

Another Cat. 5 Hurricane: Headed for Florida?

Posted by

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CBC.ca - The most severe Hurricane season on record became official overnight, as Tropical Storm Wilma grew to hurricane strength. And, how it grew! 'Hurricane Wilma' is now rated as a Category 5 hurricane, as was it's famous predecessor, Katrina. Now, Florida watches nervously to see which course the monster storm will take. Already, 10 people are reported to have been killed in Haiti by mudslides, triggered by Wilma's heavy rains. Hurricane Wilma becomes the first since naming hurricanes began to be designated with a "W," the last letter of the english alphabet to be used. The next storm in the still adolescent hurricane season will be designated using Greek letter Alpha. -lex

www.cbc.ca

An Oct. 18 satellite image of Wilma. (Courtesy NOAA)

[Wilma swells into 'extremely dangerous'; Category 5 hurricane](#)

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CBC News

Hurricane Wilma strengthened dramatically into a Category 5 storm early Wednesday, with forecasters saying it could be the most powerful storm yet in a season that has already killed nearly 2,000 people.

Within less than 18 hours, Wilma grew from a tropical storm showing winds of under 119 km/h to the strongest level of hurricane recorded on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale, packing sustained winds of about 282 km/h.

Early reports from Haiti, where Wilma is causing heavy rain, said 10 people had been killed in a mudslide related to the storm. The storm had a minimum air pressure reading of between 892 and 894 millibars early Wednesday, according to instruments carried by a U.S. Air Force plane that flew into the storm system.

That reading has not yet been calibrated, but if the 894-millibar reading is confirmed, it would be "the lowest minimum pressure ever measured in a hurricane in the Atlantic basin," according to an advisory issued at 5 a.m. EDT Wednesday on the website of the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

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[FROM OCT. 17, 2005: Wilma helps 2005 storm season tie record](#)

Atlantic storm systems tend to wax and wane, so Wilma's intensity may drop before its winds hit any point of land.

As of 5 a.m., rain associated with Wilma was falling on Jamaica, Cuba, Nicaragua and Honduras, but the storm wasn't expected to land a direct punch on any of those regions.

The hurricane centre's website says the "extremely dangerous" storm is tracking to thread through the Yucatan Channel between western Cuba and Mexico's Cancun area, affecting the Cayman Islands along the way.

"It will start to make a gradual turn to the north and then to the northeast, impacting the Florida peninsula possibly on Saturday," said Lieut. Jennifer Pralgo, a meteorologist with the National Hurricane Center.

Wilma is the 12th hurricane of a season that has inflicted nearly 2,000 deaths on places such as Guatemala, Louisiana and Mississippi.