

## = Effects of Hurricane Georges in Louisiana =

The effects of Hurricane Georges in Louisiana included \$ 30 @. @ 1 million in damage and three deaths . Forming from a tropical wave over the Atlantic Ocean , Georges attained a peak intensity of 155 mph ( 250 km / h ) on September 20 , 1998 . Over the following several days , the storm tracked through the Greater Antilles and later entered the Gulf of Mexico on September 28 , the Category 2 storm made landfall in Mississippi before dissipating on October 1 . Before landfall , about 500 @, @ 000 residents in Louisiana evacuated from low @-@ lying areas . The mayor of New Orleans declared a state of emergency to allow federal assistance into the state . After nearly 1 @. @ 5 million people were urged to evacuate coastal areas , officials described the evacuation as " probably the largest [ ... ] we have ever achieved " .

Numerous homes located outside the levee system were flooded by the storm surge , and 85 fishing camps on the banks of Lake Pontchartrain were destroyed . An estimated 160 @, @ 000 residences were left without power due to Georges and severe beach erosion took place due to the slow movement of the hurricane . Precipitation statewide peaked at 2 @. @ 98 in ( 75 @. @ 69 mm ) in Bogalusa , and wind gusts reached 82 mph ( 132 km / h ) . In the wake of the hurricane , the Federal Emergency Management Agency ( FEMA ) opened 67 shelters throughout the state , and covered insurance claims totalling \$ 14 @, @ 150 @, @ 532 , including from Puerto Rico and Mississippi . The Clinton administration appropriated \$ 56 million in disaster relief to regions in Louisiana for recovery from Tropical Storm Frances and Hurricane Georges .

## = = Background = =

Hurricane Georges began as a tropical wave that moved off the coast of Africa during mid @-@ September 1998 . Tracking westward , the wave spawned an area of low pressure two days later , which quickly strengthened into a tropical depression . On September 16 , the depression was upgraded to Tropical Storm Georges , and to Hurricane Georges the next day . The storm reached its peak intensity on September 20 with winds of 155 mph ( 250 km / h ) , just below Category 5 status on the Saffir ? Simpson hurricane wind scale .

Over the following five days , the hurricane tracked through the Greater Antilles , causing over 600 fatalities , primarily in the Dominican Republic and Haiti . By September 25 , Georges entered the Gulf of Mexico as a Category 2 hurricane . The storm made landfall three days later near Biloxi , Mississippi , with winds of 105 mph ( 165 km / h ) . Upon landfall , the hurricane 's forward motion slowed to an eastward drift . Georges dissipated on October 1 near the Atlantic coast of Florida .

## = = Preparations = =

At 9 : 00 am Central Daylight Time ( CDT ) on September 25 , the National Hurricane Center issued a hurricane watch for coastal regions of Louisiana east of Morgan City . The following day , the watch was upgraded to a hurricane warning when the storm neared landfall . A hurricane watch was also issued for areas between Morgan City and Intracoastal City . When forecasts indicated a landfall east of the state , the hurricane watch was canceled and the hurricane warning amended to a tropical storm warning . By September 29 , all tropical cyclone warnings and watches were discontinued .

During September 25 ? 26 , large @-@ scale evacuations took place in response to forecasts suggesting a landfall near New Orleans . More than 1 @. @ 5 million people in New Orleans were advised to leave the city . The nine shelters opened throughout the area were collectively capable of accommodating up to 450 @, @ 000 people . New Orleans mayor Marc Morial declared a State of Emergency to allow federal assistance into the affected areas during the immediate aftermath of the hurricane . A curfew was instituted for those who ignored evacuation orders or could not leave the city .

Approximately 500 @, @ 000 people evacuated from Jefferson and Orleans Parishes in advance of the hurricane . Elsewhere , about 31 @, @ 000 others took refuge in shelters set up throughout the

state . In Jefferson Parish , roughly 3 @, @ 900 people evacuated to public shelters , while 20 @, @ 000 temporarily moved to Orleans Parish , 14 @, @ 000 of whom were located in the Louisiana Superdome . In Plaquemines Parish , about 15 @, @ 000 residents evacuated and 2 @, @ 300 took refuge in public shelters . Grand Isle 's 1 @, @ 500 residents were ordered to evacuate for the fourth time in a month . Due to the large @-@ scale evacuations , 175 off @-@ duty state troopers and 250 national guard troops were deployed to help speed up the process . Only two highways , U.S. Route 90 and Interstate 10 lead in and out of New Orleans ; however , heavy rains from previous storms flooded parts of US 90 , hindering preparation efforts . Lt. Col. Ronnie Jones of the Louisiana state police noted that the evacuation was " probably the largest [ ... ] we have ever achieved " .

