

= 1917 Nueva Gerona hurricane =

The 1917 Nueva Gerona hurricane was the most intense tropical cyclone to strike the Florida Panhandle until Hurricane Opal in 1995 . The eighth tropical cyclone and fourth tropical storm of the season , this system was identified as a tropical storm east of the Lesser Antilles on September 20 . After crossing the Lesser Antilles , the system entered the Caribbean Sea and achieved hurricane intensity on September 21 . After becoming a Category 2 hurricane , the storm struck the northern coast of Jamaica on September 23 . Early on September 25 , the cyclone reached Category 4 status and attained maximum sustained winds of 150 mph ( 240 km / h ) soon thereafter . Later that day , the hurricane made landfall in eastern Pinar del Río Province , Cuba . The system entered the Gulf of Mexico shortly thereafter and weakened slightly . Recurving to the northeast , the hurricane briefly threatened Louisiana before turning toward Florida . Early on September 29 , the hurricane made landfall near Fort Walton Beach , Florida , with winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) . Once over land , the cyclone rapidly weakened and transitioned into an extratropical cyclone before dissipating on September 30 .

Some islands in the Lesser Antilles experienced strong winds and heavy rainfall , including Dominica , Guadeloupe , and Saint Lucia . In Jamaica , the hurricane caused significant damage to banana and coconut plantations . Communications from Holland Bay were disrupted when the station was demolished . The greatest damages were reported from the northern half of the island . Nine deaths occurred in the city of Port Antonio . In Nueva Gerona , Cuba , strong winds destroyed well @-@ constructed buildings and all but 10 homes . The Isla de la Juventud overall experienced about \$ 2 million ( 1917 USD ) in damage and there were at least 20 fatalities . Orchards and crops were destroyed on the Pinar del Río Province . In Louisiana and Mississippi , impact was generally limited to damaged crops and timber stands . Ten deaths from drowning were reported in Louisiana . Farther east in Mobile , Alabama , portions of roofs , trees , and other debris littered streets . Communications were severed in Pensacola , Florida . Several small watercraft washed ashore , and numerous wharves , docks , and boat storages suffered impact . Total damages were estimated near \$ 170 @,@ 000 in Pensacola area . Five deaths were reported in Florida , all of them in Crestview . The storm and its remnants also produced rainfall in Georgia , North Carolina , and South Carolina .

= = Meteorological history = =

A open trough of low pressure , possibly a tropical wave , developed into a tropical storm about 160 miles ( 260 km ) east @-@ northeast of Barbados at 00 : 00 UTC on September 20 . Steadily intensifying , the storm moved west @-@ northwestward and crossed the Lesser Antilles between the islands of Saint Lucia and Martinique several hours later . Upon entering the Caribbean Sea on September 21 , the system intensified quicker , becoming a Category 1 hurricane on the modern @-@ day Saffir ? Simpson hurricane wind scale later that day . While passing south of the Tiburon Peninsula on the following day , the storm strengthened into a Category 2 hurricane . Later on September 23 , the hurricane struck the northern coast of Jamaica , before re @-@ emerging into the Caribbean Sea . Around 06 : 00 UTC on September 24 , it intensified into a Category 3 hurricane while moving northwestward . Around that time , it struck Cayman Brac . Early on September 25 , the storm achieved Category 4 status .

At 12 : 00 UTC on September 25 , the hurricane attained its minimum barometric pressure of 928 mbar ( 27 @.@ 4 inHg ) , an estimate made by Ramón Perez of the Instituto de Meteorología de la República de Cuba . Using a pressure @-@ wind relationship , researchers at the National Hurricane Center estimated peak maximum sustained winds at 150 mph ( 240 km / h ) . Shortly after peak intensity , the cyclone brushed Isla de la Juventud . By 18 : 00 UTC on September 25 , the hurricane made landfall at the same intensity in the eastern part of Pinar del Río Province in Cuba . The system entered the Gulf of Mexico later on September 25 . The storm fell to Category 3 intensity early on September 27 . It briefly tracked generally northward and approached southeastern Louisiana before re @-@ curving northeastward late the next day . At 02 : 00 UTC on

September 29 , the hurricane made landfall near Fort Walton Beach , Florida , with winds of 115 mph ( 185 km / h ) . Once over land , the system rapidly weakened to a tropical storm within 12 hours . Early on September 30 , it transitioned into an extratropical cyclone over Georgia after merging with a frontal system . About six hours later , the remnants of the hurricane dissipated .

