

= Hurricane Easy ( 1950 ) =

Hurricane Easy was the fifth tropical storm , hurricane , and major hurricane of the 1950 Atlantic hurricane season . The hurricane developed in the western Caribbean Sea on September 1 , and tracked northeastward . After crossing Cuba , the hurricane rapidly strengthened in the eastern Gulf of Mexico to reach peak winds of 125 mph ( 205 km / h ) . Easy executed a cyclonic loop , moved northeastward to hit near Cedar Key , Florida , executed a second loop , and hit western Florida again . After rapidly weakening over Florida , the hurricane turned to the northwest , and ultimately dissipated over northeastern Arkansas on September 9 . From the point when Hurricane Easy entered the Gulf of Mexico until it weakened to a tropical storm , it was observed nearly constantly from radars or Reconnaissance Aircraft .

Easy is the most recent major hurricane to strike the Homosassa , Florida , area . Due to the hurricane remaining near the northwest Florida coast for an extended period of time , Easy produced severe rainfall and strong waves , resulting in heavy damage in the Cedar Key area . Hurricane Easy was one of two major hurricanes to strike Florida during the year ; the other was Hurricane King which affected Miami .

= = Meteorological history = =

Following the passage of Hurricane Baker through the Caribbean Sea , a trough of low pressure persisted across the western Caribbean Sea . On August 31 , convection became more concentrated to the south of the Isle of Youth , and on September 1 the disturbance developed into a tropical storm ; it was later given the name " Easy " , as part of the United States Weather Bureau naming tropical cyclones with the Joint Army / Navy Phonetic Alphabet . A developing anticyclone and moist air over the region provided favorable conditions for intensification , as the storm tracked slowly northeastward . On September 2 , Tropical Storm Easy attained hurricane status about 50 miles ( 85 km ) south of the Isle of Youth .

After crossing the Isle of Youth , Hurricane Easy strengthened slightly while continuing northeastward , and the storm struck the Matanzas Province of Cuba with winds of 80 mph ( 130 km / h ) . The hurricane quickly crossed the island , passing just east of Havana before reaching the southeastern Gulf of Mexico on September 3 . After entering the Gulf of Mexico , Easy turned to the north @-@ northwest , paralleling the Florida coastline a short distance offshore while producing hurricane force winds onshore . On September 4 , the hurricane quickly strengthened to reach peak winds of 125 mph ( 201 km / h ) , an intensity it would retain for 18 hours . That day , a ridge of high pressure strengthened to the north of the storm , leaving weaker steering currents . This caused Hurricane Easy to execute a counter @-@ clockwise loop to the west of Tampa , Florida .

After executing its first loop , Hurricane Easy moved northeastward at 7 mph ( 11 km / h ) until making landfall near Cedar Key on September 5 with winds of 120 mph ( 190 km / h ) . Steering currents again became weak , causing Easy to execute a second loop in 24 hours towards the southeast . After briefly emerging into the Gulf of Mexico , the hurricane made its final landfall on Homosassa Springs to the north of Tampa , and rapidly weakened to a tropical storm over land . Easy turned to the northeast , which was followed by a turn to the northwest as the storm neared the Atlantic coast . On September 7 , Easy crossed into Georgia , and shortly thereafter it weakened to a tropical depression . The depression continued northwestward for two days until dissipating over extreme northeastern Arkansas on September 9 . The reason for its erratic track , including the two loops , is unknown , although it is potentially due to a Fujiwhara interaction with Hurricane Dog to its east .

= = Preparations and impact = =

The hurricane crossed over western Cuba with winds of up to 80 mph ( 130 km / h ) ; however , damage was minor , and no deaths occurred in the country . In Havana , winds decreased to 15 mph ( 24 km / h ) as the eye of the hurricane crossed over the city .

With an eye ranging from 18 mi ( 29 km ) to 25 mi ( 40 km ) in diameter , the hurricane was well tracked throughout its lifetime by radars at the University of Florida and by Reconnaissance Aircraft . Despite its unusual track , the Weather Bureau issued hurricane warnings in a timely manner , though warnings were issued for a larger area than those that actually experienced hurricane force winds . In the Florida Keys , winds from Easy reached 72 mph ( 116 km / h ) , which downed trees and power lines , littering local streets with debris . Heavy seas moved around a Navy barge , though no damage was reported .

Hurricane Easy produced hurricane force winds across large portions of western Florida , including over 100 mph ( 160 km / h ) winds in Cedar Key for 9 and 1 / 2 hours . The town , which reported a minimum pressure of 958 @. @ 3 mbar ( 28 @. @ 30 in ) , experienced the eye of the hurricane for 2 and 1 / 2 hours while strong waves hit the coast . The tide in Tampa Bay rose 6 @. @ 5 ft ( 2 @. @ 0 m ) , the highest since 1921 . While looping twice along its path , the hurricane dropped heavy amounts of rainfall of 10 in ( 250 mm ) to 20 in ( 510 mm ) in large portions of northwestern Florida . Rainfall totals include 24 @. @ 5 in ( 620 mm ) in Cedar Key in 3 days and 38 @. @ 70 in ( 983 mm ) in Yankeetown , Florida , in 24 hours , which easily became the largest 24 ? hour rainfall total on record for the United States . The record has since been broken by Tropical Storm Claudette in 1979 with 43 in ( 1 @. @ 100 mm ) , though Easy 's total remains the largest 24 ? hour rainfall total on record for the state of Florida .

Hurricane Easy was described as the worst hurricane in the Cedar Key area in 70 years . The hurricane left half of the houses destroyed or unfit for rehabilitation , while 90 % of the others were damaged . The strong winds destroyed the roofs of 150 homes and buildings . The rainfall caused severe flooding that resulted in crop damage . Easy was indirectly responsible for two deaths due to electrocutions . In addition , 27 people were injured from the hurricane . The strong waves destroyed the fishing community 's entire fishing fleet of 100 boats , which was the town 's entire livelihood . The town 's main employment center , a broom and brush plant , was severely damaged , and would close two years after the hurricane . The hurricane also produced severe damage in Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties in the Tampa area . Throughout Florida , damages totaled \$ 3 @. @ 3 million ( 1950 USD ) , a lower than expected total due to the sparse population in the area of the worst damage . After the storm 's passage throughout central and northern Florida , " blisters " developed on hundreds of cars ; the locations affected reported that the blisters formed on the surface of vehicles shortly after Easy retreated . The following day , the blisters disappeared . Researchers later created several theories as to the unusual occurrence , though they concluded that air pockets under the layer of paint expanded as a result of the decreased barometric pressure .