

= Hurricane Fico =

Hurricane Fico was the longest @-@ lived hurricane of the 1978 Pacific hurricane season and became the longest @-@ lasting Pacific hurricane on record , a record broken by Hurricane Tina fourteen years later . The sixth tropical storm , fourth hurricane , and third major hurricane , Fico developed from a tropical disturbance off the coast of Mexico on July 9 . It moved northwestward and then westward , quickly reaching peak winds of 140 mph ( 220 km / h ) on July 12 . Moving nearly due westward , the intensity of Fico fluctuated from Category 1 to Category 4 status on the Saffir @-@ Simpson Hurricane Scale for the following days , and it passed about 170 miles ( 275 km ) south of Hawaii on July 20 with winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) . Fico slowly weakened as it turned to the northwest over cooler waters , and became an extratropical cyclone on July 28 to the northeast of Midway Island .

Swells from Fico , combined with swells from a storm in the Southern Hemisphere , produced rough surf throughout the Hawaiian islands . The surf destroyed one house and resulted in considerable damage along the southern coast of the island of Hawaii . No deaths were reported , and damage totaled \$ 200 @, @ 000 ( 1978 USD , \$ 619 @, @ 000 2006 USD ) .

= = Meteorological history = =

A tropical disturbance persisted 520 miles ( 835 km ) south of Acapulco on July 3 . It moved steadily westward and organized over warm water temperatures of 81 ° F ( 27 ° C ) . A circulation developed within the system , and on July 9 it organized into Tropical Depression Seven while located about 580 miles ( 930 km ) southwest of Acapulco . The depression turned to the west @-@ northwest , and after briefly weakening it organized more to attain tropical storm status on July 10 while located about 745 miles ( 1 @, @ 200 km ) south of the southern tip of Peninsula .

Tropical Storm Fico turned to the northwest after reaching tropical storm status , and entered an area of increasingly warm water temperatures . It quickly strengthened , and 18 hours after becoming a tropical storm Fico strengthened into a hurricane . As the hurricane turned to the west @-@ northwest , a well @-@ defined eye developed in the center of the hurricane , and Fico continued to quickly intensify . Fico attained Category 4 strength about 24 hours after it first became a hurricane , and on July 12 it reached peak winds of 140 mph ( 220 km / h ) while located 640 miles ( 1 @, @ 030 km ) southwest of Cabo San Lucas . Throughout its duration , the eye of the hurricane was around 35 miles ( 56 km ) in diameter .

While moving nearly due westward , Fico maintained peak winds for about 12 hours before weakening over cooler water temperatures . On July 14 , passing over an area of 79 ° F ( 26 ° C ) waters , the hurricane became disorganized while its winds dropped to 90 mph ( 150 km / h ) . Shortly thereafter , it again moved into an area of 83 ° F ( 28 ° C ) waters , and again reached winds of 135 mph ( 215 km / h ) on July 15 . For 48 hours , Fico 's winds fluctuated slightly , briefly dropping to 120 mph ( 195 km / h ) before strengthening again to 135 mph ( 215 km / h ) . On July 17 the hurricane again began to weaken , and its winds dropped to 90 mph ( 140 km / h ) as Fico entered the Central Pacific Hurricane Center area of responsibility . Fico slowly re strengthened and reached Category 3 status late on July 20 while passing about 170 miles ( 275 km ) south of the island of Hawaii . The hurricane turned to the northwest toward an upper @-@ level trough of low pressure , and after maintaining 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) winds for about 36 hours it slowly weakened . On July 27 after entering an area of progressively cooler waters , Fico weakened to a tropical storm while located about 35 miles ( 60 km ) east @-@ northeast of Midway Island . It weakened to a tropical depression the next day , and late on July 28 after turning to the north Fico became an extratropical depression . An approaching cold front absorbed the remnants of Fico and passed near southern Alaska on July 31 . Ships to the southeast of Cold Bay reported heavy rainfall and strong winds in association with the remnants of Fico .

= = Impact = =

Hurricane Fico never made landfall , though a strong east @-@ northeasterly swell from the hurricane along with a strong southerly swell from a southern hemisphere storm produced high surf along the coastline of Hawaii . Civil Defense officials reported 30 @-@ foot ( 9 @.@ 1 m ) waves well offshore . The island of Hawaii received breaking waves of 20 feet ( 6 m ) in height , and eastern Maui reported up to 12 @-@ foot ( 3 @.@ 7 m ) waves . Southern Oahu and Kauai also reported slightly above normal waves . Several ships in and around the periphery of the hurricane received moderate winds and rough surf , one of which reported swell waves of 41 feet ( 12 @.@ 5 m ) . The high seas washed a 65 @-@ foot ( 20 m ) tugboat ashore on a reef at Kukuiula . Six people aboard a sloop off Hanalei were rescued by a Navy torpedo boat after it lost its auxiliary power and was unable to progress in the strong winds of Fico . A strong trade wind gradient , increased due to the presence of the hurricane , produced winds of over 60 mph ( 95 km / h ) throughout the island chain . Hurricane Fico also dropped 6 inches ( 150 mm ) of rainfall in Oahu .

Days before the hurricane passed to the south of the state , high surf from Fico caused some beach flooding in the eastern portion of the island of Hawaii . High surf later resulted in considerable damage to roads and beachfront houses along the Big Island shores . The waves destroyed a home in Puna and wrecked a beach pavilion in Kau . The mayors of three Hawaiian cities issued a disaster declaration for their cities following the damage from Fico . In Maui , moderate waves led to road flooding near the water , though no damage occurred on the island . 60 mph ( 95 km / h ) winds throughout Hawaii downed trees , resulting in some power outages . Damage from the hurricane totaled \$ 200 @,@ 000 ( 1978 USD , \$ 619 @,@ 000 2006 USD ) .

= = Records and Naming = =

Fico was a northeast Pacific tropical cyclone for 20 days or 468 hours , breaking the previous record since the beginning of reliable satellite monitoring set by Hurricane Celeste of 1972 with 16 days . Fico was also a hurricane for 17 days , which also broke the record set by Celeste of 1972 with 10 days . Both records were later broken by Hurricane Tina . Fico also tracked about 6 @,@ 000 miles ( 9 @,@ 700 km ) , among the longest tracks on record for a Pacific hurricane .

This hurricane was the only usage of the name Fico . The name Fico was removed after this storm and replaced with Fabio in the 1982 season . It is unknown whether it was retired due to its damage or for another reason . Other possible reasons listed for the removal of a name are pronunciation ambiguity , a socially unacceptable meaning in another language , or because the storm name represented a significant human disaster .