

Scenario #3: “Hurricane Hunter”

The Scenario:

Those who live in the southeastern states are aware of, and prepared for, the dangers of hurricanes and tropical storms that typically strike during hurricane season, which begins on June 1st and ends on November 30th of each year. Although it is unusual, hurricanes have made their way up to the northern coastal states in the past. This year turned out to be one of the deadliest hurricane seasons with storms affecting unusual geographical areas. On August 1, Tropical Storm Hunter reached wind speeds of 70 mph. If it hits wind speeds of 74 mph, it would be a hurricane strength. Two days later, the winds shift and the storm picks up momentum with sustained wind speeds around 85 mph – making it a Category 1 Hurricane. Within the next 24 hours, winds shift again, placing it as a Category 2 Hurricane with winds around 100 mph. In addition, the system is moving fast across the Atlantic Ocean. Currently it is in the center of the Atlantic Ocean heading towards the Lesser Antilles Islands. On August 5, the system shifted northwest, heading directly for Central Florida and Georgia coastlines. At this point, it remains a Category 2 hurricane. If it remains on track, it should strike within the next three or four days. By August 6th, the Hurricane crossed the warm waters of the Atlantic and is at the upper limits of a Category 3 Hurricane with wind speeds of 125 mph. Mandatory evacuations are issued along every coastal city and state in the nation as well as some inland areas.

On August 7, Hurricane Hunter has been declared a Category 4, and by the morning of August 8, it reached sustained winds of 159 mph making it a dangerous Category 5. It is moving at approximately 10 mph across the Atlantic and is expected to cross land about six miles north of Jacksonville, Florida. However, due to the size of the storm, the entire coastline, and many inland cities of Florida and Georgia, are under mandatory evacuations.

On August 10, this Category 5 hurricane strikes as expected, moving northward along the Interstate 95 corridor knocking out powerlines, destroying entire homes, and anything else in its path. The storm track extends from Jacksonville, Florida through New York City, where it finally turns back into the Atlantic Ocean. It was a Category 5 when it hit, downgraded to a Category 4 as it tracked through Georgia...to a Category 3 through the Carolinas, Category 2 in Virginia, Category 1 in Maryland and Pennsylvania, Tropical Storm in New Jersey and exits as a Tropical Depression in New York City. See the picture below for the actual storm track data. For descriptions on Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale categories, see <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php>.



Caption: Image of category 5 hurricane path as red line on map moving northward along the Interstate 95 corridor from Jacksonville, Florida through New York City, and turns back into the Atlantic Ocean.

Source: www.mapswire.com

The damage is colossal as tracts of homes, businesses, roadways, and city infrastructures are destroyed in the wake of this massive storm from Jacksonville, Florida to New York City. This storm track was deadly with wind, rain, and hail crippling cities and towns more than 100 miles from the Hurricane's Center and more than 350 people confirmed dead, and many others missing and/or stranded despite the mandatory evacuation. Resources along the affected area are overwhelmed and hospitals near the hurricane track cannot operate due to major damage. The closest hospitals and health care facilities are in the following cities, which sustained some form of minor damage; however, they are operative:

- Miami, Florida
- Montgomery, Alabama
- Birmingham, Alabama
- Knoxville, Tennessee
- Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Lexington, Kentucky
- Charleston, West Virginia
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- State College, Pennsylvania
- Binghamton, New York
- Albany, New York

- Boston, Massachusetts

The U.S. President has declared this area a major disaster area, allowing federal aid to support local and state efforts.

Your Review: The storm has passed and you are left with the aftermath. What do you tell your public? Factor out the issues and follow protocol to formulate your response to the discussion question and public service announcement. (It is recommended that you watch the Hurricane Intensity Scale here to understand the type of damage caused by various categories of hurricanes:

<https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php>)

Resource:

National Hurricane Center. (n.d.) Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. [Website]. Retrieved from <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/aboutsshws.php>