

Hurricane Categories

The National Weather Service rates hurricanes by their intensity, using a scale of one to five. The scale, which is outlined below, categorizes storms according to their sustained winds; the storm surges produced; and expected damage:

Category One:

- Winds of 74 to 95 mph, storm surge of 4 to 5 feet above normal tide.
- Damage to shrubbery, trees, poorly constructed signs, and unanchored mobile homes. Low lying coastal roads inundated.

Category Two:

- Winds of 96 to 110 mph, storm surge of 9 to 12 feet above normal tide.
- Some damage to roofing materials of buildings; some wind and door damage. Major damage to exposed mobile homes.
- Coastal roads and low lying escape routes made impassable by rising water 2 to 4 hours before arrival of hurricane.

Category Three:

- Winds of 111 to 130 mph, storm surge 9 to 12 feet above normal tide.
- Large trees blown down.
- Some damage to roofing materials of buildings; some window and door damage. Some structural damage to small buildings.
- Mobile homes destroyed.
- Serious flooding at the coast; many small structures destroyed; large structures damaged by waves and debris.

Category Four:

- Winds of 131 to 155 mph, storm surge 13 to 18 feet above normal tide.
- Shrubs and trees blown down, all signs down.
- Extensive damage to roofing materials, windows, and doors.
- Complete failure of roofs of many small residences.
- Complete destruction of mobile homes.
- Flat terrain 10 feet or less above sea level flooded inland as far as six miles.
- Major damage to lower floors of structures near shore.

Category Five:

- Winds greater than 155 mph, storm surge greater than 18 feet above normal tide.
- Shrubs and trees blown down; considerable damage to roofs of buildings.
- Very severe and extensive damage to windows and doors.
- Complete failure of roofs on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures.
- Complete destruction of mobile homes.
- Massive evacuation of residential areas on low ground within 5 to 10 miles of shore possibly required.