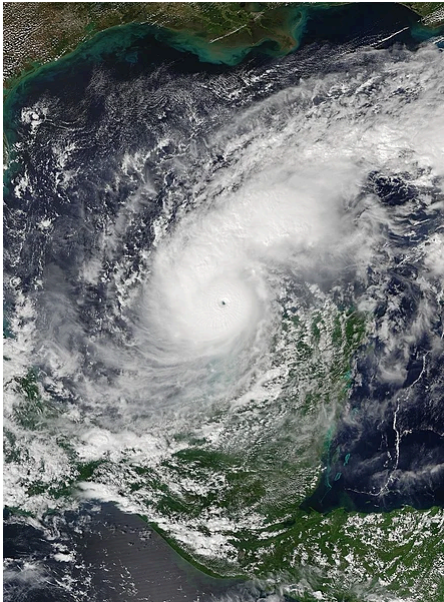
Hurricane Milton is a strong tropical cyclone that made landfall in the U.S. state of Florida, less than two weeks after Hurricane Helene devastated the state's Big Bend region.^[1] The thirteenth named storm, ninth hurricane, fourth major hurricane, and second Category 5 hurricane of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, Milton formed from a long-tracked tropical disturbance which originated in the western Caribbean Sea and consolidated in the Bay of Campeche on October 5. The storm then underwent explosive intensification, and became a Category 5 hurricane on October 7 while still over the Gulf of Mexico. At peak intensity, the hurricane was the fifth-most intense in the Atlantic on record, and is the most powerful tropical cyclone worldwide in 2024.^[2] Milton weakened to Category 4 after an eyewall replacement cycle, then regained strength and became a Category 5 hurricane again.^{[3][4]} Increasing wind shear then caused the hurricane to weaken as it turned northeastwards towards Florida, eventually falling to Category 3 intensity before making landfall near Siesta Key during the evening on October 9th.^{[5][6]}

Ahead of the hurricane, Florida declared a state of emergency in which many coastal residents were ordered to evacuate. Preparations were also undertaken in Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula. The hurricane also caused a tornado outbreak in Florida along with widespread flooding. As of October 9, Milton had killed at least four people.^[c]

Meteorological history

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) first outlined an area for possible development in the western Caribbean Sea on September 26.^[10] A broad area of low pressure formed in the western Caribbean, producing disorganized showers and

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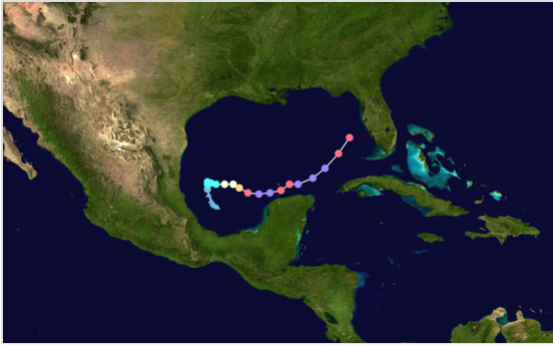


Milton near peak intensity just north of the Yucatán Peninsula on October 7

Meteorological history

Formed	October 5, 2024
Category 5 major hurricane	
<i>1-minute sustained (SSHWS/NWS)</i>	
Highest winds	180 mph (285 km/h)
Lowest pressure	897 mbar (hPa); 26.49 inHg
Overall effects	
Fatalities	4+ ^[a]
Injuries	14+ ^[b]
Damage	Unknown
Areas affected	Northern <u>Mexico</u> , · <u>Yucatán Peninsula</u> · <u>Greater Antilles (Cuba)</u> · <u>Southeastern United States</u> (especially <u>Florida</u> , <u>Georgia</u>) · <u>Lucayan Archipelago</u> (<u>The Bahamas</u>)

Part of the **2024 Atlantic hurricane season**



Map plotting the storm's track and intensity, according to the Saffir–Simpson scale

