

= Hurricane Betsy (1956) =

Hurricane Betsy in 1956 was the first North Atlantic hurricane to make landfall in Puerto Rico in 24 years . The third tropical cyclone of the 1956 Atlantic hurricane season , Betsy developed from a tropical wave on August 9 to the east of the Lesser Antilles . It rapidly developed into a 120 mph (195 km / h) major hurricane before striking Guadeloupe . There , Betsy heavily damaged 1000 houses and left severe crop destruction , and there were 18 deaths in the territory . As Betsy continued into the northeastern Caribbean , it capsized a ship , killing its crew of two .

On August 12 , Betsy struck southeastern Puerto Rico and quickly crossed the island . Damage was heaviest where it moved ashore and in the territory 's central portion , and throughout Puerto Rico there were 15 @, @ 023 houses that were destroyed by Betsy . Multiple locations reported heavy crop damage , including Camuy which reported a complete loss of the corn crop . Hurricane Betsy was the first hurricane to be observed from the San Juan radar , and also resulted in the first hurricane warning on the island to be released on television . The hurricane left \$ 40 million in damage and 16 deaths , which prompted a federally declared disaster area . Locally the hurricane was known as the Santa Clara Hurricane . After exiting Puerto Rico , Betsy brushed the Bahamas before turning northeastward , becoming extratropical on August 18 . The remnants dissipated two days later to the south of Newfoundland .

= = Meteorological history = =

Before Betsy 's formation , the northeastward shift of the Azores High allowed for an increase in atmospheric instability across the tropical Atlantic , which made conditions for tropical cyclogenesis more favorable in early August . A tropical wave exited the west coast of Africa on August 4 . On August 9 , a ship reported rough seas and winds of force 10 on the Beaufort scale . On that basis , it is estimated that Tropical Storm Betsy developed that day about 835 mi (1345 km) east of Barbados . The next day , a Hurricane Hunters flight observed winds of 120 mph (190 km / h) , which indicated that Betsy had intensified significantly overnight . The flight reported how small the hurricane was , including a 10 mi (16 km) wide eye . After maintaining that intensity for about 24 hours , Betsy began weakening , moving directly over Marie @-@ Galante and southern Guadeloupe . It entered the eastern Caribbean with winds of 90 mph (150 km / h) before it began a track to the west @-@ northwest .

On August 12 , Hurricane Betsy passed about 30 mi (48 km) south of Saint Croix before striking southeastern Puerto Rico . This made Betsy the first hurricane to strike the island since the 1932 San Ciprian hurricane . It crossed the central portion of the island , and the structure deteriorated and the eye became difficult to locate as Betsy crossed the highest mountains . On two occasions the eye dropped slightly to the south because of the mountains . The eye became well @-@ defined as it approached the coast , and Betsy emerged on the northwest coast near Camuy at a similar intensity as when it moved ashore . The hurricane re @-@ intensified as it moved toward the Bahamas , reaching winds of 110 mph (180 km / h) on August 13 . That day , the eye passed near Grand Turk Island and San Salvador Island . By that time , the storm had increased in size ; the Hurricane Hunters reported that the gale force winds extended 125 mi (201 km) to its north . The eye reformed on August 14 , becoming well @-@ organized and attaining a minimum barometric pressure of 960 mbar (28 inHg) . The next day , Betsy turned to the northeast due to an approaching trough . Despite beginning a weakening trend , the pressure dropped further to 954 mbar (28 @. @ 2 inHg) on August 17 . The eye became increasingly poorly defined , and Betsy weakened to a tropical storm on August 18 to the south of Nova Scotia . Turning to the east , it became extratropical later that day , eventually dissipating on August 20 .

= = Impact = =

When the first advisory was issued on Betsy , a hurricane watch was issued from Barbados to Antigua . Around that time , a hurricane watch was also issued for Puerto Rico and the United

States Virgin Islands , which was later upgraded to a hurricane warning . This was the first hurricane warning in Puerto Rico to be aired on television .

The hurricane struck Guadeloupe with winds from 100 ? 120 mph (160 ? 195 km / h) , which caused extensive damage to 1 @, @ 000 houses . The communications throughout the territory were disrupted . The high winds destroyed upwards of 60 % of the banana , breadfruit , coconut , and papaya crop , which severely impacted the economy . Across the French West Indies , the hurricane resulted in 18 deaths and caused \$ 10 million in damage , \$ 3 @. @ 5 million of which from crop damage . In nearby Dominica , winds reached 69 mph (111 km / h) . In Saint Croix , the hurricane dropped 3 @. @ 20 in (81 mm) , while winds reached 86 mph (138 km / h) . In the northeastern Caribbean , Betsy capsized a ship and killed its crew of two . Another ship in the region drifted for several days south of Saint Croix due to a damaged engine .

When Betsy crossed Puerto Rico , it produced hurricane force winds across the entire territory except in the southwest corner . Sustained winds reached 73 mph (117 km / h) in San Juan , and Ramey Air Force Base on the island 's northwestern portion recorded 115 mph (185 km / h) wind gusts . The high winds downed a significant number of trees in the island 's interior due to the funneling within valleys . In Aibonito , the winds destroyed 1000 houses and damaged another 500 , and in nearby Comerío the winds severely damaged or destroyed 1285 dwellings . In Jayuya in the central portion of the island , the hurricane left severe crop damage , including a complete loss to the banana crop . However , damage was heaviest in Yabucoa near where Betsy moved ashore , due to a slight oscillation of the eye . High winds caused severe damage in a 20 mi (32 km) radius . In Yabucoa , over 12 @, @ 000 people were left homeless , and damage totaled \$ 8 million . Damage was likewise severe where Betsy moved offshore in Camuy , with a complete loss to the corn crop , 95 % of the avocado , 65 % of breadfruit , and 50 % of the coffee crop ruined . The hurricane dropped heavy rainfall in the central portion of the island , with a peak 24 ? hour total of 8 @. @ 72 in (221 mm) in Río Grande . The same station recorded a total of 9 @. @ 07 in (230 mm) , which was the highest total related to Betsy 's passage . Across Puerto Rico , Betsy destroyed 15 @, @ 023 houses and left \$ 40 million in damage . There were sixteen deaths on the island , which was less than expected due to well @- @ heeded warnings . There were also 24 injuries in the territory related to the storm . Betsy was the first hurricane on record to be observed from the San Juan radar . On the island , it is known as the Santa Clara hurricane . Due to the damage , U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower declared Puerto Rico as a disaster area on August 18 , which allocated millions of dollars in assistance . The Puerto Rican governor allocated \$ 6 @. @ 7 million of funding to aid in rebuilding .

In San Salvador in the Bahamas , the hurricane produced wind gusts of 132 mph (212 km / h) , and sustained winds reached 100 mph (160 km / h) . The strm dropped about 5 in (130 mm) of rainfall . Betsy destroyed several houses and wrecked the roofs of several churches . Hurricane Betsy left about \$ 380 @, @ 000 in damage in the Bahamas . While delivering relief supplies to San Salvador Air Force Base , a Douglas C @- @ 124A @- @ DL Globemaster II operated by the U.S. Air Force crashed . The plane had a right landing gear fail and as the result the plane skidded down the runway and came to a stop . One person was killed . Due to uncertainty in the storm 's movement , officials issued a hurricane warning for southern Florida . Although Betsy remained far away from the state , its eye was observed on radar in Miami at a potentially record distance of 337 mi (542 km) .

In the Grand Banks offshore Canada , the hurricane sunk a ship , although the entire crew was rescued .