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# Understanding Hurricane Andrew and Its Aftermath in Florida

On August 24, 1992 Hurricane Andrew made landfall in South Florida. A landfall happens when a storm passes from the sea to land. Hurricane Andrew made the transition to land and wreaked havoc in Florida. Although the storm made landfalls in different locations, the most intense and damaging landfalls happened in South Florida. As news of the storm reached residents of Florida, evacuations were ordered. Despite many evacuations and attempts to prepare for the storm, it still caused major damage. Many lives were lost, and billions of dollars in property damage happened as a result of Hurricane Andrew. Although other storms have caused more damage since 1992, Hurricane Andrew was the most destructive storm of its time.

## Storm Categorization

Different methods of categorization exist for different types of storms. Hurricanes are categorized using the Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale (Friedland et al.). The scale has 5 different categories, and storms are classified based on the intensity of sustained winds that are produced (Friedland et al.). Storms that have sustained winds of 157mph or higher fall into category 5, which is the most intense category. Hurricane Andrew was classified as a category 5 storm after meteorologists measured sustained wind speeds of 165mph and higher. The Saffir-Simpson scale makes estimates of the type of property damage that is likely to occur with different wind speeds. With category 5 storms, the scale estimates that a large percentage of framed homes and buildings will be destroyed. It is estimated that Hurricane Andrew destroyed 25,524 homes, and caused severe damage to another 101,241 (Lilly). Many people were left homeless after the storm passed through.

## Destruction and Damage

Homes were not the only structures that were damaged by Hurricane Andrew. The storm destroyed 3,300 miles of power lines, 3,000 watermains, 59 health facilities, 31 public schools, 32,900 acres of farmland, and 82,000 businesses (Lilly). 26 people died as a direct result of the storm, and another died from indirect results of the storm (Lilly). Overall, the storm had a terrible impact on the economy of many parts of Florida. Cities and towns operate by taxing businesses and individuals that live there. In some parts of Florida, large areas were wiped out. The result is that the local government of those areas was unable to generate tax revenue. Business owners were forced to move elsewhere in the time that reparation was taking place. The biggest downside is that the economy was damaged, but the people living in areas impacted by the

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storm were in need of help from governmental programs. Overall, Hurricane Andrew had a devastating impact on many different communities.

## **Cause**

Hurricanes are storms that originate at sea. Hurricane Andrew started out as a tropical wave that moved off of the coast of Africa on August 14 (Liu et al.). Over the course of the next week, the storm continued to travel and gain momentum. The National Hurricane Center took notice of the storm and tracked its movement. Residents of Homestead, Florida were ordered to evacuate and prepare for the storm. Despite their efforts, the storm still had a devastating impact on Florida. Changing temperatures and levels of air pressure caused the storm to weaken and intensify periodically.

## **Conclusion**

Hurricane Andrew was a devastating storm that had a negative impact on many different people. In addition to all of the property damage that was done, there were other downsides. Even if people did not suffer from physical harm or financial loss as a result of the storm, there are many people who suffered from psychological issues. Witnessing a terrifying storm unfold can be traumatic. Many people suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after the incident. The thought that an entire community of people could be completely devastated by a sudden storm is troubling. Although other storms have surpassed Hurricane Andrew in terms of overall damage, Hurricane Andrew is still a major incident that negatively impacted many people.

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