



The History of Hurricanes in Southwest Florida

Frequency of Hurricanes and Tropical Storms in Southwest Florida

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Fort Myers, Port Charlotte, and Sarasota are three major cities in Florida that have been affected or directly hit by past hurricanes that made landfall in the vicinity of Hurricane Charley's landfall. Hurricane City (<http://www.hurricane-city.com>) has compiled the historical hurricane database from many reliable sources. The database shows that both Fort Myers and Port Charlotte have been affected or brushed by a hurricane or tropical storm approximately once every 3 years; Sarasota has been affected less often (once every 4.5 years). For a direct landfall (within 40 miles), the statistics show the likelihood as once every 13 years for Fort Myers and Port Charlotte, and once every 26.5 years for Sarasota. Figure E-1 highlights some of these hurricanes and storms with paths similar to those of Hurricane Charley; these hurricanes are described below. Figure E-2 shows landfalling hurricanes in the continental U.S. for the period 1950-2004.

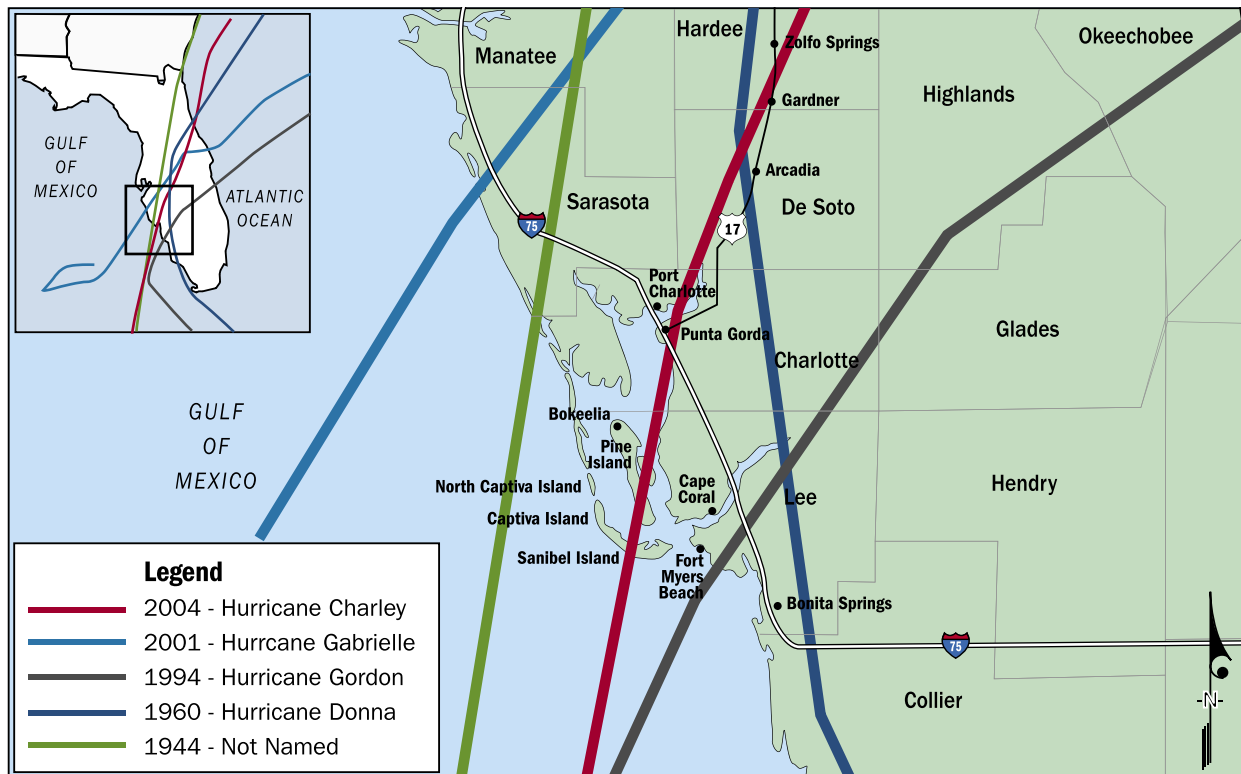


Figure E-1. Historical hurricane and tropical storm paths

Unnamed Hurricane, 1944

This unnamed Category 3 hurricane was one of the 10 costliest and deadliest hurricanes in Florida history. The storm made landfall south of Sarasota and maintained hurricane strength northward while crossing Florida. Thirty deaths were reported and the loss (mainly in central Florida and the northeast peninsula) was estimated to be \$725 million (year 2000 dollars).

Hurricane Donna, 1960

The fifth strongest hurricane of record to hit the U.S., Donna was also the only hurricane of record to produce hurricane-force winds in Florida, the Mid-Atlantic states, and New England. Donna caused storm surges of up to 13 feet in the Florida Keys and 11-foot surges along the southwest coast of Florida. According to the NHC, the storm caused 50 deaths, and losses were \$2.4 billion (year 2000 dollars) in property damage.

