

= 1959 Escuminac disaster =

The 1959 Escuminac disaster (also referred to as the Escuminac hurricane) was considered the worst fishing @-@ related disaster in New Brunswick in 100 years . It occurred due to the extratropical remnants of an Atlantic hurricane . The storm was the third tropical cyclone and first hurricane of the 1959 Atlantic hurricane season , and developed from a tropical wave in the central Gulf of Mexico on June 18 . It headed rapidly northeastward and struck Florida later that day . Shortly after entering the Atlantic Ocean , it strengthened into a tropical storm later on June 18 . By the following day , it had strengthened into a hurricane . However , it transitioned into an extratropical cyclone about six hours later . The remnants struck Atlantic Canada , once in Nova Scotia and again in Newfoundland before dissipating on June 21 .

In its early stages , the storm dropped moderately heavy rainfall in Florida , which caused damage to crops . A tornado near Miami and high tides on the west coast of the state also resulted in damage . Overall , losses in Florida were around \$ 1 @.@ 7 million (1959 USD) . After becoming extratropical , the storm caused significant effects in Atlantic Canada . About 45 boats were in the Northumberland Strait between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island , and they did not have radio to receive warning of the approaching storm . Rough seas of up to 49 ft (15 m) in height damaged or destroyed many boats . At least 22 fishing boats capsized over water with their crew , causing 35 fatalities . High winds also disrupted communications in some areas , and several houses were damaged , causing \$ 750 @,@ 000 (1959 CAD , \$ 781 @,@ 000 1959 USD) . The event became the deadliest work @-@ related disaster in New Brunswick .

= = Early history = =

On June 15 , a tropical wave with associated instability was observed in the northwestern Caribbean Sea . It moved into the central Gulf of Mexico on June 16 , and the next day developed a weak circulation at the same time that Tropical Storm Beulah was on the other side of the gulf . The system in the eastern gulf moved to the northeast , becoming a tropical depression by June 18 at 0000 UTC . Moving quickly to the northeast , the system moved across central Florida in less than six hours , making landfall near Tampa Bay and exiting near Cape Canaveral .

As the depression struck western Florida , it produced 3 ft (0 @.@ 91 m) above normal tides , which damaged docks and caused beach erosion . Wind gusts near Sarasota reached about 49 mph (80 km / h) . After previously wet conditions , the system dropped heavy rainfall across the state , unofficially reaching 15 in (380 mm) in some areas and causing flooding . Along the Indian River , flooding damaged citrus crops , and statewide some roads were damaged due to flooding . When the storm was first forming in the Gulf of Mexico , it spawned a tornado in Miami that lasted for over 20 minutes . The National Climatic Data Center considered it the worst tornado in the city since one in 1925 , and the overall path was about 12 mi (19 km) . A total of 77 people were injured due to the tornado , mostly due to cuts from broken glass , and damage from it was estimated at \$ 1 @.@ 5 million . Another tornado was reported north of West Palm Beach , although it affected a sparsely populated area ; total damage statewide totaled \$ 1 @,@ 656 @,@ 000 .

= = Storm approach to Canada = =

Late on June 18 , it is estimated the depression intensified into a tropical storm , and that day the Miami Hurricane Center issued its last advisory , warning ships of the potential for future strengthening . The storm moved rapidly to the northeast , passing halfway between Bermuda and North Carolina early on June 19 . At 0250 UTC that day , a ship reported a falling barometric pressure of 993 mbar (29 @.@ 3 inHg) with west @-@ southwesterly winds of 92 mph (148 km / h) . Although it was associated with a diffused frontal zone , the storm maintained a warm core and initially remained largely tropical . At 1200 UTC on June 19 , it is estimated the storm intensified into a hurricane about halfway between Bermuda and Nova Scotia , with a pressure of 974 mbar (28 @.@ 8 inHg) . By six hours later , it became extratropical , although the former hurricane intensified

further to peak winds of 80 mph (130 km / h) . On June 20 , the storm slowed and turned sharply to the northwest . It weakened slightly before moving ashore near Canso , Nova Scotia . Crossing the island , it struck Prince Edward Island before turning sharply to the east and crossing Nova Scotia again . By late on June 20 , it re-emerged into the Atlantic Ocean and continued to the east-northeast . The extratropical storm moved over southeastern Newfoundland and dissipated on June 21 .

Before the storm reached Atlantic Canada , the National Search and Rescue Secretariat (NSS) provided notices for the advancing storm . On the day of the storm , the forecast from Halifax was for light winds , and although it was amended to highlight severe conditions , boats in the region had no radio to learn of the threat . There were many salmon in the region , which prompted fishermen to set sail . As the storm approached , there were about 45 boats in the Northumberland Strait between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island .

= = Impact and aftermath = =

Along the coast of New Brunswick , the storm produced 49 ft (15 m) waves that destroyed several boats , including 22 over open waters between Point Escuminac and Richibucto . Two bodies washed ashore in the latter city , and eleven bodies were eventually discovered . About one-third of the salmon boats in Miramichi were destroyed . Across New Brunswick , the storm disrupted communications near the coast . Along the coasts of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island , high waves destroyed cottages and forced some families to evacuate . The former hurricane produced strong winds in the region , peaking at 75 mph (120 km / h) , and its passage was accompanied by moderate rainfall , peaking at 4 @. 29 in (109 mm) in Nova Scotia . There , many lobster cages were destroyed , and boats were removed from their moorings . In Prince Edward Island , up to 50 % of lobster traps were destroyed or missing , including 5 @, 000 destroyed traps near Souris . As with New Brunswick , several boats were destroyed or washed ashore , and damage in the province was estimated at \$ 750 @, 000 (1959 CAD , \$ 781 @, 000 1959 USD) . A total of 35 people were killed between Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island , mostly fishermen . As a result , the Escuminac Disaster , as it came to be known , became the deadliest work-related disaster in New Brunswick . The Minister of Fisheries considered the event as " the worst disaster to hit a Canadian fishing fleet in about 100 years . "

In the days after the storm , the Royal Canadian Air Force and Royal Canadian Mounted Police operated search and rescue missions , while families waited on the beach . The Canadian Red Cross set up headquarters in Escuminac to assist the victims . Due to storm fatalities , 24 adults became widows , and 83 children lost a father . As a result , the New Brunswick Fishermen 's Disaster Fund was created to assist the families . The fund raised \$ 400 @, 000 in a few months from donations from throughout Canada , as well as Pope John XXIII and Queen Elizabeth II , the latter who was on a tour of the country at the time .

In memory of the storm victims , artist Claude Roussel created a wood sculpture entitled " Les Pêcheurs ? The Fishermen " , which won first prize at New Brunswick Museum in 1962 . Later , residents near Escuminac raised money to turn the work into a stone monument , which was dedicated on June 19 , 1969 . It was nearly 7 ft (2 @. 3 m) in height , weighed about 10 @, 000 lbs (5 tonnes) , and depicted a group of fishermen working together , with the names of the deceased on a bronze plaque . In 2001 , the government of New Brunswick declared the Escuminac Disaster Monument as a provincial historical site .