

= 1952 Groundhog Day tropical storm =

The extraordinary 1952 Groundhog Day Storm was the only Atlantic tropical cyclone on record in the month of February . First observed in the western Caribbean Sea on February 2 as a non @-@ frontal low , it moved rapidly throughout its duration and struck southwestern Florida early the next day as a gale @-@ force storm . In the state , the winds damaged some crops and power lines , but no serious damage was reported . The system became a tropical storm after emerging over the Atlantic Ocean before quickly transitioning into an extratropical cyclone on February 4 . Strong winds and waves washed a freighter ashore , but no injuries were related to the event . Subsequently , the storm brushed eastern New England , causing minor power outages , before it moved inland near Maine . There were no reported fatalities related to the storm .

= = Meteorological history = =

On February 2 , Groundhog Day , a disturbance was first observed in the western Caribbean Sea . Winds were estimated at around 35 mph (55 km / h) , and it tracked rapidly northward , initially to the north @-@ northwest . After passing near Cancún along the Yucatan Peninsula , it turned northeastward and brushed the northwest coast of Cuba . Early on February 3 the storm approached Key West , and shortly thereafter moved ashore near Cape Sable , Florida . It quickly crossed the state , passing near Miami before emerging into the western Atlantic Ocean . The Miami National Weather Service office recorded a wind gust of 68 mph (110 km / h) , as well as sustained tropical storm force winds for about four hours ; the station also recorded a barometric pressure of 1004 mbar (29 @.@ 66 inHg) .

After leaving Florida , the storm continued rapidly northeastward and transitioned into a tropical cyclone . Late on February 3 it reached its peak strength with maximum sustained winds of 70 mph (110 km / h) . On February 4 it completed the transition into an extratropical cyclone off the coast of North Carolina . Around that time , gale force winds extended 100 miles (160 km) to the east of the center . Later that day , it passed over Cape Cod , and early on February 5 it moved into eastern Maine . The Hurricane Research Division assessed the storm as losing its identity shortly thereafter , over New Brunswick . However , a map produced by the U.S. Weather Bureau indicated that the storm continued northward into the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and later crossed eastern Quebec and Labrador . By February 6 , it reached the ocean again , deepening to a minimum pressure of 988 mbar (29 @.@ 18 inHg) . At that point , the Weather Bureau track ended , and as such the ultimate fate of the storm is unknown .

= = Impact and records = =

Residents and tourists in southern Florida were unprepared for the unusual off @-@ season storm . Winds of up to 65 mph (105 km / h) spread across the area , causing damage to windows and power lines . The storm dropped 2 ? 4 inches (50 ? 100 mm) of precipitation along its path ; the combination of unseasonable rainfall and winds resulted in crop damage in Miami @-@ Dade County .

After the storm moved into the western Atlantic , the Miami U.S. Weather Bureau issued storm warnings for the North Carolina coastline from Wilmington to Cape Hatteras ; the region was warned to prepare for strong winds . The agency also issued a small craft advisory southward through Charleston , South Carolina . Offshore , the storm produced winds of up to 85 mph (140 km / h) , as well as waves up to 35 feet (10 m) in height . The combination of the winds and rough waves drove a freighter ashore along Portsmouth Island in the Outer Banks , after the engine was damaged when water entered the fuel line . The 26 person crew initially planned to evacuate , but they later decided to stay on the freighter as the U.S. Coast Guard were deployed to assist . The seas damaged a portion of the ship , but the entire crew was rescued without any injuries . The storm later brushed New England , bringing rain , fog , warmer temperatures , and gusty winds . The combination resulted in downed power poles and tree limbs , leaving 10 @,@ 000 houses without

electricity .

The storm was described as a " freak " , forming about three months after the end of the hurricane season . The chief forecaster at Miami U.S. Weather Bureau , Grady Norton , remarked that he was unsure how the cyclone developed . It is the only tropical or subtropical storm on record during the month of February , and was the earliest tropical cyclone to strike the United States . Its structure initially was uncertain , and the storm was not included in the 1952 Atlantic hurricane season summary published by the Miami Weather Bureau office . Ultimately it was included in the tropical cyclone database . Had it been operationally treated as a tropical cyclone , it would have been named Tropical Storm Able .