

= Subtropical Storm Alpha (1972) =

Subtropical Storm Alpha (also called Alfa) was a rare off @-@ season subtropical cyclone that hit Georgia in May 1972 . It developed from a previously non @-@ tropical cyclone in the western Atlantic Ocean , and initially it moved northeastward off of the Carolinas . The storm turned southwestward due to a building ridge , and concurrently it intensified to become Subtropical Storm Alpha . It later moved ashore near Savannah , and it finally dissipated in the northeast Gulf of Mexico on May 29 . It produced wave action and moderate rainfall along the coast . Damage totaled over \$ 100 @,@ 000 (1972 USD) , and there were two associated deaths .

= = Meteorological history = =

Throughout May 1972 , a series of weak troughs moved across the eastern United States . In the third week of the month , an upper @-@ level cutoff low developed along one of these troughs , located southeast of the United States and removed from the Westerlies . The origins of Alpha were from a surface low northeast of Florida , associated with the larger @-@ scale , cold core upper low . It organized , and late on May 23 it could be classified as a subtropical depression , east of the Georgia / South Carolina border . While southeast of Hatteras , North Carolina , a developing ridge blocked its northeast motion , and so it slowed to turn to the southeast . On May 25 , a small , intense low @-@ level center organized rapidly , and by the next day it attained gale force winds , by which time the storm turned southwestward . At 1600 UTC on May 26 , the National Hurricane Center initiated advisories on Subtropical Cyclone Alpha , when the storm was about 225 miles south of Cape Hatteras . Around that time , it reached its peak winds of 70 mph (110 km / h) .

On its first advisory , there was disagreement among forecast models regarding its eventual track , with projected tracks deviating from a Georgia landfall to a track northeastward out to sea . Alpha was also a climatological outlier at the time ; the NHC HURRAN model , which was based on previous storms with similar characteristics , found no analogs for the storm . Subtropical Storm Alpha was initially well @-@ defined as it moved southwestward . The very small center was located along the eastern edge of the convection , while low @-@ level cloud bands formed east of the center . At the time , the temperature structure was more typical of a winter storm , although it was expected to become more like a subtropical storm typical during the summer months . The winds decreased steadily as it turned more westward on May 27 , and the heavy rainfall persisted mostly to the north and west of the center .

The National Hurricane Center initially thought the center might not have been at the surface , and the agency indicated low forecasting confidence , as they could not determine a circulation center . The difficulty arose from the large , sprawling nature of the storm , and by later on May 27 a new center formed , as confirmed by radar imagery and the Hurricane Hunters . That night , the extremely small center made landfall just south of Savannah , Georgia , affecting a very small area with winds of 65 mph (100 km / h) and a minimum pressure of 991 mbar (hPa ; 29 @.@ 26 inHg) . Around the time of landfall , Alpha developed a warm core , indicating some tropical characteristics . The storm weakened quickly over land , although it did not dissipate until two days later over the northeast Gulf of Mexico .

= = Preparations and impact = =

At the time of the first advisory on Alpha , there were small craft warnings from Jacksonville , Florida to Cape May , New Jersey . Gale warnings were posted from Cape Fear , North Carolina to Chincoteague , Virginia . The interaction between Alpha and the high pressure system to its northeast caused cooler temperatures and gusty winds from Delaware southward . Wave heights reached up to 20 feet (6 @.@ 1 m) along the Virginia capes . The storm dropped rainfall along the coast of North Carolina and Virginia , with a maximum of 6 @.@ 97 inches (177 mm) reported in Ocracoke , North Carolina . While moving slowly off the North Carolina coast , Alpha caused heavy beach erosion , destroyed one house , and threatened the foundation of several other homes in the

Outer Banks . Damage totaled over \$ 50 @, @ 000 (1972 USD) .

While the storm was traveling over the western Atlantic Ocean , the storm produced a large area of rough seas , which was considered the greatest threat from the storm . In northeastern Florida , police officers were stationed to ensure people did not swim in the dangerous seas . The high waves also halted work to deepen a harbor at the Mayport Naval Station . Two people drowned after the storm dissipated , when surf was still turbulent . Tides along the Georgia coast reached 2 to 3 feet (0 @. @ 61 to 0 @. @ 91 m) above normal , which caused some flooding and beach erosion . Wind gusts reached 58 mph (93 km / h) on Saint Simons Island . The winds knocked down trees and power lines , leaving some people without power in eastern Georgia . Damage was minor but widespread in the state , estimated at over \$ 50 @, @ 000 (1972 USD) . Moderate rains spread in coastal areas from South Carolina through southern Florida .

The 1972 hurricane season was the first year in which quasi @-@ tropical cyclones were named , by using the NATO phonetic alphabet . At the time , the names were applied to large subtropical cyclones and small neutercanes , both of which were later combined into one category .