

The ArkLaMiss Observer



Fall 2008 Edition

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Hurricane Gustav Impacts the ArkLaMiss

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By: Brad Bryant, Journeyman Forecaster

Hurricane Gustav was the 2nd major hurricane of the 2008 Atlantic Hurricane Season. It took shape as a tropical depression on the morning of August 25th just southeast of Haiti, and rapidly strengthened to hurricane status by the morning of August 26th. After inflicting serious damage on portions of Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba, Gustav entered into the southeastern portion of the Gulf of Mexico and took aim at the Gulf Coast of the United States. Although Gustav attained Category 4 status earlier in its life, Gustav eventually made landfall as a strong Category 2 system at Cocodrie, Louisiana, on September 1st, containing maximum sustained winds around 100 mph. Gustav slowed down and weakened as it continued on its northwest track across southern Louisiana where major damage was inflicted. The cyclone still packed enough punch to produce a swath of wind damage and related power outages

to many areas of central Louisiana, and even into far southwestern Mississippi (particularly around Natchez where wind gusts near hurricane force were estimated). The pace of the system continued to slow dramatically over the next few days as it turned gradually to the right around a large ridge of high pressure over the Southeast. The remnants of Gustav finally began moving rapidly away from the Lower Mississippi Valley on the 4th as an incoming disturbance deflected it to the northeast.



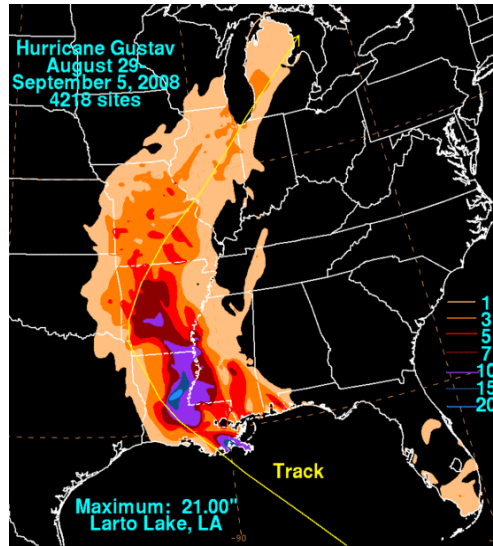
Satellite Image of Hurricane Gustav before landfall

The slow movement of a weakening Gustav up the western periphery of the Lower Mississippi

Valley over the course of a few days put the ArklaMiss region on the active eastern or “right” side of the land-falling system for a prolonged period. Past history of such systems has shown this right side to produce the majority of heavy rainfall and tropical tornado concerns for inland areas. The lesson of history proved to be quite accurate in this case.

While some areas of north-central and northeastern Mississippi received less than 2 inches of rain from September 1st through September 4th, a majority of locations in the ArklaMiss were soaked with over 3 inches. Many residents of northeastern Louisiana, extreme southeastern Arkansas, and western Mississippi got much more than a general soaking, unfortunately. In these areas total rainfall amounts from 7 to 12 inches were common, with up to 20 inches being observed in a few gauges in northeastern Louisiana. The highest rainfall total observed for the event was from an observer in Larto Lake, Louisiana, where a staggering 20.8 inches was measured. All of this precipitation resulted in many flash flooding problems, particularly along and west of the axis of the Mississippi River where many hundreds of homes and businesses were flooded and crop damage was extensive. Although rises in the Mississippi River level were fortunately low from this rain, water rises on small streams and bayous (especially in northeastern Louisiana) were much greater and lead to substantial flooding of

homes and structures and also caused damage to bridge infrastructure. A positive of all the wetness was that traces of long term drought (dating back to 2005) were erased in many portions of the ArklaMiss.



Rainfall image from Hurricane Gustav

Tornadoes in association with land-falling Gustav began to occur in the region beginning late on September 1st in southern sections of the ArklaMiss, and continued to be observed (sometimes quite sporadically) through September 3rd. Weakening wind shear ended the threat for tornadoes by September 4th. In total, 26 tornadoes were confirmed. Fortunately, no fatalities or major injuries resulted, likely related to the fact that none of the tornadoes were rated higher than EF1. Although the impact from heavy rain was substantial in the region from Gustav, the fact that numerous tornado touchdowns did not produce a widespread negative effect was fortunate.

