

= 1942 Matagorda hurricane =

The 1942 Matagorda hurricane was the most intense and costliest tropical cyclone of the 1942 Atlantic hurricane season . The second tropical storm and hurricane , as well as the first major hurricane of the year , it originated from a tropical wave near the island of St. Lucia on August 21 . Moving generally westward across the Caribbean Sea , the storm remained weak for much of its early existence . However , it gradually intensified , and reach hurricane strength south of Jamaica on August 25 before coming ashore the Yucatán Peninsula late on August 27 . Once in the Gulf of Mexico , the hurricane quickly strengthened , and attained its peak intensity on August 29 as a Category 3 hurricane with winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) . However , nearing the Texas Gulf Coast , the storm waned in intensity , and was only a Category 1 hurricane by the time it made a final landfall near Matagorda , Texas on August 30 . Continuing inland , the hurricane weakened , and dissipated into a remnant low on August 31 .

At the hurricane 's first landfall near the northeastern tip of the Yucatán Peninsula , little information was documented on the storm 's impacts . However , as the storm approached the Texas coast , widespread evacuations took place , including the evacuation of roughly 50 @, @ 000 people from Galveston , Texas alone . Upon making landfall , the hurricane caused extensive damage in coastal regions . In Matagorda , storm surge peaking at 14 @. @ 7 ft ( 4 @. @ 5 m ) inundated the city and damaged many others . Strong winds from the storm wreaked havoc as far inland as San Antonio , Texas . The winds leveled numerous buildings and uprooted trees , in addition to causing widespread power outages . Crops in the areas affected saw large losses , particularly the rice crop . Rainfall associated with the storm was relatively light , due to the hurricane 's rapid forward motion once inland , peaking at 9 @. @ 3 in ( 0 @. @ 24 m ) in Woodsboro , Texas . Overall , the storm caused \$ 26 @. @ 5 million in damages and eight deaths .

= = Meteorological history = =

A tropical wave was first noted near St. Lucia at 0600 UTC on August 21 , associated with squally weather , though there were little signs of any organization . However , in HURDAT ? the official database of positions and intensities of Atlantic hurricanes dating back to 1851 ? the system is listed to have already organized into a tropical storm at the same time . Nonetheless , development was slow throughout its early existence as it moved quickly eastward across the Caribbean Sea . Forward motion slowed as the storm progressed westward south of Jamaica on August 25 . Though signs of development were first noted at around this time , later reanalysis was conducted on the system , revealing that it had already strengthened to the equivalent of a modern @- @ day Category 1 hurricane . Shortly after , observations indicated that the hurricane was rapidly intensifying . Passing well north of the Swan Islands , the storm attained Category 2 intensity at 0600 UTC on August 26 . Shortly after , the hurricane made its first landfall at a similar intensity on the northeastern tip of the Yucatán Peninsula late on August 27 .

Once in the Gulf of Mexico on August 28 , the hurricane moved northwest on a nearly linear path towards the Texas coast as it steadily intensified . By 0600 UTC on August 29 , the storm reached Category 3 intensity with winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) ? this would be the storm 's maximum intensity . However , the hurricane weakened back down to Category 1 strength before making landfall just after midnight on August 30 near Matagorda and Palacios , Texas . At the time , the storm had maximum sustained winds of 80 mph ( 130 km / h ) , with hurricane @- @ force winds extending out 150 mi ( 240 km ) from the storm 's center of circulation . The hurricane 's minimum central pressure at landfall was estimated at 950 mbar ( hPa ; 28 @. @ 06 inHg ) , though a pressure reading of 952 mbar ( hPa ; 28 @. @ 16 inHg ) in Seadrift , Texas marked the lowest recorded pressure . Once inland , the storm quickly weakened , and degenerated to tropical storm strength at 1200 UTC on August 30 while located near Hallettsville , Texas . Weakening to a tropical depression the following day , it dissipated at 1200 UTC on August 30 near Sweetwater , Texas .

= = Preparations and impact = =

Despite making landfall on the Yucatán Peninsula on August 27 as a Category 2 hurricane , no damage was reported there . As the storm traversed the Gulf of Mexico towards the Texas Gulf Coast , evacuation procedures were conducted across the region . In the storm @-@ warning area of Galveston , Texas , roughly 50 @,@ 000 people evacuated inland ; the high number of evacuees was likely due in part to another hurricane which struck the coast a week prior . Camp Hulen , located near Palacios , Texas , was also evacuated . Other coastal locations were evacuated via trucks , buses , and trains with the guidance of warnings published by the United States Weather Bureau . Schools in the region were prepared as emergency shelters in advance of the storm 's landfall .

