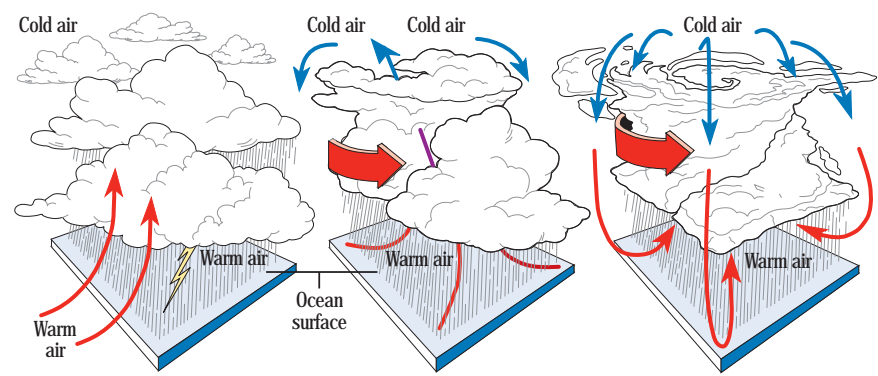


The anatomy of a hurricane

How thunderstorm can evolve into hurricane



Thunderstorm cluster

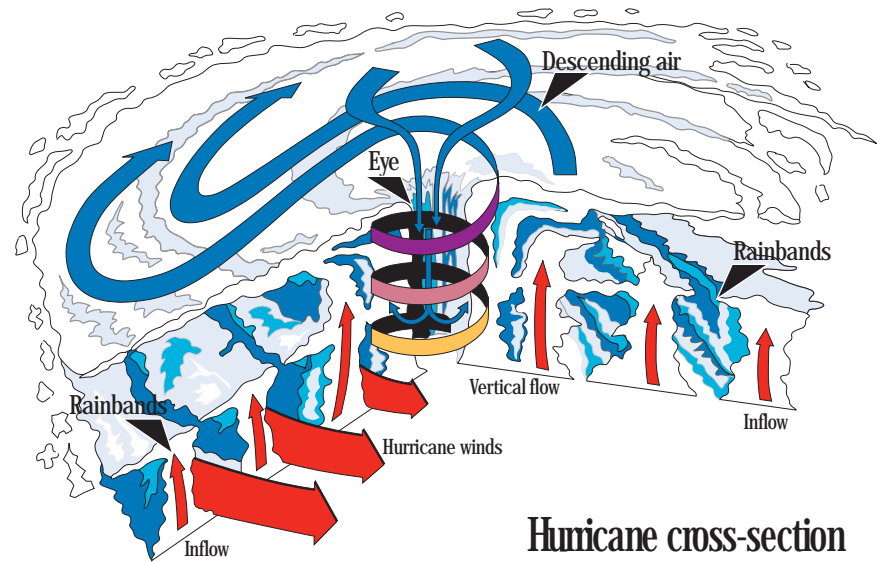
Individual thunderstorms form as warm, moist air rises and hits cold air. They begin to merge into a cluster, often reaching 100 to 300 miles in diameter.

Topical depression

The thunderstorm cluster forms one center of low pressure and is reclassified as a tropical depression. Surface winds reach 20 to 38 mph as the storm drifts and begins to rotate.

Topical storm

As evaporation and condensation intensify, rising warm air is trapped and spreads out in all directions, forming rainbands. Spinning, due to the Earth's rotation, increases and winds reach 39 mph.