Hurricane Gustav was responsible for at least 15 billion dollars in damage to the United States, with a large portion of this damage experienced by residents of southern Louisiana (near the site of landfall). In comparison, Hurricane Katrina was responsible for over 5 times the monetary damage to the United States, with Hurricane Ike much more recently producing roughly twice Gustav’s damage with its landfall as a strong Category 2 storm along the northern Texas coastline. Still, Gustav produced its fair share of misery in portions of the Caribbean and in the Gulf Coast region (along with 138 total fatalities). Gustav was also responsible for prompting the evacuation of 1.9 million residents of southern Louisiana (which was the largest evacuation of people in the history of Louisiana). Although residents of the ArklaMiss were not spared major impacts, at least no deaths were directly attributable to the powerful storm within the specific confines of our region.



Track of Hurricane Gustav from near Haiti toward the southeastern coast of Louisiana

Your Local National Weather Service is having an Open House!

By: Ashley Wester, Journeyman Forecaster/Editor

The National Weather Service in Jackson, MS will be holding its first ever Open House on Saturday, October 25 from 10 AM until 2 PM. In an effort to further educate our customers about severe weather and the services we provide, we are inviting anyone interested in learning more about the National Weather Service to come out to our office and attend our Open House. Those who come will have the opportunity to tour the National Weather Service, learn about some of our products and service, gain a better understanding of the science of meteorology, and have the opportunity to visit with our meteorologists and to ask questions. There will be meteorologists available to talk about severe weather, hydrology, climate, and much more! Kids will be able to participate in various activities designed to teach basic meteorology and severe weather safety. It will be a fun day, and we would love for you to join us! For questions about our Open House, please call Ashley Wester or Steve Wilkinson at (601) 936-2189. We will see you there!

Directions:

**National Weather Service
234 Weather Service Drive
Flowood, MS 39232**

From I-20: Take exit number 52...or the International Airport Exit, and go north onto Hwy 475 toward the International Airport. Go straight through two traffic lights. You will come to a round about, where you will have an option of going straight, turning left, or doing a U-turn. You will want to be in the left lane when approaching the round about, and then go left. Take your next right. (You will still be on Hwy 475 after all of the turning) Go down this road for about a mile. You will see a green sign on your right for the National Weather Service, and the road will be to the right shortly after. Turn right onto this road (Weather Service Drive). Go all the way down the road until you get to a parking lot on your right. That is the National Weather Service parking lot!

From I-55: Take the Lakeland Drive exit and head east (away from the hospitals). You will go a few miles and through several traffic lights. Turn right at Highway 475. You will see an International Airport sign shortly before the turn. There will be a strip of stores on your right before you turn, and Corky's nearby. There will be a gas station and car wash on your left before you turn. After turning onto Hwy 475, go through one traffic light. You will see a green sign on your right for the National Weather Service (It is after the sign for the National Guard). Shortly after, you will turn left onto Weather Service Drive. Go all the way down the road until you get to a parking lot on your right. That is the National Weather Service parking lot!

From Highway 25 (towards Carthage, Starkville, etc): Go southeast on Hwy 25. Once you get into the Jackson Metro, you will go through several traffic lights. Hwy 25 will become 3 lane, and you will want to get into the far left lane. You will turn left at the next traffic light on Highway 475. (You will see a sign for the International Airport on your right shortly before you turn. There will be a Corky's on the corner on your left. After turning onto Hwy 475, go through one traffic light. You will see a sign on your right for the National Weather Service (It is after the sign for the National Guard). Shortly after, you will turn left onto Weather Service Drive. Go all the way down the road until you get to a parking lot on your right. That is the National Weather Service parking lot!

