

Hurricane History

Saffir-Simpson Scale

Scale Number (Category)	Sustained Winds (MPH)	Damage	Storm Surge
1	74-95	Minimal: Unanchored mobile homes, vegetation and signs.	4-5 feet
2	96-110	Moderate: All mobile homes, roofs, small crafts, flooding	6-8 feet
3	111-130	Extensive: small buildings, low-lying roads cut off.	9-12 feet
4	131-155	Extreme: Roofs destroyed, trees down, roads cut off, mobile homes destroyed, beach homes flooded.	13-18 feet
5	155+	Catastrophic: Most buildings destroyed. Vegetation destroyed, major roads cut off, homes flooded.	greater than 18 feet

The wind speeds above show the wind speeds surrounding the hurricane and the wind speeds associated with them. This is not however how fast the actual hurricane is moving. The hurricane can be a category 5 hurricane but be moving at a slow rate of just 30 mph. Hurricanes that move slow along their path tend to be the most volatile as they linger over islands and countries the longest, thus inflicting the most harm.

Table showing a list of various Hurricanes that have affected Dominica

Name	Category	# of Deaths	Impact	Date	Classification
Omar	2	0	Damage to coast and fishing industry	2008	Sea surge 20-30 feet
Dean	2	0	Agriculture Housing	2007	Flash flooding
Lenny		1	Coastal Damage	1999	Sea surge 30-40 feet
Luis				1995	
Marilyn	1			1995	
Hugo				1989	
Gilbert				1988	
Klaus				1984	
Frederick		0		1980	
Allen		0		1980	
David	5	43	60% homeless	1979	Disaster
Great Hurricane		200			

Brief History on Various Hurricanes That Have Affected Dominica

With the legacies of Atlantic tropical cyclones predating many cultures and thousands of years, the largest loss of life in a hurricane is known to have occurred in the Lesser Antilles in mid-October 1780, during what became known as The Great Hurricane. Estimates indicate that around 22,000 deaths occurred in that storm, with a total of about 9,000 lives lost in Martinique, 4,000-5,000 in St. Eustatius, and 4,326 in Barbados. Thousands of deaths also occurred offshore including 200 on the shores of Dominica.

The Great Hurricane also cause far more deaths than documented in any other storm. The second largest loss (the largest in the United States) came during the 1900 Galveston hurricane. Estimates of persons killed ranged from 8000 to 12000 fatalities. Three other storms killed around 8000 people: 1974 Hurricane Fifi in Honduras; a 1930 hurricane in the Dominican Republic; and 1963 Hurricane Flora in Haiti and Cuba. There is also a list of 39 instances of at least 1,000 fatalities.

Interestingly enough, while Dominica's two closet neighbours Martinique and Guadeloupe have lost thousands of lives in single hurricanes, Dominica has been a lot more fortunate. On September 6, 1776 more than 6000 lives were lost in Guadeloupe and as previously noted more than 9000 were lost in Martinique. In the case of Dominica, the largest single loss of life was on August 14, 1788 when upwards of five hundred were killed. In 1806, within days of each other on September 9 and again on September 20, 450 and 165 individuals were killed in two separate hurricanes.

The earliest recorded deaths from a hurricane in Dominica dates back to 1567. According to one account, "six ships carrying three million pesos were wrecked in a storm off Dominica. The island natives killed all the survivors." At that time the 'island natives' were predominantly Carib Indians and this episode helped feed the belief that the Carib (Kalinago) Indians were "warlike, cannibals and fierce, and hence much to be feared."

Hurricane David

The notorious hurricane David to all Dominicans is one of the major hurricanes to hit Dominica if not the most devastating; it left the country with over 60% of the population homeless and 43 deaths. The city of Roseau and several villages were demolished. Houses and buildings were torn apart. Hurricane David slammed into Dominica in 1979 has been recorded as the 18th most destructive storm in all of recorded history. In that storm, 2068 souls were lost, in Dominica (43), the Dominican Republic and the United States. Other times when hurricanes have claimed more than fifty lives in Dominica were on:

- October 21, 1817 when a combined total of about 250 persons were killed (about a quarter of this in St. Lucia)
- September 20, 1834 more than 200
- Hurricane Dorothy on August 20, 1971 with a total of 51 killed
- August 28, 1916 when about 50 souls perished.