

= Hurricane Able (1951) =

Hurricane Able was a rare hurricane that formed outside of the typical North Atlantic hurricane season . The first tropical cyclone in 1951 , Able developed from a trough of low pressure on May 15 about 300 miles (480 km) south of Bermuda . Initially subtropical in nature , Able acquired tropical characteristics as it moved over the warm waters of the Gulf Stream and attained hurricane status on May 17 off the coast of Florida . This made Able one of only four May Atlantic hurricanes on record . On May 22 Able reached peak winds of 90 mph (150 km / h) about 70 miles (115 km) off of Cape Hatteras , North Carolina . The hurricane weakened as it turned eastward , and became an extratropical cyclone on May 23 .

Hurricane Able did not affect land significantly . In Florida , the storm dropped light precipitation , while in the Bahamas it produced winds of up to 95 mph (152 km / h) . From North Carolina through New England , Able produced higher than normal tides . No casualties were reported .

= = Meteorological history = =

An active trough of low pressure exited the East Coast of the United States on May 12 , and by the following day it passed near Bermuda . Initially the trough was located only near the surface , though as cold air from behind it advanced eastward , the trough extended into the mid- to upper @-@ levels of the atmosphere . By May 14 a closed low pressure area developed in seclusion from the westerlies . Continued cold air from behind the trough , about 12 ° F (7 ° C) colder than usual for the time of year , extended across the low in conjunction with warm upper levels and warm sea surface temperatures , resulting in large amounts of instability . The polar trough gradually weakened as the low organized , and on May 15 it developed into a subtropical depression while located about 300 miles (480 km) south of Bermuda .

Located under an upper @-@ level low , the depression initially tracked briskly to the northwest , followed by a turn to the west @-@ southwest on May 16 as the upper @-@ level low turned southwestward . Later on the 16th , the depression approached the warmest waters of the Gulf Stream . Strong divergence from the upper @-@ level low and a high pressure system to its northeast provided favorable conditions towards transitioning into a tropical cyclone , and late on the 16th the depression attained winds of 40 mph (65 km / h) . The storm continued to intensify as it turned to the southwest , and early on May 17 a ship near the center reported about 55 mph (88 km / h) winds and up to 30 foot (9 m) waves while located about 125 miles (200 km) east of Daytona Beach , Florida , indicating the system transitioned into a tropical storm . The Navy reconnaissance squadron flew into the system later that day , and reported a storm of full hurricane strength moving southward .

Receiving the name Able , the small hurricane turned to the southeast and to the east while passing near or over the Bahama Banks . Able subsequently turned to the northeast and later to the north , and finished executing its cyclonic loop on May 20 . The hurricane continued to intensify with an eye 20 miles (32 km) in diameter , and on May 21 Reconnaissance Aircraft estimated the hurricane attained peak winds of 90 mph (150 km / h) . Shortly thereafter Able passed about 70 miles (110 km) east of Cape Hatteras , North Carolina , and early on May 22 Able weakened from its peak intensity after turning to the east . On May 23 it deteriorated into a tropical storm while passing over cooler waters , and that night Able became an extratropical cyclone while located about 520 miles (840 km) south of Halifax , Nova Scotia . The extratropical remnant turned to the northeast before losing its identity late on May 24 .

= = Impact and records = =

Storm warnings were issued from Savannah , Georgia to Fort Pierce , Florida subsequent to the discovery of the hurricane . The National Weather Bureau advised all small craft to remain at port and recommended residents in the northern Bahamas to take immediate precautions . On Grand Bahama , the threat of Hurricane Able resulted in a construction crew to evacuate further inland ; the

crew was constructing an observation post for guiding long @-@ range missiles from Cape Canaveral . Fishermen on dozens of boats left the open ocean for safety on two Bahamian islands , while two airplanes safely rode out the hurricane . Small craft warnings and storm warnings were later issued from North Carolina through New England .

The outer rainbands of Able produced light rainfall and high seas along the Florida coastline . While moving slowly near the Bahamas , Able produced strong winds reaching 90 to 95 mph (145 to 152 km / h) at Walker Cay , and minimal hurricane force on Grand Bahama and Little Abaco Island . The hurricane produced high surf in Wilmington , North Carolina and abnormally high tides northward through New England , though no damage was reported . A ship called " City of Eastbourne " sailed through the storm and reported hurricane @-@ force winds , along with " mountainous , confused seas and driving rain . "

Able is one of only four North Atlantic hurricanes on record to exist during the month of May , the others occurring in 1889 , 1908 , and 1970 . None of the others reached winds of more than 80 mph (130 km / h) . It was described as " wrong way , wrong time " , referring to its unusual motion to the southwest near the Bahamas , as well as its presence outside of the normal hurricane season . Additionally , the Weather Bureau described it as a " freak of freaks " .