Map key

Saffir–Simpson scale

- ☐ Tropical depression (≤ 38 mph, ≤ 62 km/h)
- ☐ Tropical storm (39–73 mph, 63–118 km/h)
- ☐ Category 1 (74–95 mph, 119–153 km/h)
- ☐ Category 2 (96–110 mph, 154–177 km/h)
- ☐ Category 3 (111–129 mph, 178–208 km/h)
- ☐ Category 4 (130–156 mph, 209–251 km/h)
- ☐ Category 5 (≥ 157 mph, ≥ 252 km/h)
- ☐ Unknown

Storm type

- ☒ Tropical cyclone
- ☒ Subtropical cyclone
- ☒ Extratropical cyclone, remnant low, tropical disturbance, or monsoon depression



Satellite photo from the International Space Station shows Hurricane Milton as a Category 5 hurricane in the Gulf of Mexico on Oct. 8, 2024.

environmental conditions consisting of very warm sea surface temperatures (SSTs) near 31 °C (88 °F), high mid-level relative humidity values and low wind shear. As it did so, a pinhole eye measuring 4 nautical miles (7 km) soon developed within very deep convection of around −80 °C (−112 °F),^[22] becoming a major hurricane and soon after a Category 5 hurricane, by 11:00 UTC and 16:00 UTC respectively on October 7,^{[23][24]} making it the second Category 5 hurricane of the season. Milton reached its peak intensity at 00:00 UTC on October 8 with maximum sustained winds of 180 mph (285 km/h) and a minimum central pressure of 897 mbar (26.49 inHg), the most intense since Wilma in 2005, making Milton the fifth-most intense Atlantic hurricane on record.^{[25][2][26]} In the 24-hour period from 00:00 UTC October 7 to 00:00 UTC October 8, the pressure fell from 981 mb (28.97 inHg) to 897 mbar (26.49 inHg), a

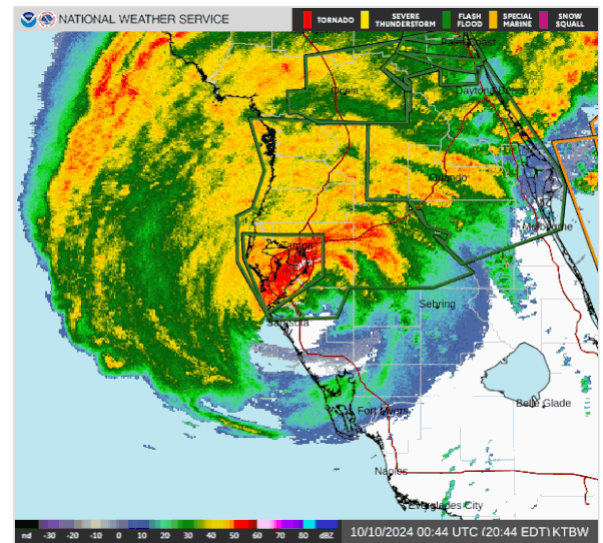
thunderstorms^[11] before degenerating into an open trough two days later.^[12] The disturbance then interacted with the remnants of Tropical Depression Eleven-E in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and a stationary front,^[13] and consolidated in the Bay of Campeche. By October 4,^[14] showing more signs of development, it was designated *Invest 92L*. The next day, as associated showers and thunderstorms organized further,^[15] the NHC upgraded it to Tropical Depression Fourteen,^[16] then to Tropical Storm Milton less than three hours later as satellite wind data indicated the storm was producing gale-force winds.^[17] The system gradually strengthened as it moved erratically in the Bay of Campeche due to weak steering currents. A developing mid-level trough over the Central United States eventually helped steer Milton eastward across the Gulf of Mexico. Milton's radius of maximum winds (RMW) was only 30 nautical miles (56 km), marking it as a relatively small storm.^[18] Spiral banding and consistent bursts of convection continued through the early morning of October 6.^[19]