Upon making landfall near Palacios , Texas early on August 30 , considerable damage was wrought to an extensive area of the state . At the coast , the hurricane produced a strong storm surge , mostly in the storm 's eastern hemisphere . Storm tides were reported across the Texas coast up to southwestern Louisiana . A station in Matagorda , Texas recorded a storm tide 14 @.@ 7 ft ( 4 @.@ 48 m ) above average . At the time , this was the third highest storm surge ever measured in Texas , behind peak observations taken during the 1919 Florida Keys hurricane and the 1900 Galveston hurricane . The unusually strong tide inundated Matagorda under 6 ft ( 1 @.@ 8 m ) of seawater . The accumulation of the hurricane 's affects resulted in the destruction of nearly every building in the city . Due to debris and other sediments scattered by the strong waves , the reach of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway in both the Matagorda and San Antonio Bays decreased by 540 ft<sup>2</sup> ( 50 m<sup>2</sup> ) . Further north in Freeport , Texas , the storm surge reached 11 @.@ 8 ft ( 3 @.@ 6 m ) above normal . The strong wave action reopened two inlets near Corpus Christi Pass , and also destroyed two cottages on North Beach . In Harris County , Texas , located near the northern edge of the storm , crops sustained heavy damages , and losses to the rice crop alone amounted to \$ 600 @,@ 000 .

The hurricane also brought strong winds which caused considerable damage as far inland as San Antonio , Texas , 120 mi ( 195 km ) from the coast . In Seadrift , Texas , where the storm 's lowest pressure reading of 952 mbar ( hPa ; 28 @.@ 16 inHg ) was recorded , winds were estimated to have reached 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) . The Halfmoon Reef Lighthouse , then situated offshore in Matagorda Bay , was knocked off its pilings due to the strong winds . As such , the United States Coast Guard decided to sell the lighthouse to a private owner . The lighthouse was later repositioned on land . In Matagorda and Palacios , winds of at least 100 mph ( 160 km / h ) lasted roughly three hours , leveling several buildings . Later reports from Palacios indicated that the storm was the worst there since the 1900 Galveston hurricane . Due to the storm 's fast motion before and after landfall , hurricane @-@ force winds were felt as far inland as Atascosa County , Texas . In Corpus Christi , Texas , a peak wind gust of 72 mph ( 116 km / h ) was reported . There , damage was limited to oil derricks and other light structures . Communications from the city to Port Aransas , Texas . The county sheriff of Victoria County , Texas reported that every house was " damaged to some extent . " In Cuero , Texas , strong winds caused severe infrastructural and crop damage .

Precipitation associated with the storm was generally light due to the hurricane 's rapid forward motion . Moderate to heavy rainfall was of local extent and covered a limited area of South Texas , peaking at 9 @.@ 3 in ( 240 mm ) in Woodsboro , Texas . Contrary to typical rapidly moving tropical cyclones , much of the storm 's rainfall fell to the west and south of the storm throughout its duration , which up to that point was a phenomenon rarely observed . The peak rainfall measurement in Woodsboro was located 25 mi ( 40 km ) away from the center of the hurricane . Throughout Atascosa County , at least 4 in ( 100 mm ) of rain fell .

After making landfall , the hurricane 's fast speed enabled it to still bring strong winds and impacts well inland . In South @-@ Central Texas , the tropical cyclone was considered the worst of the entire 20th century . On August 30 , despite being situated over the Austin and San Antonio metropolitan areas , the storm still retained maximum sustained winds of at least 50 mph ( 80 km / h ) . In Floresville , Texas , the winds damaged numerous buildings . Similar effects occurred in Atascosa County and Seguin , Texas , where trees were uprooted and additional buildings were damaged . In Seguin , the passing storm was considered the worst since the 1886 Indianola

hurricane , which also moved rapidly inland . In New Braunfels , Texas , damage was confined to trees , while in Austin , Texas power lines were downed by the strong winds . San Antonio saw the brunt of the storm 's impacts in South @-@ Central Texas . Gusts reaching as high as 70 mph ( 110 km / h ) battered the city for at least five hours , causing extensive damage to infrastructure , as well as causing numerous power outages . Hundreds of trees were uprooted , and the resulting damage was considered the worst since 1899 . Despite being held to the ground by 8 ft ( 2 @.@ 4 m ) stakes , the strong winds still managed to damage 70 of the 75 planes at Alamo Field . Total estimated damages in the city amounted to \$ 300 @,@ 000 .

Overall , the hurricane caused \$ 26 @.@ 5 million in damages , with \$ 11 @.@ 5 million to property and \$ 15 million to crops , with the storm 's damage in Texas spread across twelve counties . This would make the storm the most costly of the hurricane season . Despite the hurricane 's wide swath of damage and strong intensity , only eight people were killed . The low number of fatalities is attributable to the extensive evacuation procedures which underwent prior to the storm , as well as warnings provided by the Weather Bureau .