

SAFFIR/SIMPSON HURRICANE CATEGORY DEFINITIONS

1. Hurricane Categories: Hurricane intensity and expected damage is categorized according to the Saffir-Simpson scale. The scale ranges from categories one through five, with five being the most severe. The categories and their effects are:

a. Category One

(1) Winds 65 to 82 knots (75 to 95 miles per hour). Damage primarily to shrubbery, trees, foliage and unanchored mobile homes. No real damage to permanent building structures.

(2) Storm Surge, four to five feet above mean water level. Low-lying coastal roads inundated, minor pier damage.

b. Category Two

(1) Winds 83 to 95 knots (96 to 110 miles per hour). Considerable damage to shrubbery and tree foliage with some trees blown down. Major structural damage to exposed mobile homes. Some damage to roofing material, windows and doors. No major damage to permanent building structures.

(2) Storm Surge, six to eight feet above mean water level. Coastal roads and low-lying escape routes inland cut by rising water. Considerable pier damage and marinas flooded. Evacuation of some shoreline residences and low lying island areas required.

c. Category Three

(1) Winds 96 to 113 knots (111 to 130 miles per hour). Damage to shrubbery and trees. Foliage off trees, large trees blown down. Some roofing material damage; some window and door damage; some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings. Mobile homes destroyed. Minor amount of curtain wall failures.

(2) Storm Surge, nine to 12 feet above mean water level. Serious flooding along coast with many smaller structures near coast destroyed. Larger structures damaged by battering of floating debris. Low-lying escape routes inland cut by rising water.

d. Category Four

(1) Winds 114 to 135 knots (131 to 155 miles per hour). Shrubs and trees down. Extensive roofing material damage; extensive window and door damage. Complete failure of roof structures on many small residences and complete destruction of mobile homes.

(2) Storm Surge, 13 to 18 feet above mean water level. Major damage to lower floors of structures near the shore due to flooding and battering action. Low-lying escape routes inland cut by rising water. Major erosion of beach areas.

e. Category Five

(1) Winds greater than 135 knots (155 miles per hour). Shrubs and trees down and roofing damage considerable. Very severe and extensive window and door damage. Complete failure of roof structures on many residences and industrial buildings; extensive glass failure; some complete building failures; small buildings overturned and blown over or away and complete destruction of mobile homes. Major power distribution failures causing loss of water and sewer for an extended period.

(2) Storm Surge, greater than 18 feet above mean water level. Major damage to lower floors of all structures. Low-lying escape routes inland cut by rising water. Evacuation of residential areas situated on low ground within 5 to 10 miles of the shore line may be required.