By the afternoon of October 6, Hurricane Hunters had found that Milton had intensified into a hurricane, with an intermittent eye feature.^[21] Overnight, Milton began to undergo explosive intensification, enabled by highly favorable

Most intense Atlantic hurricanes ()				
Rank	Hurricane	Season	Pressure	
			hPa	inHg
1	<u>Wilma</u>	<u>2005</u>	882	26.05
2	<u>Gilbert</u>	<u>1988</u>	888	26.23
3	<u>"Labor Day"</u>	<u>1935</u>	892	26.34
4	<u>Rita</u>	<u>2005</u>	895	26.43
5	<u>Milton</u>	<u>2024</u>	897	26.49
6	<u>Allen</u>	<u>1980</u>	899	26.55
7	<u>Camille</u>	<u>1969</u>	900	26.58
8	<u>Katrina</u>	<u>2005</u>	902	26.64
9	<u>Mitch</u>	<u>1998</u>	905	26.73
	<u>Dean</u>	<u>2007</u>		
Source: HURDAT ^[20]				

drop of 84 mb (2.48 inHg), while the winds increased by 90 mph (145 km/h). This was also the third-fastest period of rapid intensification in the Atlantic after Wilma and Hurricane Felix, and the fastest in the Gulf of Mexico.^[27]

After peaking in intensity, further strengthening was halted by an eyewall replacement cycle, causing the storm to weaken to Category 4 intensity later that night.^{[28][29][30]} But a larger eye became increasingly well-defined, and Milton re-achieved Category 5 intensity by the afternoon of October 8,^[4] by which time the hurricane had undergone a second round of rapid deepening to a secondary peak with winds of 165 mph (270 km/h) and a pressure of 902 mbar (26.64 inHg) at 00:00 UTC on October 9.^[31] By this time, Milton had begun to turn towards the northeast and accelerate from the trough steering it towards Florida.^[4] The following day on October 9, conditions unfavorable for cyclonic intensification began to affect Milton,^[d] which fell below Category 5 intensity early that morning.^[34] The eye of the hurricane became cloud-filled and increasingly ill-defined while the convection became more ragged-looking as strong southwesterly wind shear of 35–40 mph (56–65 km/h) overtook the hurricane.^[35] Milton made landfall at about 00:30 UTC on October 10 (8:30 p.m. local time on October 9) near Siesta Key, Florida, as a Category 3 hurricane with winds of 120 mph (195 km/h).^[36] At around 2 a.m local time, Milton downgraded to a Category 1 hurricane.^[37]



Hurricane Milton landfall on radar.

Preparations

Mexico

On October 6, the Mexican government issued a tropical storm watch for the northern coast of the Yucatán Peninsula, from Celestún to Cancún.^{[38][39]} The watch was upgraded to tropical storm warnings and hurricane watches^{[40][41]} later in the day, then hurricane warnings the following day.^{[42][43]} Some 2,711 people voluntarily evacuated from the island of Holbox, Quintana Roo Governor Mara Lezama reported.^{[44][45]} The Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) mobilized hundreds of workers and pieces of equipment to be placed in Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo in preparation for Milton.^[46] The Secretariat of the Navy announced that the Mexican Navy would be distributed around affected regions for distribution of resources.^[46] Services on the Tren Maya were suspended.^[44]

Panic buying was observed in Mérida ahead of the storm.^[47] Non-essential government services, including public transportation, were suspended in parts of Yucatán as Milton rapidly intensified on October 7.^[48] Governor Joaquín Díaz Mena ordered the closure of all schools and ports in Yucatán.^[49]

