

= Hurricane Hilda ( 1955 ) =

Hurricane Hilda was a strong Category 3 hurricane that was the second in a succession of three hurricanes to strike near Tampico , Mexico . The eighth named storm of the 1955 Atlantic hurricane season , Hilda formed from a tropical wave on September 10 near the Lesser Antilles . It quickly intensified while moving westward into a small hurricane , and it crossed over southeastern Cuba on September 13 . There , it dropped heavy rainfall and produced gusty winds that destroyed 80 % of the coffee crop in Oriente Province . In the eastern Cuban city of Baracoa , Hilda severely damaged the oldest church in the country . Damage totaled \$ 2 million in Cuba , and there were four deaths . Later , the hurricane moved across the Caribbean Sea , causing light damage in the sparsely populated region of the eastern Yucatán Peninsula .

After reaching the Gulf of Mexico , Hilda strengthened to reach peak winds of 125 mph ( 205 km / h ) late on September 18 . Before the hurricane moved ashore , there was residual flooding in Tampico from earlier Hurricane Gladys . Hilda struck the city early on September 19 , with gusts estimated at 150 mph ( 240 km / h ) . It dropped heavy rainfall that flooded 90 % of Tampico , while its strong winds damaged half of the homes , leaving 15 @, @ 000 homeless . The storm killed 300 people and caused over \$ 120 million ( 1955 USD ) in Mexico . Ongoing flooding caused an outbreak of dysentery , and about 10 days after Hilda struck , Hurricane Janet struck the same region and caused further flooding and damage . Collectively , the damage from the storms represented about half of Mexico 's budget in 1955 .

= = Meteorological history = =

The origins of Hurricane Hilda were from an easterly wave , which spawned a tropical depression over the northern Lesser Antilles late on September 10 . By the next day , the system was producing winds of 46 mph ( 74 km / h ) in squalls . After moving to the northwest , it turned more to the west and quickly intensified . On September 12 , Hilda attained hurricane status to the north of the Mona Passage between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic . It was a small cyclone , and the strongest winds were in a small region around the eye . Hilda continued to the west about 30 mi ( 48 km ) offshore northern Hispaniola . After reaching winds of 100 mph ( 160 km / h ) , the hurricane weakened slightly while off the north coast of Haiti . Turning to the west @-@ southwest , Hilda made landfall near the southeastern tip of Cuba on September 13 . While crossing the island into the Caribbean Sea , it weakened from a hurricane into a tropical storm .

On September 14 , Hilda emerged into the Caribbean Sea . It quickly re @-@ intensified , surpassing its previous strength to winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) by September 15 . The hurricane weakened slightly as it neared the Yucatán Peninsula , and Hilda struck the sparsely populated area between Chetumal and Cozumel on September 16 with winds of about 110 mph ( 180 km / h ) . It weakened slightly over the Yucatán Peninsula , emerging into the Gulf of Mexico on September 17 with winds of about 100 mph ( 160 km / h ) . Hilda again re @-@ intensified , reaching its maximum sustained winds of 125 mph ( 205 km / h ) late on September 18 . Early the next day , the hurricane made landfall near Tampico , Tamaulipas in northeastern Mexico . Winds in the city reached 105 mph ( 169 km / h ) , and the eye was observed for 45 minutes . The lowest pressure in Tampico was 952 mbar ( 28 @. @ 1 inHg ) on September 19 . Hilda rapidly weakened over land , turning to the west @-@ southwest and dissipating on September 20 .

= = Impact = =

Early in its duration , the storm produced winds of 55 mph ( 89 km / h ) on Grand Turk Island . Its threat prompted a small craft advisory for southern Florida , the southern Bahamas , and Cuba . When Hilda struck southeastern Cuba , it caused moderate damage and killed four people , all of whom in Oriente Province . Wind gusts reached 45 mph ( 72 km / h ) at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base , which caused a brief power outage . High waves washed a freighter ashore along Cuba 's north coast . Strong winds severely damaged the church in Baracoa , which was built in the 16th

century and was the oldest in the country . In Santiago de Cuba , Hilda produced heavy rains and gusty winds , which knocked down telephone lines and caused flooding . Five people were injured after houses collapsed in the city . High rains and winds damaged the sugar cane and pineapple crop , and destroyed 80 % of the coffee crop in Oriente Province . Damage in the country was not severe , estimated at \$ 2 million . Hundreds of people were injured or left homeless . After the hurricane isolated the town of Caimanera , American workers sent a train there from Guantanamo Bay with a medical team and supplies .

While Hilda moved across the western Caribbean , it produced winds of 55 mph ( 89 km / h ) on Grand Cayman Island . Ahead of Hilda 's landfall on the Yucatán peninsula , officials warned the residents to prepare for high winds and waves . A storm warning was issued in Belize City . When Hilda crossed the Yucatán peninsula , it caused about \$ 100 @, @ 000 in damage . Ahead of the storm in South Texas , officials provided sandbags and advised businesses to move merchandise within 2 ft ( 0 @. @ 61 m ) of the floor , both an effort to mitigate potential flooding . The large circulation produced winds of 22 mph ( 35 km / h ) and flooded coastal roads in southern Texas . Outer rainbands flooded Raymondville and other towns in the region .

Before the hurricane struck , residents in Mexico expected that Hurricane Hilda would be weaker and strike near Tampico . When the storm was announced via radio about three hours before landfall , most people were already asleep and unable to prepare . Tides rose in advance of the storm , and before it made landfall , 10 % of Tampico was still flooded from previous Hurricane Gladys . In Tampico , Hilda 's strong winds blew away an anemometer after the instrument recorded winds of 105 mph ( 169 km / h ) ; peak winds were later estimated at around 150 mph ( 240 km / h ) . At the city 's port , Hilda damaged boats and ferries , some of which washed out to sea . The hurricane destroyed the roofs of about half of the city 's houses , as well as several schools and large buildings . Hilda produced severe flooding in Tampico that was reported to have covered 90 % of the city 's streets . Although smaller than the previous Hurricane Gladys , Hilda dropped heavy rainfall that flooded local rivers . Overall , 11 @, @ 432 people were directly affected by Hilda . The hurricane caused 300 deaths and \$ 120 million in damage , mostly due to the flooding .

After the storm , Tampico was left without power or communications . About 15 @, @ 000 people became homeless due to the storm , or previously from Hurricane Gladys . The governor of Tamaulipas declared a state of emergency and requested assistance from the military to provide food and shelter . Within a day after the storm , water access was restored , although the city initially remained without power or telephone . Communications were cut to Tampico , except for the airport at the radio . The rail line from Laredo , Texas to Mexico City was cut during the storm , but was restored ten days later . Due to ongoing flood conditions , there was an outbreak of dysentery that killed two children . The Mexican government flew medical supplies , food , and clothing from Mexico City to Tampico , while four United States helicopters assisted in rescue missions along the Pánuco River . About 10 days after Hilda struck Tampico , Hurricane Janet affected the same area , causing further damage and deaths . Collectively , the two hurricanes caused 1 @, @ 240 deaths along their paths , and damage from the consecutive storms totaled about half of Mexico 's 1955 national budget . After the two hurricanes , the Mexican government and military worked to assist the affected residents , and the Mexican Red Cross provided vaccinations and medical assistance to prevent the spread of disease .