

# Hurricane Categories

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale is a 1-5 rating based on a hurricane's destructive potential. This is used to provide an estimate of the potential property damage associated with hurricane landfall. The margin of error in hurricane forecasts is usually +/- one category. Storm surge refers to the rise in ocean levels that impact the coast when storms make landfall. In addition to storm surge levels there may be additional impacts due to wave action.

## Tropical Storm:

Winds 45-73 mph. Tropical storms move more slowly than hurricanes and may contain strong winds, severe thunderstorms, tornadoes and extended periods of heavy rain associated with inland flooding. Hampton Roads experienced Tropical Storm Isabel in 2003 and Tropical Storm Ernesto in 2006.

## Category One:

Winds 74-95 mph. Storm surge generally 4-5 feet above normal. No real damage to building structures. Damage primarily to unanchored mobile homes, shrubbery, and trees. Some damage to poorly constructed signs. Also, some coastal road flooding and minor pier damage. Hurricanes Allison of 1995 and Danny of 1997 were in this category at peak intensity.

## Category Two:

Winds 96-110 mph. Storm surge generally 6-8 feet above normal. Some roofing material, door, and window damage of buildings. Considerable damage to shrubbery and trees with some trees blown down. Considerable damage to mobile homes, poorly constructed signs and piers. Coastal and low-lying escape routes flood 2-4 hours before arrival of the hurricane center. Small craft in unprotected anchorages break moorings. Hurricane Bonnie in 1998 was a Category Two hurricane when it hit the North Carolina coast, as was Hurricane Georges in 1998 when it hit the Florida Keys and the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

## Category Three:

Winds 111-130 mph. Storm surge generally 9-12 feet above normal. Some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings. Damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down. Mobile homes and poorly constructed signs are destroyed. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Flooding near the coast destroys smaller structures with larger structures damaged by battering from floating debris. Terrain continuously lower than 5 feet above mean sea level may be flooded inland 8 miles or more. Evacuation of low-lying residences with several blocks of the shoreline may be required. Hurricane Hazel which made landfall in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1954 and Hurricane Katrina which made landfall in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana in 2005 were Category Three storms.

## Category Four:

Winds 131-155 mph. Storm surge generally 13-18 feet above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failures on small residences. Shrubs, trees and all signs are blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Extensive damage to doors and windows. Low-lying escape routes may be cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of structures near the shore. Terrain lower than 10 feet above sea level may be flooded requiring massive evacuation of residential areas as far inland as 6 miles. Hurricane Hugo which made landfall in Charleston, South Carolina in 1989 and Hurricane Charley which made landfall in Port Charlotte, Florida in 2004 were Category Four hurricanes.

## Category Five:

Winds greater than 155 mph. Storm surge generally greater than 18 feet above normal. Complete failure of many residences and industrial buildings. All shrubs, trees, and signs blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Severe and extensive window and door damage. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of all structures located less than 15 ft above sea level and within 500 yards of the shoreline. Massive evacuation of residential areas on low ground within 5-10 miles of the shoreline may be required. Only three Category 5 storms have made landfall in the United States: The Labor Day Storm in 1935 devastated Islamorada in the Florida Keys; Hurricane Camille in 1969 made landfall in Biloxi, Mississippi and exited through Virginia; and Hurricane Andrew in 1992 struck South Miami-Dade County, Florida.



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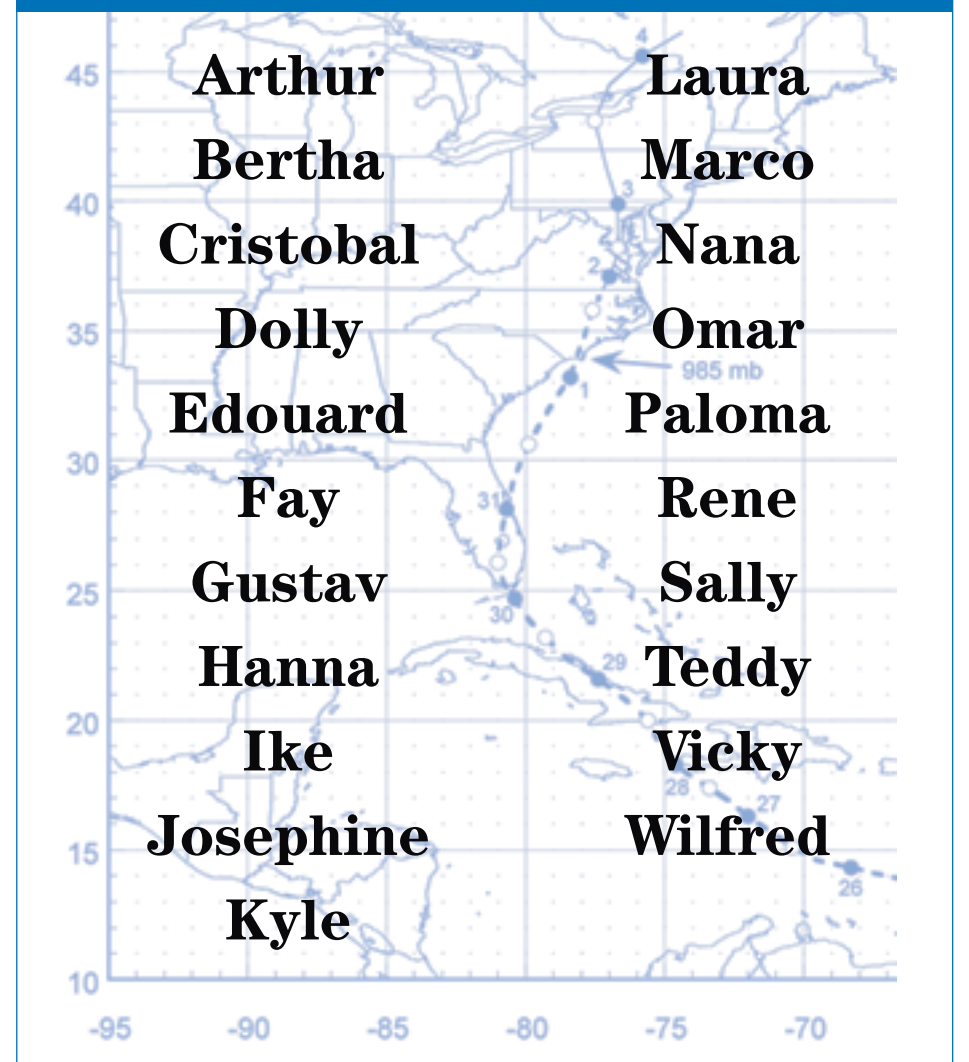
### Watch:

Hurricane conditions are possible within 36 hours.

### Warning:

Hurricane conditions are expected within 24 hours.

## 2008 Hurricane Names



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