

## **Major Flood Events In North Carolina**

### **1916 – Great Catawba River Flood**

Western North Carolina experienced back-to-back successive tropical storms which resulted in extensive flooding. The first storm, after hitting the coast of Alabama on the 5th and 6th of July, delivered massive rainfall on the mountain and foothill regions of North Carolina. Although this rain event did not cause major flooding, it did saturate the soil and cause streams and rivers to rise within their banks.

The second storm hit the region mid-month and dropped record levels of rainfall, with 22.22 inches recorded in a 24-hour period. Because the ground was already saturated, rivers and streams overtopped their banks and mass flooding occurred. In Ashville, the French Broad River exceeded its flood stage by 17 feet and swelled from an average width of 381 feet to nearly 1300 feet. The Catawba River saw a rise of nearly 23 feet above previously recorded high levels.

Property damage from flooding was estimated at \$22 million.

### **1954 – Hurricane Hazel**

During October 1954, the southern North Carolina coast experienced the year's largest lunar tide. It was during this "marsh hen tide" that Hurricane Hazel hit. The storm was so destructive, its hurricane-strength winds were still in effect by the time it hit Raleigh, over 100 miles inland from the coast. More than 15,000 structures were completely destroyed, with property losses estimated at \$136 million. 19 people died with another 200 injured.

### **1960 – Hurricane Donna**

Hurricane Donna made landfall at Topsail Island in September of 1960 as a Category 3 hurricane. Tides were recorded at 4-8 feet above normal. The worst destruction occurred in Carteret, Pamlico, Hyde, and Tyrell counties with Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, and Morehead City municipalities receiving the worst of the damage. The hardest hit areas suffered extensive property damage, beach erosion, loss of crops, and significant power outages. The cost of damages was estimated at \$25 million. More than 8 people died and at least 100 suffered injuries.

### **1989 – Hurricane Hugo**

In September, 1989, Hurricane Hugo made landfall and swept inland all the way to Charlotte, 150 miles to the west. The environmental impact of Hugo was immense. An estimated 100,000 trees were uprooted, resulting in a more than \$250 million loss to the timber industry. The coastline also suffered significant beach erosion. In total, 29 counties were declared federal disaster areas and damages were estimated at \$1 billion. 7 North Carolinians lost their lives.

### **1996 – Hurricane Fran**

Hurricane Fran hit the North Carolina coast in September 1996, and was referred to as “Paul Bunyan” for uprooting thousands of trees during its stay. Fran made landfall near Bald Head Island with winds at 115 mph and an accompanying storm surge that ranged between 8 and 12 feet. All of the neighborhoods in the Triangle Region, which includes Chatham, Durham, Lee, Johnston, Orange, and Wake counties, were littered with downed trees and suffered power outages that lasted longer than a week. Each of North Carolina’s 100 counties were declared states of emergency for the very first time ever. Total damages reached \$2.3 billion and 24 people were killed.

### **1995 – Tropical Storm Jerry**

August of 1995 saw Tropical Storm Jerry unleash enough rainfall to flood three watersheds. Flood insurance claims reached \$4 million and loans for repair and recovery of property damage hit the \$1 million range.

### **1999 – Hurricane Floyd**

When Hurricane Floyd hit in September 1999, the ground had already been saturated and the rivers swollen due to Tropical Storm Dennis that impacted the area 10 days earlier. Rainfall in some areas lasted for more than 60 hours which resulted in devastating floods. Roads, highways, and homes in Wilmington were flooded when Floyd made landfall nearby. The entire eastern part of North Carolina, to include Princeville, Rocky Mount, Tarboro, and Wilson, was inundated by flood waters leaving entire communities under water. And estimated 8,000 homes were destroyed and more than 67,000 damaged. The flood waters stretched over 4.2 million acres. Total damages were estimated at \$6 billion.

52 people were killed as a result of Floyd, many of whom died while trying to traverse flooded roads, while others were trapped by flood waters in their homes.