

Battered by hurricane winds



About once every 100 years, the United Kingdom experiences a major storm. Once in every 200 years or so, the storm is severe. On 16 October 1987, a violent storm hit the south of England. This news report gives some of the main facts about the storm and the damage it caused.

After the most severe night of storms to hit southern England since 1703, 18 people have died and more have been injured, mainly by debris from buildings and falling trees. Weeks of steady rain have weakened tree roots, so that trees fall easily. Some buildings have had their roofs blown off. A caravan park was razed to the ground and Shanklin Pier on the Isle of Wight has been completely destroyed. Two firemen were killed in Dorset, on their way to an emergency call, and five people died in Dover Harbour. Rescue workers struggled to respond to a record number of calls as winds from the west reached up to 110 mph (177 km/h). The winds lashed areas as far apart as Wales, the southern counties of Britain, the Channel Islands and London.

Boatyards and yachts on the south coast have been severely damaged. A Sea Link ferry was blown ashore in Folkestone. Southern Britain has now started a huge clear-up operation. Commuters have been advised to stay at home as blocked roads and railway lines will prevent them from getting to work.

It was a few days ago that the Meteorological Office noticed a strengthening depression over the Atlantic and predicted some stormy weather. Normally the South-East and East Anglia escape the big storms from the Atlantic. The unexpected path of this storm caught weather reporters off guard. The previous evening, the BBC's weatherman Michael Fish assured viewers, "There's no hurricane coming." The storm, he predicted, would run along the length of the English Channel, safely away from the land. Instead it has carved a pathway of destruction right across southern England.

Record numbers of claims

Insurance companies are preparing themselves for record numbers of claims. Since many buildings' insurance policies cover damage caused by storms, homeowners have already begun contacting them.

BBC news reports suggest that, in the London borough of Ealing alone, 600 calls have been made by people whose homes and cars had been struck by falling trees, roof tiles, and other items dislodged by the hurricane-force winds. In an interview with the BBC, Len Turner of Ealing Council said that government funding might be required to deal with the repair bills that local councils are facing.

"It's going to take an enormous amount of effort and money; I hope we can look to the Government to support us because the burden on local rate payers is going to be enormous."

1 What caused most of the injuries on the night of the hurricane?

1 mark

2 Why were trees so easily uprooted?

1 mark

3 From which direction was the hurricane wind blowing? (ring **one**)

north south east west

1 mark

4 In 'clear-up operations', what might need removing, and from where? Give as full an answer as possible.

2 marks

5 To what does the sub-heading refer?

1 mark

6 Where was a pier destroyed?

1 mark

7 Who were local councils going to ask for help with the clear-up costs?

1 mark

8 a) What are 'commuters'?

1 mark

b) Why were they advised to stay at home after the hurricane?

1 mark

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