

= Hurricane Diana ( 1984 ) =

Hurricane Diana was the fourth tropical storm , the first hurricane , the first major hurricane , and the strongest storm of the 1984 Atlantic hurricane season . Diana was the first major hurricane to hit the U.S. East Coast in nearly 20 years . Watches and warnings were issued for the storm along the East coast between eastern Florida and Virginia . It caused moderate damage in North Carolina while it looped offshore and after it made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane . Forming on September 8 , Diana moved northward and wandered across North Carolina for a couple of days during mid @-@ September , dropping heavy rainfall . Once it left the state and accelerated east @-@ northeast , Diana quickly evolved into an extratropical cyclone . Damages to the United States totaled \$ 65 @. @ 5 million ( 1984 USD ) . Three indirect fatalities were caused by the cyclone .

= = Meteorological history = =

The origins of Hurricane Diana can be traced back to a stalled out area of low pressure just north of the Bahamas along the tail end of a cold front on September 6 . Shower and thunderstorm activity began to increase the next day but was generally disorganized . Around 1200 UTC on September 8 , a ship in the vicinity of the low reported a sustained wind speed of 40 mph ( 65 km / h ) . A few hours later , based on satellite observations , the low was designated Tropical Storm Diana . With weak steering currents , Diana gradually intensified as it slowly moved towards the west over the next day , coming within 50 miles ( 85 km ) of Cape Canaveral , Florida , before taking a sharp turn towards the north @-@ northwest . As Diana neared Saint Augustine , Florida , it turned towards the northeast and intensified into a hurricane .

Under weak steering currents while detached to the front , Diana drifted westward , and came within 50 miles ( 80 km ) of the Florida coast . Rather than continuing westward , where it would have hit near Cape Canaveral , Diana turned to the northwest where it paralleled the coastline . The storm , continually strengthening over the Gulf Stream , turned to the northeast and became a hurricane on September 10 . On September 11 and September 12 , Diana rapidly intensified to a peak of 130 miles per hour ( 210 km / h ) winds while remaining offshore .

An approaching frontal system caused Diana to execute a cyclonic loop , where cool , dry air caused it to weaken . The hurricane hit Wilmington , North Carolina as a weakening hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 90 miles per hour ( 140 km / h ) on September 13 , and quickly weakened to a tropical storm over land . The high pressure system that built in after Diana looped weakened , allowing the storm to move to the north and east . After crossing the Outer Banks , Diana accelerated to the northeast , and after restrengthening to a 70 miles per hour ( 110 km / h ) storm , became extratropical near Nova Scotia on September 16 .

= = Preparations = =

Soon after advisories were initiated , gale warnings were issued between Cape Canaveral , Florida and Virginia Beach , Virginia during the afternoon of September 8 . During the morning of September 9 , gale warnings were lowered south of St. Augustine , Florida . As Diana strengthened into a hurricane , hurricane watches and gale warnings were raised between St. Augustine and Oregon Inlet , North Carolina . By the morning of September 10 , gale warnings were upgraded to hurricane warnings between Brunswick , Georgia and Oregon Inlet . All warnings and watches south of Brunswick were dropped at that time . By the morning of September 11 , hurricane warnings were lowered south of Savannah , Georgia . That afternoon , all warnings were lowered south of Cape Romain , South Carolina .

On the morning of September 12 , all warnings were lowered south of Myrtle Beach , South Carolina . Early in the morning of September 13 , gale warnings were raised between Cape Romain and Myrtle Beach . Later that morning , hurricane warnings were lowered between Wilmington , North Carolina and Oregon Inlet , and all warnings were dropped between Cape Lookout and Virginia Beach . Gale warnings were then in effect between Wilmington and Cape Lookout . Once

inland , all warnings were lowered on the afternoon of September 13 . As the tropical storm moved offshore , gale warnings went into effect between the mornings of September 14 and September 15 between Cape Lookout and Chincoteague , Virginia .

Along the North Carolina coastline , state troopers were deployed to assist residents in evacuating and preparing for the hurricane . South Carolina governor Mike Daniel declared a state of emergency and placed the national guard on standby . Schools throughout the Carolinas and Georgia were closed . Most beaches were closed due to strong rip currents and beach erosion . Residents on barrier islands were urged to evacuate as waves in excess of 12 ft ( 3 @. @ 7 m ) were expected to inundate them . Approximately 94 families were relocated from their mobile homes near Beaufort , North Carolina by state officials . A 24 @-@ hour emergency operations center was also established . The Coast Guard moved all available boats in the area to a position where they could be deployed immediately if needed .

Along the Georgia coastline , The Golden Isles of Georgia were evacuated due to large swells produced by Diana . Two nursing homes in Tybee Island were evacuated and a voluntary evacuation was issued for all residents in the town . Several shelters were also opened at schools in a few counties ; however , relatively few families sought refuge in them . Local schools and beaches were also closed for the duration of the storm 's passage .

= = Impact and aftermath = =

With Category 4 winds of 135 mph ( 217 km / h ) , Diana threatened to become the most intense hurricane to strike North Carolina since Hurricane Hazel in 1954 . However , it looped and weakened just offshore and made landfall as a Category 2 hurricane . Because of this , Diana only caused \$ 65 @. @ 5 million in damage ( 1984 USD ) due to heavy flooding from up to 19 inches ( 480 mm ) of rain , tree damage , and downed power lines . Most of the damage was experienced between Wilmington , North Carolina and Myrtle Beach , South Carolina . The Carolina Power and Light Brunswick Nuclear Power Plant recorded winds of over 75 mph , making Hurricane Diana the first hurricane to bring hurricane force winds to a nuclear power plant . Some yard damage was seen , but the plant was mostly unaffected .

Three indirect deaths were reported from Diana . One person died from a heart attack while making hurricane preparations , and the other two were from automobile accidents . Following the storm , President Ronald Reagan declared five North Carolina counties as a federal disaster area , allowing the affected regions to receive government funds and assistance . Funds were also allocated for the repairing of roads and sewers .