

## = Effects of Hurricane Wilma in The Bahamas =

The effects of Hurricane Wilma in The Bahamas were generally unexpected and primarily concentrated on the western portion of Grand Bahama . Hurricane Wilma developed on October 15 , 2005 in the Caribbean Sea , and after initially organizing slowly it explosively deepened to reach peak winds of 185 mph ( 295 km / h ) and a record @-@ low pressure of 882 mbar ( hPa ) . It weakened and struck eastern Mexico as a Category 4 hurricane on the Saffir @-@ Simpson scale , and accelerated northeastward to make landfall on southwestern Florida on October 24 . After crossing the state , Wilma briefly restrengthened in the open Atlantic Ocean , moving north of The Bahamas before weakening and later becoming an extratropical cyclone .

On October 24 , Hurricane Wilma made its closest approach to The Bahamas , passing about 150 km ( 90 mi ) north @-@ northwest of Freeport . While passing the archipelago , Wilma produced hurricane @-@ force winds and powerful storm surge , flooding southwestern coastal areas of Grand Bahama and destroying hundreds of buildings . Damage totaled about \$ 100 million ( 2005 USD ) , almost entirely on the western half of the island . Central Grand Bahama , including the Freeport area , reported minor to moderate damage , while the eastern end received little to no damage . One child died on the island from the flooding . Elsewhere in the Bahamas , moderate damage occurred on Abaco and Bimini , while islands further to the south reported minimal wind damage

## = Preparations =

At 1200 UTC on October 23 , about 24 hours before Wilma made its closest approach to the archipelago , the government of The Bahamas issued a hurricane warning for the northwestern portion of the territory , including the Abacos , Andros Island , Berry Islands , Bimini , Eleuthera , Grand Bahama , and New Providence . The government of The Bahamas advised citizens to rush preparations to completion , though many failed to fully prepare , believing Wilma would pass through the region as a tropical storm . Many homes failed to board windows or apply hurricane shutters , as well . Officials ordered evacuations for the eastern and western portion of Grand Bahama island , and established multiple shelters on the island . Evacuations were minimal ; it is estimated that between 300 and 1 @, @ 000 people left . As most people failed to prepare sufficiently for the hurricane , hardware stores and food markets were generally well @-@ stocked .

## = Impact =

On Grand Bahama Island , Wilma produced sustained winds of 155 km / h ( 95 mph ) and a gust of 178 km / h ( 111 mph ) . The hurricane also produced a storm surge of over 3 @. @ 7 m ( 12 ft ) , reportedly as high as 6 @. @ 1 m ( 20 ft ) along the southwestern portion of the island . The surge , which moved about 305 m ( 1 @, @ 000 ft ) inland , caused large @-@ scale flooding that washed away or destroyed about 800 homes . Damage was estimated at \$ 100 million ( 2005 USD ) on the western portion of the island . Excluding the southwestern region of Grand Bahama , the majority of the island reported minor wind damage , and the eastern end of the island reported little , or no , damage . Over 7 @, @ 000 people on the island were directly affected by the hurricane , many of whom had not fully recovered from hurricanes Frances and Jeanne during the previous year .

Significant damage was reported in coastal areas of Grand Bahama Island , with widespread destruction of roofs and vehicles , along with downed poles and trees . Power and telephone services were disrupted throughout the island . A total of 400 structures sustained damage , of which about 200 commercial buildings were severely damaged and recommended by engineers not to be repaired . Among the destroyed buildings were a police station on the western end and several buildings in Freeport . More than 500 automobiles were flooded , including five police cars . The storm surge also raised 54 corpses in five graveyards on the island . Several resorts were closed for an extended period of time , all on the western portion of the island . One hotel , the Xanadu Beach and Marine Resort , reported about \$ 3 @. @ 5 million in damage ( 2005 USD ) , including numerous

destroyed windows designed to withstand hurricane @-@ force winds . Further to the east , numerous houses and commercial buildings lost their roofs in the city of Freeport . One serious traffic accident occurred when the winds overturned a bus , inflicting injuries on the driver . Several other traffic accidents were reported in the area , although none were severe . During the passage of the hurricane , five cases of looting were reported , of which one person was caught in the process . Storm surge from the hurricane killed one child , the only casualty directly related to Wilma in the archipelago .

Damage was also heavy on Bimini island , where heavy rainfall and powerful storm surge damaged homes , trees , and utility poles . On the island , the hurricane severely damaged a hotel and eight waterfront homes . On Abaco , eight homes and a governmental clinic were destroyed . The storm surge destroyed a government dock and caused flooding and beach erosion near the coast . New Providence and the Berry Islands also reported minor wind damage from Wilma , primarily to downed trees and power lines . Throughout the Bahamas , Wilma damaged public infrastructure such as schools , roads , health clinics , and electrical systems .

= = Aftermath = =

By about two days after the passage of Hurricane Wilma , 800 residents on Grand Bahama remained in shelters , including 65 families who lost their homes and stayed in a hotel set up as a government shelter in Freeport . On Bimini , most residents who evacuated to shelters returned to their homes within two days of the hurricane . The Bahamian Red Cross quickly assessed the damage on Grand Bahama and Bimini , and successfully requested to be included under the federation 's hurricane appeal for Central America . Local Red Cross chapters mobilized all available resources to assist the residents most affected . The Bahamian Red Cross began a three @-@ month program to distribute food and other items to 1 @,@ 000 of the 3 @,@ 500 affected families , primarily on Grand Bahama ; the remaining 2 @,@ 500 families received assistance from the government and other organizations . Volunteers delivered building materials and provided water vouchers to those affected . In Nassau , the Red Cross disaster contingency stock sent a boat with food items , blankets , health kits , tarpaulins and water . About a week after the hurricane , the United States Agency for International Development began providing \$ 50 @,@ 000 ( 2005 USD ) to the Bahamian National Emergency Management Agency for the purchase and distribution of emergency supplies . The agency also provided \$ 9 @,@ 000 ( 2005 USD ) for locally contracted helicopter assessments in the affected areas . Red Cross agencies throughout the Caribbean Sea provided hygienic kits , plastic sheeting , blankets , and jerry cans .

Electricians had power restored to the Freeport area by the day after the storm , and had power restored to most of the western portion of the island within three weeks after the hurricane . Work crews quickly removed road debris and tree limbs , and by the day after the passage of Wilma most roads were cleared . The passage of the hurricane left 1 @,@ 000 ? 4 @,@ 000 people and hundreds of animals homeless . In response , the Grand Bahama Humane Society distributed about 340 kg ( 750 lb ) of dog food and treated or euthanized injured animals , depending on their condition . The earlier effects of Wilma on Mexico left many tourist areas in that country closed , leading to a 10 % increase in tourism in the Bahamas in December 2005 . By about three weeks after the hurricane , the airport on Grand Bahama Island was reopened , and all but one resort were also reopened ; the remaining resort was reopened about two months after the hurricane .