COOP Corner

By: Carolyn Bryant, Observing Program Leader

Several of our Cooperative Observers have reached milestones

in their observing duties this year. Pictured are those receiving

awards through June of this year. Congratulations and a big “Thank You” to all of you! Check out the next issue of the *ArkLaMiss Observer* for even more awards.

Betty Alexander reached 25 years of observing before she passed away this spring. Pictured (right) is her daughter Melinda, accepting the award on her mother’s behalf. Thank you, Betty, for your service and dedication for so many years. You will be missed!



Estalene Hayden (left) of Crawford, MS has been taking precipitation observations for 30 years. Brothers Lloyd and Eddie Chapman (right) of Lake Providence, LA have been taking temperature and precipitation records for 30 years, as well.



Harlan Davis, Jr.,(below) of Topton, MS has been recording precipitation for 15 years. Mr. Davis’ family has been observing precipitation for the NWS since 1960!



Rudy Rodriguez (above left) of Vidalia, LA and Wayne Sanders(above right) of Larto Lake, LA have each been taking observations for 10 years.



!!Fun Stuff for the Kids!!

Tornadoes and Safety

Tornado Watch: The National Weather Service forecasts that a tornado may develop later. The sky may be blue at the time you hear the Watch. Don’t be fooled. Listen to the radio for the latest news and get to safety.

Tornado Warning: When someone has seen a tornado the NWS issues a warning. It may be moving toward you! Dark clouds swirl in the sky. There may be thunder, lightning, heavy rain or hail. When you see large hail, you may be close to a tornado. You should already be inside. Power may go off. If you are outside, go inside immediately.

What To Do When A Tornado Threatens

- 1) If you are at home, go to the basement if you have one. If there is no basement, go to a closet on an inside wall, a bathroom, or hallway on the lowest level of the house. Cover Your Head!!
- 2) If outside or in a car, get out of the car and inside a house or building. Don't try to outrun a tornado in a car. Tornadoes can pick up a car and throw it through the air. If you're caught outside, crouch low in a ditch. Cover Your Head!!
- 3) If you are at school, follow directions from your teachers. Go to an inside hall on the lowest floor. Crouch near the wall. Bend over and put your hands on the back of your head. If you have a book or book bag to use to cover your head, use it!
- 4) If you are in a mobile home or trailer, get out and get to a sturdy shelter. Even if it is tied down, a mobile home can be shattered by a tornado. Get out and into a safer place! Some mobile home areas have storm shelters. If you cannot get to a shelter, lie in a ditch and cover your head!

Reaching Out to You!

By: *Ashley Wester, Journeyman Forecaster/Editor, and Alan Campbell, Journeyman Forecaster*

Our goal here at the National Weather Service in Jackson, MS is to protect life and property. In an attempt to do this, we issue various types of watches, warnings, and advisories to alert you, the public, of impending hazardous weather that is either occurring or could possibly occur in your area. Knowing that hazardous weather is possible is one thing, but what

should you do if hazardous weather is threatening you and/or your family?

When hazardous weather occurs, seconds can literally mean the difference between life and death. Staying calm and knowing the correct instructions to follow could save your life. This is why the National Weather Service in Jackson, MS believes it is important to educate people about severe weather safety and preparedness. In our efforts to accomplish this task, we offer various forms of outreach, such as talks and setting up booths at area events, just to name a few. We provide these services for any community, school, public/private

group, or business that is interested in learning about severe weather safety and how to prepare for it. We also offer office tours that allow you to see what the National Weather Service is and what we do.

If you would like to schedule to have someone come and talk to your community, school, group, business, or if you would like for us to set up a booth at your next event, please contact Steve Wilkinson, Alan Campbell, or Ashley Wester. If you like to schedule an office tour, please contact Marty Pope or Karen White. All can be reached at the National Weather Service in Jackson, MS at (601) 936-2189.



Cream: Jackson, MS service area
Blue: Memphis, TN service area
Purple: New Orleans, LA service area
Green: Mobile, AL service area

Thank You!!

Editor:

Ashley Wester, Journeyman Forecaster

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