= = Impact = =

Compared to the record @-@ breaking rainfall in Mississippi , Alabama , and Florida , Hurricane Georges produced relatively little precipitation in Louisiana , peaking at 2 @. @ 98 in ( 75 @. @ 69 mm ) in Bogalusa . The worst damages were confined to the southeastern portion of the state , concentrated in the Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes . A storm surge of 8 @. @ 9 ft ( 2 @. @ 7 m ) was recorded in Gardene Bay before power at the recording station failed . Gale @-@ force winds impacted most of the parish and gusts peaked at 82 mph ( 132 km / h ) . The combination of high winds and surge cut power to most of the area and flooded at least 50 homes , all of which were located outside the levee system . A lighthouse on one island was partially submerged in the Gulf of Mexico , nearly 1 @, @ 200 feet ( 370 m ) from land following severe beach erosion . Six @-@ foot ( 1 @. @ 8 m ) sand dunes on the islands were completely eroded by the storm , leaving boardwalks formerly situated atop the dunes suspended near the water 's surface .

In St. Tammany Parish , the storm 's effects were mainly limited to wind damage : gusts reached 48 mph ( 77 km / h ) , knocking down trees and power lines . A storm surge of 4 @. @ 3 ft ( 1 @. @ 3 m ) flooded 20 homes in the parish . Winds in Jefferson Parish gusted up to 55 mph ( 88 km / h ) , causing minor roof damage and power outages . In Orleans Parish , a storm surge of 5 @. @ 81 ft ( 1 @. @ 77 m ) destroyed 85 fishing camps constructed on wooden pilings . Winds gusting up to 68 mph ( 109 km / h ) left 80 @, @ 000 residences without power in the parish . Throughout the state , a total of 160 @, @ 000 homes and businesses lost power due to the hurricane . Georges is blamed for three indirect fatalities ; two men collapsed and died due to medical conditions aggravated by the stress of the evacuation , and another died as the result of a house fire sparked by an emergency candle that was tipped over . Damages from the storm totaled approximately \$ 30 @. @ 1 million .

= = Aftermath = =

Before Hurricane Georges , FEMA issued disaster declarations for Ascension , Assumption , Jefferson , Lafourche , Livingston , Plaquemines , Orleans , St. Bernard , St. Charles , St. James , St. John the Baptist , St. Tammany , Terrebone , Tangipahoa , and Washington Parishes . The declaration allowed residents to receive individual and public assistance . Including relief funds to Puerto Rico and Mississippi associated with Georges , a total of \$ 14 @, @ 150 @, @ 532 insurance claims was paid for by FEMA . The Clinton administration appropriated \$ 56 million in post @-@ disaster funds for regions impacted Tropical Storm Frances and Hurricane Georges in Louisiana .

Throughout the state , officials opened 67 shelters and deployed 1 @, @ 200 FEMA personnel to Louisiana , Mississippi , Alabama , Florida and Georgia . The day after Georges made landfall , 4 @, @ 000 of the 14 @, @ 000 residents who evacuated to the Louisiana Superdome returned to their homes ; however , Mayor Marc Morial requested that the residents stay in the superdome for their own safety . In attempts to prevent major flooding in the aftermath of Georges , the United States National Guard provided the Gulf Coast with 1 @. @ 25 million sandbags . Rescue teams flew nearly 50 missions in response to calls for help from stranded residents . The United Methodist Committee on Relief deployed its disaster response team on September 29 to the state to assess damages wrought by Georges . Thomas Michot , a United States Geological Survey ecologist , surveyed the islands following the storm and stated that " the single most important line of defense

standing between New Orleans and future hurricanes had all but disappeared " .