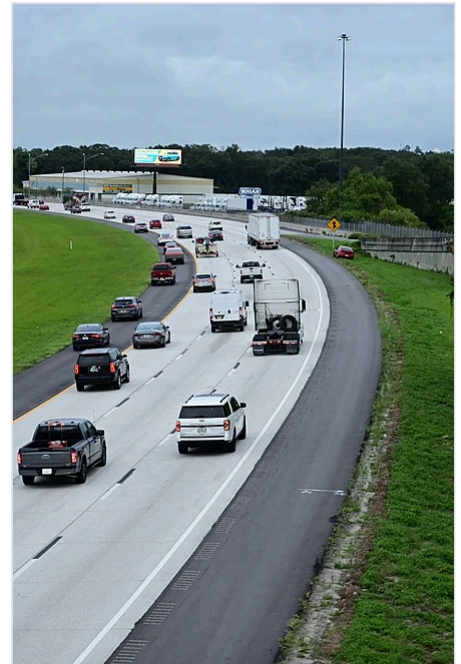
United States

Florida

On October 5, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency.^[50] He also issued an executive order requiring debris management sites and landfills in counties affected by Hurricane Helene to remain open around the clock to help remove debris before Milton made landfall. The order also increased the number of Florida National Guardsmen working on debris removal from 800 to 4,000 to keep debris becoming a hazard in Milton's high winds.^{[51][52]} Dump trucks were deployed to help remove mounds of debris.^[53] Sandbagging sites opened across the state.^[54]

Two days later, hurricane and tropical storm warnings were declared for the Florida West Coast^[55], nearly 15 million people across Florida were under flood watches^[56]; and President Joe Biden approved an emergency declaration for the state.^[56] DeSantis ordered the Florida Department of Transportation and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to coordinate resources.^[57] He suspended tolls on many roads in western Florida, including Florida's Turnpike. Many school systems^[58] and universities across the state canceled classes or were closed, including the University of South Florida in Tampa and Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers.^{[59][60]} Rollins College evacuated campus.^[61] Marion County opened up numerous schools as emergency shelters.^[62]

Amtrak suspended its *Silver Service* between Jacksonville and Miami from October 7 to 11 and cancelled the Auto Train from October 8 to 10.^[63] Many airports throughout the state, particularly in Central and Southwest Florida, will be closed as a result of Milton, including Tampa International Airport, Sarasota–Bradenton International Airport, St. Pete–Clearwater International Airport, Palm Beach International Airport, and Orlando International Airport.^{[64][65][66]} Thousands of flights intending to arrive or depart from Florida are expected to be canceled.^[67] All Allegiant Air flights on October 9 and 10 in the state were canceled.^[68] Several cruise lines have had their schedule affected due to the storm.^[64] The October 7 launch of Hera occurred as planned, but the launch of the Europa Clipper space launch was delayed.^{[69][70]} SpaceX Crew-8's return was postponed to October 13.^[71] Brightline operations were suspended between West Palm Beach and Orlando stations beginning on October 8.^[72] Several attractions were to close at Walt Disney World; Legoland Florida closed as well.^[73] Starting on October 8, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay was to close for three days.^[74]



Emergency shoulder use (left shoulder only) on eastbound Interstate 4 near Lakeland on October 7

An estimated six million Floridians were ordered to evacuate, marking one of the largest evacuation orders in state history since Hurricane Irma in 2017. The evacuation orders were primarily situated in Hillsborough and surrounding counties.^[75] Volusia and Marion counties also issued evacuation orders for homes at risk.^{[76][62]} United Airlines issued a travel advisory for five airports in the state.^[77] Throughout the Tampa Bay area, comfort stations and locations to do basic utilities that were opened due to Helene were closed due to Milton.^[78] In Longboat Key, officials stated that residents should evacuate from the town.^[79] In coordination with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Uber offered free rides to and from state shelters.^[80]

The National Hockey League cancelled the preseason finale for the Tampa Bay Lightning, which was initially postponed from Helene. All University of Central Florida sporting events scheduled for October 9 and 10 were cancelled as well.^[81] The South Florida Bulls football game against the Memphis Tigers was postponed from October 11 to October 12.^[82]