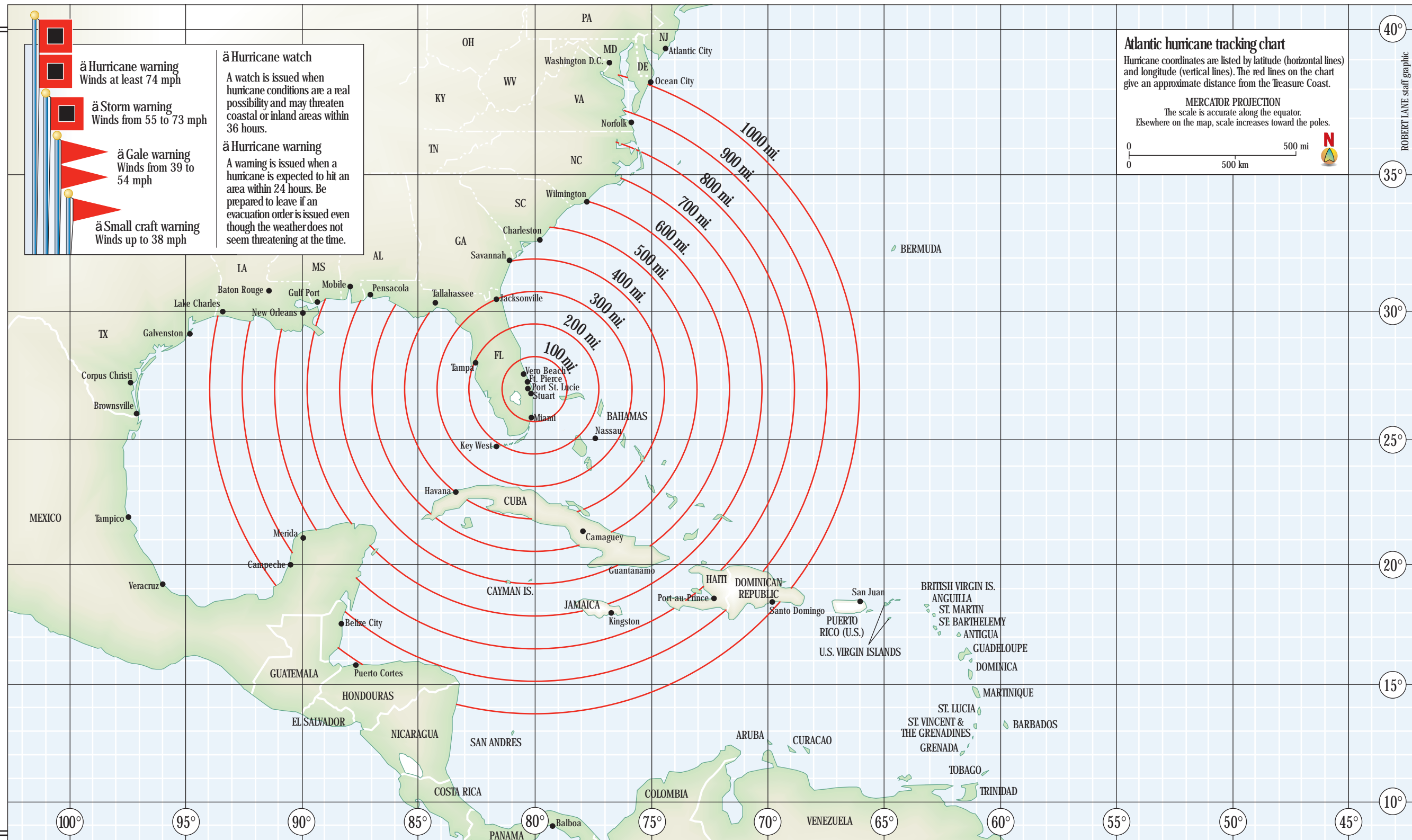


Hurricane cross-section

Hurricane

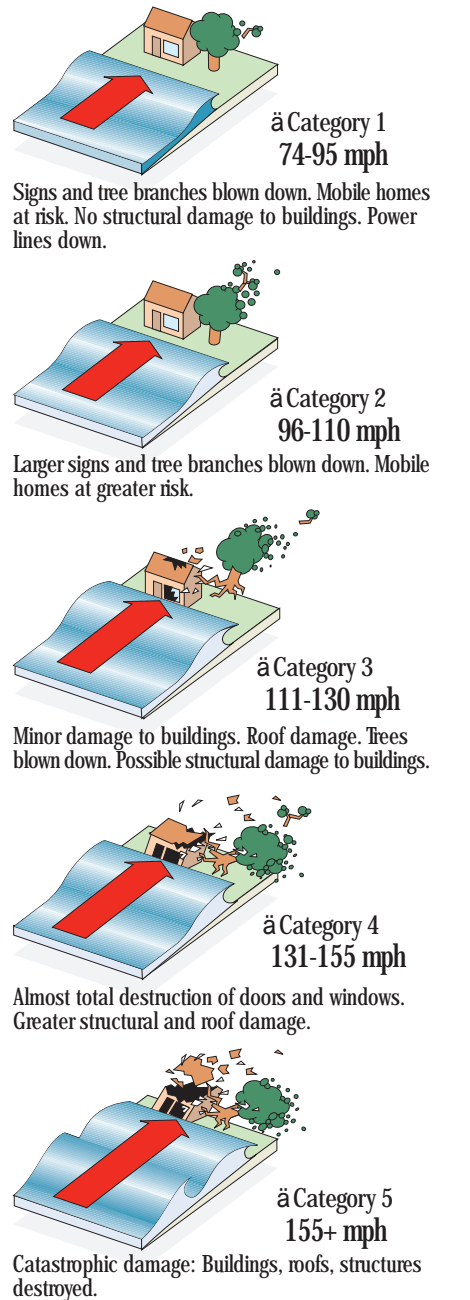
Billions of gallons of water evaporate and condense, fueling the storm. Warm air in the center loses its moisture, forming the eye. Winds reach 74 mph and the storm is reclassified as a hurricane. Average diameter is 300 miles.

Sources: National Hurricane Center, Knight-Ridder Global Weather, National Geographic



The strength of a storm

The National Hurricane Center classifies hurricanes according to wind speed and destructive potential.



Sources: KRT, National Hurricane Center, Knight-Ridder Global Weather, National Geographic