Tropical Storm Gordon, 1994

After a serpentine track through the Caribbean, Gordon moved slowly west-northwest, reaching the lower Florida Keys, and then turned northeast, accelerated, and moved inland near Fort Myers, Lee County. Gordon directly caused 8 fatalities and 43 injuries. The total damage was estimated to be approximately \$400 million (year 1994 dollars). Volusia County was hit hard by inland flooding. Flood damages to 1,236 buildings (977 single-family homes, 68 manufactured homes, 139 multi-family homes, and 52 other buildings) were reported and losses were over \$26 million.

Tropical Storm Gabrielle, 2001

Gabrielle tracked across Florida on September 14, spawning tornadoes and causing heavy rain with significant flooding. Downtown Sarasota was flooded, schools along the coast were closed, and more than 300,000 homes and businesses were without power along the coast south of Tampa and into central Florida. According to the NHC, total damage from Gabrielle across the 15-county area impacted by the hurricane in (southwest and west central) Florida was estimated to be nearly \$17 million.

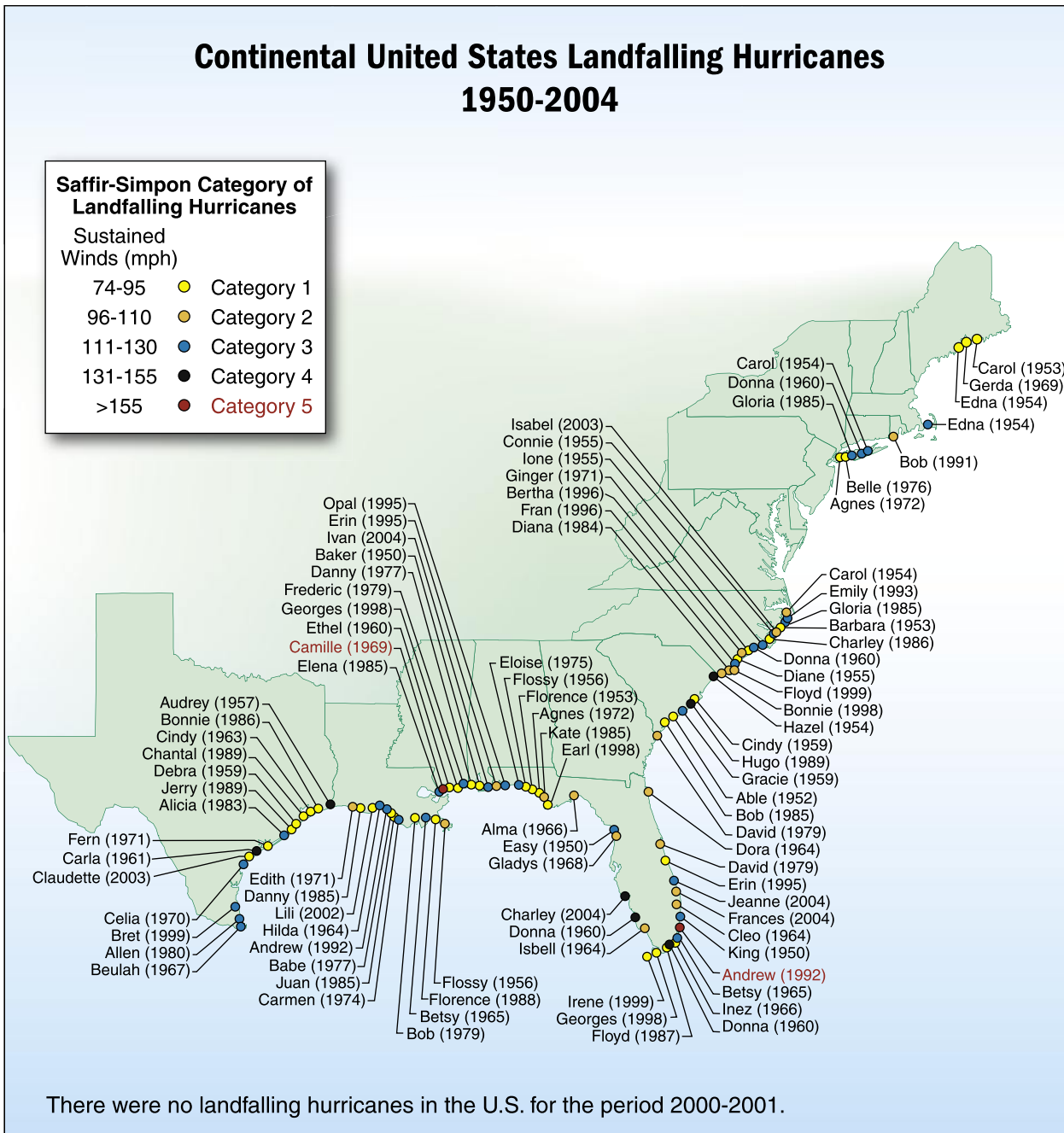


Figure E-2. Continental U.S. landfalling hurricanes, 1950-2004

(NOAA/NCDC)