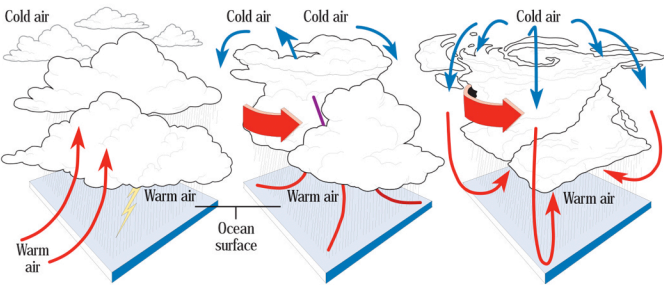


The anatomy of a hurricane

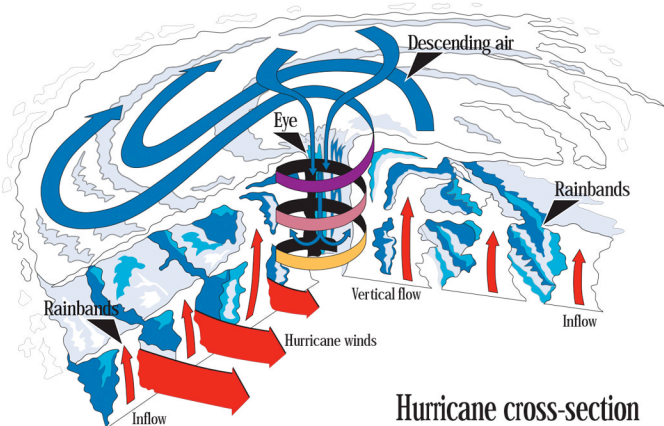
How thunderstorm can evolve into hurricane



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.

Tropical 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.

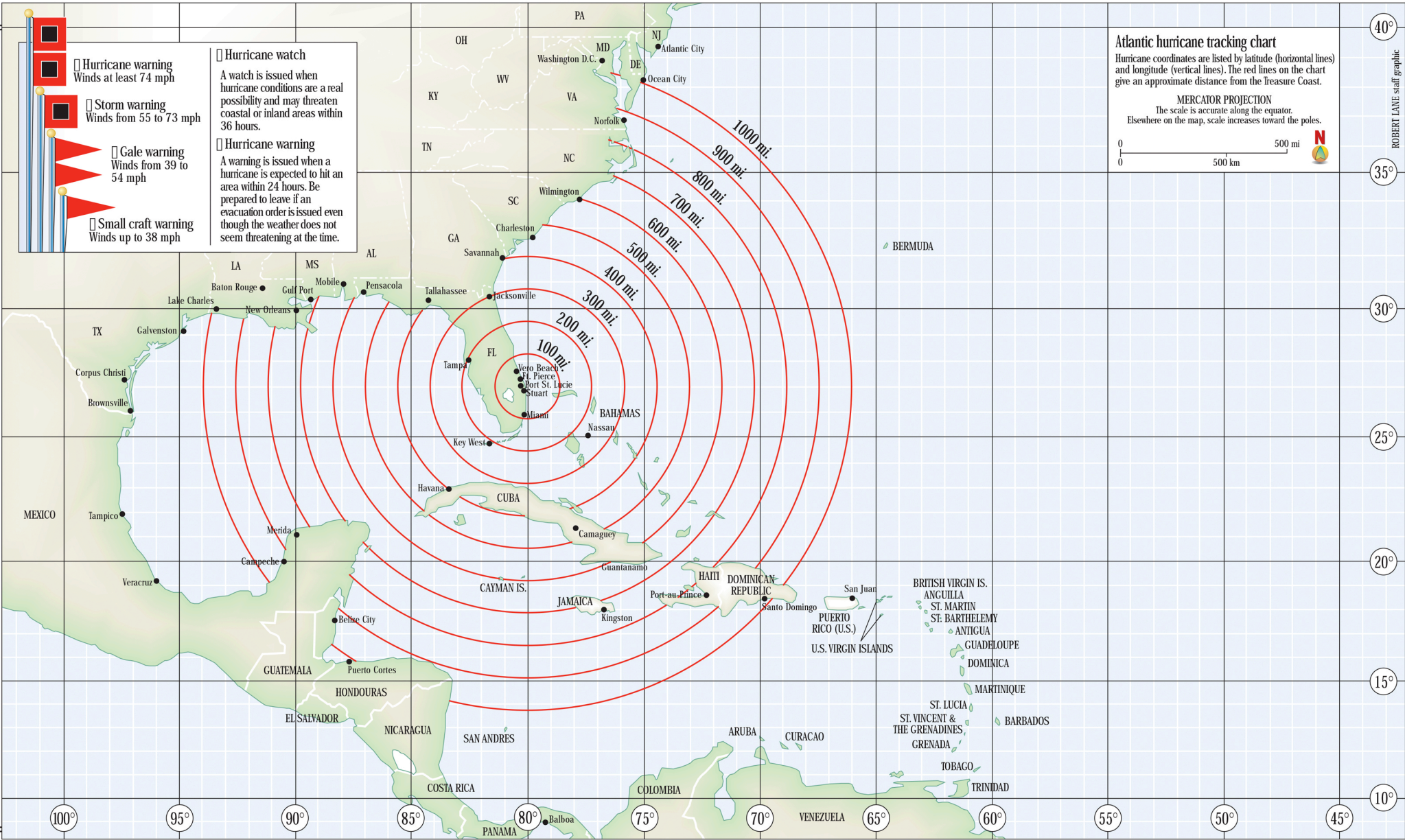
Tropical storm
As evaporation and condensation intensify, rising warm air is trapped and spreads out in all directions, forming rainbands. Spinning, due to the Earth's rotation, increases and winds reach 39 mph.



Hurricane cross-section

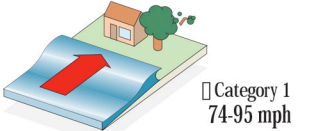
Hurricane
Billions of gallons of water evaporate and condense, fueling the storm. Warm air in the center loses its moisture, forming the eye. Winds reach 74 mph and the storm is reclassified as a hurricane. Average diameter is 300 miles.

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

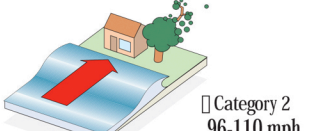


The strength of a storm

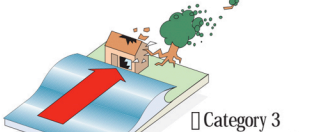
The National Hurricane Center classifies hurricanes according to wind speed and destructive potential.



Signs and tree branches blown down. Mobile homes at risk. No structural damage to buildings. Power lines down.



Larger signs and tree branches blown down. Mobile homes at greater risk.



Minor damage to buildings. Roof damage. Trees blown down. Possible structural damage to buildings.



Almost total destruction of doors and windows. Greater structural and roof damage.



Catastrophic damage: Buildings, roofs, structures destroyed.

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