The National Football League's Tampa Bay Buccaneers relocated to New Orleans ahead of their game against the New Orleans Saints on October 13.^[83]

Publix and Walmart altered store hours and closed several other of their locations in preparation for the storm and their locations among other stores faced shortages of items such as bottled water, alcohol, canned goods, and snacks due to panic buying.^{[84][85]} Gas station shortages occurred across the state, with 16.5% out by the afternoon of October 8, including 43% in the Tampa Bay area according to GasBuddy. Governor DeSantis said fuel replenishment efforts were underway and said that there was not a fuel shortage. The Florida Highway Patrol began escorting fuel tankers to help replenish gas stations ahead of landfall to aid in evacuation efforts. DeSantis also urged that people consider evacuating "tens of miles" instead of "hundreds of miles". The American Automobile Association advised Floridians to "take only what you need" and to avoid letting one's gas tank getting too low before looking for a place to fill up.^{[86][87]} Thirty-three Waffle House locations in Milton's projected path were closed, indicating a red level on the Waffle House Index.^[88]

President Joe Biden postponed a planned trip from October 10 to 15 to Angola and Germany in order to oversee preparations and the response and urged those living in areas at risk to evacuate, saying that it was a matter of life and death.^[53]

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suffered a staffing shortage ahead of the storm, with only 9% of the agency's staff available. According to Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, the agency remained ready to respond, saying that "we can respond to multiple events at a single time".^[89] Over the previous five years at least 25% of staff remained available by October 7. This figure was lower than in 2017 when FEMA's staff availability dropped to 19% as FEMA staff responded to Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, and Hurricane Maria.^[90] Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre ended a briefing, accusing journalists of spreading misinformation related to disaster funding.^[91]

There were casualties involved as a result of evacuating: one fatality occurred after a car accident in Marion County southeast of Orange Lake,^[8] while three people were injured after the plane they were in crashed into Tampa Bay after its engine failed while taking off from Albert Whitted Airport in St. Petersburg.^[92] In addition, two people died on eastbound Highway 82 while evacuating.^[9]

On an October 8th observation flight NOAA scientists spread the ashes of hurricane scientist Peter Dodge into the eye of the storm.^[93]

Georgia

Coastal Georgia was placed under tropical storm warning.^[94]

On October 7, Atlanta Motor Speedway opened its campground for evacuees with pop-up campers and tents with access to a complementary shower house, including those from Florida, in collaboration with the Henry County Emergency Management Agency. A limited number of camping spaces with water, power, and sewer hook-ups were made available as well.^[95]

On October 8, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp issued an executive order which declared a state of emergency across 40 counties and ordered the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency to activate the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan and Georgia Department of Transportation and Georgia Department of Public Safety to take action to ensure the expeditious movement of utility vehicles, equipment, and personnel throughout the state to eliminate any potential power outages. The order also called up to 250 Georgia National Guard troops to be used in preparation, response, and recovery efforts.^[96]

Cumberland Island National Seashore closed indefinitely on October 8.^[97]

The Bahamas

A tropical storm watch was issued for Extreme Northwest Bahamian Islands on October 8, upgraded six hours later to a tropical storm warning.^{[98][99][100]} Grand Bahama activated their emergency operations center.^[101] The Royal Bahamas Defence Force went on standby with supplies prepared for Hurricane Milton.^[102] In-person schools on Grand Bahama, Bimini, Abaco, and Grand Cay were closed.^[103] The Anglican Central Education Authority closed two campuses.^[104] Bahamian students in Florida were ordered to evacuate; Bahamasair made two flights on October 7 and 8 to Orlando.^[105] Bahamas Power and Light offices in northern islands closed October 9.^[106] Banks on Grand Bahama and Abaco closed October 10.^[107]

A large surge in sales of hurricane related supplies occurred.^[108]

