

The Saffir –Simpson Hurricane Scale

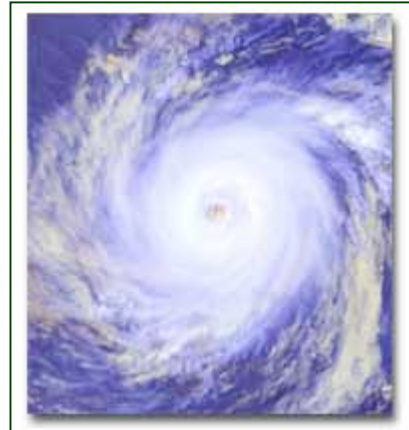
The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale is a 1-5 rating based on the hurricane's present intensity. It is used to estimate the damage and flooding potential expected along the coast from a hurricane landfall. Wind speed is the determining factor in the scale.

Category One Hurricane: Winds 74-95 mph

Storm surge generally 4-5 ft above normal. No real damage to building structures. Damage primarily to unanchored mobile homes, shrubbery, and trees. Some damage to poorly constructed signs. Also produces, some coastal road flooding and minor pier damage.

Category Two Hurricane: Winds 96-110 mph

Storm surge generally 6-8 feet above normal. Produces some roofing material, door, and window damage of buildings. There is usual considerable damage to shrubbery and trees. Considerable damage occurs 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 Category 2.



Category Three Hurricane: Winds 111-130 mph

Storm surge generally 9-12 ft above normal. There is some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings with a minor amount of curtainwall failures. 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 ft above mean sea level may be flooded inland 8 miles (13 km) or more. Evacuation of low-lying residences with several blocks of the shoreline may be required. Hurricane Fran in 1996 was Category Three.

Category Four Hurricane: Winds 131-155 mph

Storm surge generally 13-18 ft above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failures on small residences. Shrubs, trees, and all signs are blown down. There is complete destruction of mobile homes.

On stick built homes, expect 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 occurs to lower floors of structures near the shore. Terrain lower than 10 ft above sea level may be flooded requiring massive evacuation of residential areas as far inland as 6 miles (10 km).

Category Five Hurricane: Winds greater than 155 mph

The storm surge is generally greater than 18 ft above normal. Complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures with small utility buildings blown over or away. All shrubs, trees, and signs are blown down. Expect complete destruction of mobile homes and expect severe and extensive window and door damage to stick built homes. 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 (8-16 km) of the shoreline may be required

***The following information is provided by the National Hurricane Center,
a division of the National Weather Service.***