The minimum atmospheric pressure of 928 mbar ( 27 @. @ 42 inHg ) established the cyclone as the third most intense landfalling Cuban hurricane . Deeper pressures of 921 mbar ( 27 @. @ 23 inHg ) and 915 mbar ( 27 @. @ 02 inHg ) were measured in the 1924 and 1932 hurricanes , respectively . The cyclone ( 949 mbar ; 28 @. @ 02 inHg ) was also the most intense tropical cyclone in the Florida Panhandle until Hurricane Opal ( 942 mbar ; 27 @. @ 82 inHg ) . At the time , it was tied with an 1882 storm , which also had a central pressure of 949 mbar ( 28 @. @ 02 inHg ) at landfall in northwest Florida .

= = Preparations and impact = =

= = = Caribbean = = =

On September 21 , the United States Weather Bureau issued advisories because of strong swells in the Leeward Islands , indicating the presence of a tropical disturbance .

The system produced heavy precipitation and strong winds in the eastern Caribbean islands . In Jamaica , the hurricane caused significant damages to banana and coconut plantations . Communications from Holland Bay were disrupted when the station was demolished . The greatest damages were reported from the northern half of the island . At Port Antonio , the custom house was destroyed , while a hotel was several damaged . Nine deaths occurred in the city . In Nueva Gerona , Cuba , severe winds destroyed well constructed buildings , devastating the town . Only ten homes remained standing . At a large plantation , every building but the house was destroyed . Nearly all of the chickens on the property were killed during the storm . Throughout Isla de la Juventud , damage reached approximately \$ 2 million . The island 's food supply was also ruined . Offshore , a number of ships capsized or went missing , resulting in " many " deaths . There were at least 20 fatalities on the island , while other accounts state that there were hundreds killed . Orchards and crops were destroyed on the Pinar del Río Province . A relief committee issued an appeal for aid to then @-@ Cuban president Mario García Menocal and Americans . At the Burnside Hotel , among few buildings were demolished , a soup kitchen was opened to feed storm victims .

= = = United States = = =

On September 23 , northeast storm warnings were issued for the Florida coast from West Palm Beach to Boca Grande . On September 25 , the Weather Bureau advised marine traffic to remain alert in the Gulf of Mexico , noting that the intensity of the storm was unknown . Later , hurricane warnings were issued from Apalachicola , Florida , to Mobile , Alabama , on September 25 . Warnings were also released from Pascagoula , Mississippi , to New Orleans , Louisiana , on September 26 . The warnings were briefly discontinued because of track uncertainties , but they were re @-@ issued when the cyclone began to curve northeast . On September 27 and September 28 , scheduled vessel trips were cancelled in New Orleans , Louisiana . Marine traffic resumed after the storm passed east of the city . The storm struck the Gulf Coast later than anticipated because of slow forward motion .

In Louisiana , rain bands produced 6 @. @ 40 in ( 160 mm ) of rain in Burrwood . The Louisville and Nashville Railroad sent trains on alternate routes because of eroded tracks near Lake Catherine . The effects of the cyclone also damaged crops and timber stands in Louisiana and Mississippi . The storm surge associated with the hurricane moved several structures from their foundations in Buras , Louisiana . There , the storm was blamed for the death of an 8 @-@ year @-@ old boy . Nine additional fatalities occurred near Houma after the fishing bark Wanna was wrecked . In Biloxi , warnings prevented considerable loss of shrimp boats . Street cars and other traffic were practically

suspended in Gulfport .

In Alabama , more than 5 in ( 125 mm ) of rain was measured in Montgomery , prompting flood advisories for the lower Alabama River watershed . At Camp Sheridan , a United States Army World War I training camp , the streets were inundated with at least a few inches of water . In Mobile , trees and telephone and telegraph wires were downed , cutting off communications . Roofs were detached and the galleries of houses were torn away . Police stopped the streets cars were operating and shut off the electricity . No boats from the area were lost , and waterfront damage was negligible .

The hurricane severed communication from Pensacola , Florida , though reports eventually indicated that the wireless radio plant was not destroyed . Several small watercraft washed ashore , including the USS Quincy , and numerous wharves , docks , and boat storages received damage . Total damages reached about \$ 170 @, @ 000 in the vicinity of Pensacola . Near the city , a portion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad was 8 ft ( 2 @. @ 4 m ) underwater , while several of their bridges washed away . At Valparaiso , tides reached 7 @. @ 5 ft ( 2 @. @ 3 m ) above normal . Significant destruction of timber occurred in Okaloosa and Santa Rosa counties , and crops , structures , and livestock were affected . Strong winds occurred along the southwest coast of Florida , and a wind gust of 44 mph ( 70 km / h ) was reported in Jacksonville . A total of five people were killed in Crestview .

The storm and its remnants also produced rainfall in Georgia , North Carolina , and South Carolina .