

= 1924 Cuba hurricane =

The 1924 Cuba hurricane is the earliest officially classified Category 5 Atlantic hurricane on the Saffir ? Simpson scale . It formed on October 14 in the western Caribbean , slowly organizing as it tracked northwestward . By October 16 , it attained hurricane status to the east of the Yucatán Peninsula , and subsequently executed a small counterclockwise loop . On October 18 , the hurricane began undergoing rapid deepening , and the next day it reached an estimated peak intensity of 165 mph ( 270 km / h ) . Shortly thereafter , it struck extreme western Cuba at peak intensity , becoming the strongest hurricane on record to hit the country . Later the hurricane weakened greatly , striking southwestern Florida with winds of 90 mph ( 150 km / h ) in a sparsely populated region . While crossing the state it weakened to tropical storm status , and after accelerating east @-@ northeastward , it was absorbed by a cold front on October 23 south of Bermuda .

Across the western Caribbean Sea , the developing storm produced heavy rainfall and increased winds . Strong winds in western Cuba caused severe damage , with two small towns nearly destroyed . About 90 people were killed in the country , all in Pinar del Río Province . Later , the hurricane brought heavy rainfall to southern Florida , which caused flooding and crop damage . Damage was light in the state , and there were no casualties .

= = Meteorological history = =

On October 14 , a tropical depression was first observed over the western Caribbean Sea , just off the eastern Honduras coast . It was a large and weak tropical cyclone , moving slowly northwestward and gradually intensifying . On October 15 , it is estimated the depression attained tropical storm status , and its strengthening became more steady . The next day , the storm reached hurricane status about 130 mi ( 215 km ) southeast of Cozumel , Quintana Roo . Around that time , it began to execute a small counterclockwise loop off the east coast of the Yucatán Peninsula . By October 18 the hurricane completed the loop , during which its winds increased to 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) ; this is the equivalence of a major hurricane , or a Category 3 on the Saffir ? Simpson Hurricane Scale . The estimation of its strength at this point was based on subsequent analysis of peripheral recordings of atmospheric pressure and maximum sustained winds by ships and land stations .

Beginning late on October 18 as it tracked north @-@ northeastward toward Cuba , the hurricane underwent rapid deepening , evidenced by a ship wind report of 120 mph ( 193 km / h ) . This wind report was initially thought to be the peak intensity of the cyclone ; however , subsequent research confirmed further deepening , based on very low pressures recorded across the region . A ship in the radius of maximum winds reported a reading of 922 mbar ; the barometer on the ship was found to be 5 mbar too high , resulting in a pressure of 917 mbar . Additionally , a station on land reported a pressure of 932 mbar ( 27 @.@ 52 inHg ) . Based on the readings , the Hurricane Research Division estimated the hurricane attained a minimum central pressure of 910 mbar very near the western coast of Cuba ; this suggested peak winds of 165 mph ( 270 km / h ) . Late on October 19 , the hurricane made landfall in extreme western Cuba in Pinar del Río Province . José Carlos Millás , director of the National Observatory at Havana , believed that " this hurricane [ was ] one of the most severe ever experienced in our latitudes . "

After exiting Cuba into the Gulf of Mexico , the hurricane weakened greatly . On October 20 it passed a short distance west of Key West , Florida , and very early on October 21 the hurricane moved over Marco Island with winds of 90 mph ( 150 km / h ) . The cyclone weakened further as it turned eastward through the state , deteriorating to tropical storm status as it passed near or over Miami . It accelerated east @-@ northeastward , moving over the Abaco Islands in The Bahamas . Gradually weakening , the storm interacted with an approaching cold front ; late on October 23 it transitioned into an extratropical cyclone , and shortly thereafter it was absorbed by the front .

= = Impact and records = =

As a developing tropical cyclone , the storm produced increased winds and lower pressures in the Swan Islands , off the coast of Honduras . Heavy rainfall occurred throughout Jamaica , causing street flooding and several mudslides , but little damage . No disruptions were reported to communications or railway travel . The storm brushed eastern Belize while located off the coast , producing 3 @. @ 62 inches ( 21 @. @ 9 mm ) of rainfall and light winds .

In extreme western Cuba , damage was very severe from the strong winds , likened to the impact of a tornado . Severe damage was reported in Los Arroyos and Arroyos de Mantua . In the latter location , around a dozen people were killed , 50 were injured , and nearly every building in the town was severely damaged ; heavy losses also occurred to the tobacco crop . Across western Pinar del Río Province , the hurricane destroyed all communication links . Further from the center , the capital city of Havana recorded southerly winds of 72 mph ( 116 km / h ) , as well as a minimum pressure of about 999 mbar ( 29 @. @ 50 inHg ) . Around the country , the hurricane capsized several ships , primarily fishing vessels . The death toll in the country was estimated at around 90 . In the days after the storm , Cuban President Zayas authorized about \$ 30 @, @ 000 in relief aid to send to hurricane victims in Pinar del Río .

Several days prior to striking Florida , the outer circulation began producing rainfall across the state . Storm warnings were issued along the east and west coastlines northward to Cedar Key and Titusville . Later , hurricane warnings were issued for much of the same area , and schools in the Tampa area were closed as the storm was expected to move ashore . The hurricane first affected Florida when it passed west of Key West , where sustained winds of 66 mph ( 107 km / h ) , along with gusts to 74 mph ( 120 km / h ) , were reported . Little damage occurred in the region , limited to downed trees ; this was due to advance warning by the U.S. Weather Bureau , which advised ships to remain at port and for residents to secure property . Later , the hurricane moved ashore in a sparsely populated region of southwestern Florida . Damage was reported in Fort Myers and Punta Gorda and communications were temporarily cut , although no deaths were reported . Heavy rainfall was reported along its path , and one location accumulated 23 @. @ 22 inches ( 590 mm ) in a 24 ? hour period ; this established a new one @- @ day rainfall record in the state . A station in Miami recorded 12 @. @ 18 inches ( 309 mm ) , and wind gusts in the area approached hurricane force . The combination of winds and rain damaged 5 % of the local citrus and avocado crop . The rainfall flooded streets , homes , and commercial buildings in the Miami area , and hundreds of people were left without telephone access . No impact was reported in the Bahamas .

After a reanalysis of hurricanes between 1921 and 1925 , the Hurricane Research Division determined this hurricane attained winds of 165 mph ( 270 km / h ) , making it a Category 5 on the Saffir ? Simpson Hurricane Scale . The hurricane is the earliest known to have attained the intensity , besting the 1928 Okeechobee hurricane , which was previously thought to be the earliest storm of this intensity . It is also the only one on record to make landfall on Cuba at Category 5 status . A hurricane in 1846 that hit the country was also thought to have struck at Category 5 status , although the storm existed prior to the start of the Atlantic hurricane database . When the steamship " Toledo " recorded an atmospheric pressure of 922 mbar ( 27 @. @ 22 inHg ) in the storm , it was the lowest pressure recorded in an Atlantic hurricane , breaking the previous record of 924 mbar ( 27 @. @ 28 inHg ) in the Atlantic hurricane of 1853 . The record during this storm lasted until the 1932 Cuba hurricane , when a pressure of 915 mbar ( 27 @. @ 02 inHg ) was reported . The reading of 932 mbar ( 27 @. @ 52 inHg ) at Los Arroyos in Mantua , Pinar del Río remains the lowest pressure recorded on land in Cuba .