Impact

Mexico

Heavy rainfall from Milton caused flooding in the city of Campeche.^[109] Dangerous storm surge and torrential rainfall impacted the state of Yucatán, with the seawall at Progreso being inundated by high waves. Over 12,000 people were affected in the state by power outages.^[110]

Flooding from the storm surge led to evacuations being carried out during the hurricane in Celestún.^[111] Strong waves caused sections of the Ciudad del Carmen–Isla Aguada federal highway

Casualties and damages by country

Country	Deaths	Injuries	Damage cost (USD)
Mexico	1	0	Unknown
Cuba	0	0	Unknown
Bahamas	0	1	Unknown
United States	3	13	Unknown
Total	4	14	Unknown

to be inundated by sea waters.^[112] A man drowned in Calkiní due to waves produced by the hurricane.^{[113][7]} Heavy winds from Milton caused an old house in Progreso to collapse,^[114] and in Chuburná heavy winds and rainfall nearly demolished a home.^[115]

The municipalities of Sisal and Celestún suffered the most damage, with flooding, fallen trees, and blackouts affecting the cities. In Sisal, there were reports of some roofs of softball field stands and palapas collapsing. Over a thousand people from El Cuyo, Río Lagartos, and Las Coloradas needed to be transferred to shelters.^[116] Heavy swells and intense winds from Milton destroyed the dock of the port of Chelem.^[117] Cancún International Airport cancelled several flights due to Milton.^[44]

Cuba

As Milton neared Cuba, its rainbands caused flooding to be reported in Surgidero de Batabanó.^[118] In Havana Bay, deteriorating weather conditions from Milton caused officials to suspend ferry services on October 8.^[119] The Cuban Weather Service reported that Western Cuba experienced winds of 25–30 miles per hour (40–48 km/h) and maximum gusts in Casablanca, Havana, of 50 miles per hour (80 km/h).^[120]

United States

Florida

On October 9, 19 confirmed tornadoes touched down in Florida before the storm made landfall.^[121] At least two tornadoes moved across I-75.^[122] Another tornado touched down in North Fort Myers around 1:00 p.m, causing extensive damage to the area.^[123] A likely tornado in Cocoa Beach ripped off the roof of a Wells Fargo bank.^[124] At 6 p.m, the National Weather Service post in Miami, which covers much of South Florida, reported that they had issued 55 tornado warnings, and confirmed nine tornadoes on a preliminary basis.^[125] The county sheriff confirmed "multiple fatalities" and a county spokesperson for St. Lucie County has confirmed that dozens of homes have been damaged from a large tornado near Fort Pierce.^[126] In total, a record 126 tornado warnings have been issued throughout the state.^[127]

Key West saw a large decline in commercial activity as a result of Milton and the closure of the Port of Key West.^[128] Across the state, about 125 homes were destroyed before Milton made landfall, and more than 2.6 million homes and buildings were left without power.^{[129][130]} Ten people were injured in Wellington.^[131]

Tropicana Field, which had been set up to house first responders, lost a large part of its fiberglass roof as a result of wind gusts.^[132]

The Bahamas

On October 9, the Bahamas Department of Meteorology reported that a likely downburst occurred on Nassau. The strong winds caused roof damage and an injury.^[133]

See also



***Tropical cyclones
portal***

- Weather of 2024
- Tropical cyclones in 2024
- Timeline of the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season
- List of Category 5 Atlantic hurricanes
- List of Florida hurricanes (2000–present)


Notes

- One direct and three indirect
- 11 direct and three indirect
- One in Mexico^[7] and three in the United States.^{[8][9]}
- In the northern hemisphere, high levels of southerly wind shear result in the asymmetric distribution of warm, moist air around the center of convection, which stifles the formation of thunderstorms that make up the hurricane.^{[32][33]}

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External links

- The National Hurricane Center's advisory archive on Hurricane Milton (<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/archive/2024/MILTON.shtml?>)
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