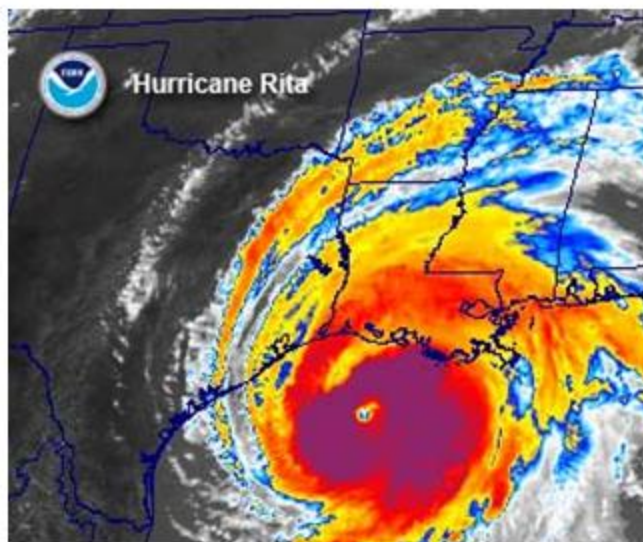




# NOAA's National Climatic Data Center

<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/research/2005/rita.html>

## Hurricane Rita



Tropical Storm Rita developed on September 18, 2005 from a tropical depression that formed early the same day. The storm increased in intensity over the next 48 hours, becoming a category 1 hurricane on the 20th and a category 2 hurricane later that afternoon. Tracking through the Florida Straits, Hurricane Rita neared the Florida Keys on the 20th, causing sustained tropical storm force winds on Key West with gusts of up to 76 mph (66 knots).

Rapidly intensifying, Hurricane Rita tracked westward into the Gulf of Mexico and by the afternoon of the 21st, Rita had reached category 5 strength on the Saffir-Simpson scale, with winds of 165 mph. Continuing to intensify to reach windspeeds of 175 mph, the minimum central pressure of the storm dropped to 897 mb, the third lowest on record for the Atlantic Basin, after Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 (888 mb), and the 1935 Labor Day Hurricane (892 mb). 2005 marks the first time in recorded history that two hurricanes (Katrina and Rita) have reached category 5 strength in the Gulf of Mexico in a single season.

Weakening during the afternoon of the 22nd, due to an eyewall replacement cycle and perhaps some influence of slightly cooler sea-surface temperatures, Rita's intensity dipped to a surface windspeed of 145 mph (125 kts) and continued to weaken gradually over the next 36 hours prior to landfall. Rita tracked west-northwest during the 23rd and made landfall at the Texas/Louisiana border early on the 24th, at category 3 strength with sustained winds of 120 mph.

Hurricane force winds were sustained more than 150 miles inland and tropical storm force winds were felt as far north as the LA-TX-AR border. Rita's pressure as it came ashore was 937 mb.