

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

DISASTERS

HURRICANE



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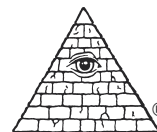
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*Blow wind, swell billow, and swim bark! The storm is up,
and all is on the hazard.*

– William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar

Additional Art Acknowledgments

P. 8: “Stormy Landscape,” by Hendrik Meijer. From the Ian Woodner Family Collection Fund, 2007, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, metmuseum.org.

P. 16: Highsmith, C. M., photographer. *Waffle House Restaurant torn apart by Hurricane Katrina on the Biloxi, Mississippi coast*. Biloxi, Mississippi, 2006. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2010630838.

P. 18: “Sudden Shower at Shōno, from the series Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō,” by Utagawa Hiroshige. From the Rogers Fund, 1914, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, metmuseum.org.

P. 20: *Carrying out bodies just removed from the wreckage, Galveston*. Galveston, Texas, ca. 1900. [Photograph] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/00651006.

P. 23: “Hurricane, Bahamas,” by Winslow Homer. From Amelia B. Lazarus Fund, 1910, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, metmuseum.org.

INTRODUCTION

You've had a couple of days' warning, but it's never enough. You have half the plywood you need, and don't know how high the water will get this time. The evacuation order was just announced . . .

Water is the key to life, but it is also our greatest enemy. We can't go more than a few days without a drink, but it can kill millions at a time. When water combines with wind, devastating hurricanes form. They wreck ships, destroy cities, and flood areas from horizon to horizon. They are even given names.

Hurricanes can provide a complication in any game setting. Hurricanes are natural disasters, terrifying in both scope and intensity. In a futuristic scenario, weather control devices may cause them, creating unstoppable disaster weapons. In a historical or fantasy setting, the hurricane may arrive with little warning, and villagers must react in real time to impending destruction. In a space-opera setting, hurricanes can be just

as destructive on other planets as they are on Earth. In a military-focused campaign, storms and weather affect the battle and the war. Hurricanes can also strike ships at sea.

Hurricanes have two distinct phases that lend themselves storytelling. The first phase is the storm itself, with wind, rain, and immediate destruction. The second phase is post-storm flooding, which lingers and establishes a setting for rescues and recovery.

Hurricanes come with many side effects. In a modern world, the power can go out, media are affected, and law enforcement may collapse. Gas lines explode, and businesses are destroyed. Effects can be mixed and matched with other disasters, such as a post-hurricane nuclear catastrophe or a zombie uprising among the storm's dead.

Outcomes described in this supplement are those historically associated with severe hurricanes, though application to the game depends on the setting. Where possible, extended effects and long-term results are also described, allowing the ramifications of the disaster to continue beyond a single adventure.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for **GURPS** releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

GLOSSARY

Beaufort Wind Scale: A system for correlating wind speeds, ocean-wave height, and expected wind effects. See p. 14.

hurricane: A weather pattern with rotation, winds greater than 74 mph, and lower pressure than a tropical storm.

recovery: The long-term rebuilding of a community after a disaster.

response: The immediate acts to contain a disaster, save lives, and limit property damage.

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale: A system for classifying hurricanes into one of five categories by wind speed. See p. 5.

tropical depression: A weather pattern with low pressure forming in the tropics, with winds up to 38 mph.

tropical storm: A weather pattern with rotation, winds up to 74 mph, and lower pressure than a tropical depression.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James P. Howard, II is a scientist in Maryland. James holds a Ph.D. in public policy and a Master of Science in environmental engineering and science. He's written books on mathematics and public policy, and this is his first gaming module. James enjoys playing various roleplaying games with his children. Follow his latest interests, work, and thoughts at jameshoward.us.

THE EFFECTS

Hurricanes are dangerous places. There are a lot of things that hurt or kill people in a storm. Trained experts avoid them. Except for news reporters standing in the rain for a shot, people should stay where it is safe. If someone cannot get out of the way of a storm, they will experience the fury of the hurricane. Any of the hurricane's effects can lead to a Fright Check (pp. B360-361), at the GM's discretion, when someone experiences unusual or fear-inducing conditions.

WIND

The following rules incorporate the Beaufort Wind Scale (below) into the existing **GURPS** rules, providing guidelines for the damage and effects of wind at subhurricane and hurricane speeds. Wind increases the difficulty of many physical acts and should be considered a hazard similar to an affliction for the duration of the storm. At high speeds, the wind may be disorienting and affect tasks that require clear thinking.

When people are indoors, the wind is unlikely to harm them directly, but it can damage the structure they are in.

The wind affects more than just people. Ocean waves can be driven by increased wind. Wave height at different wind speeds is included in *Beaufort Wind Scale* below.

Most objects can withstand some amount of wind without any damage. Trees can withstand some wind, but very high wind speeds shear off branches. Trees break with winds between 90 and 100 mph, regardless of size. Many trees uproot first in winds of approximately 60 mph. This is the wind speed where telephone poles and unreinforced wooden building materials break. A downed power line not only causes damage from the pole falling (*Damage from Falling Objects*, p. B431), but also from the live electrical wire (see *Lethal Electrical Damage*, pp. B432-433).

Buildings are reasonably resilient if constructed to local standards to withstand a hurricane. However, glass (DR 0-1, HP 1-3, and Brittle) is easily broken by flying material.

BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

These speeds and effects are valid for Earth near sea level. Effects at each level are not cumulative with previous levels. The wave height is the average wave height at sea. Note that the intensity of effects is also related to the atmospheric density; at extreme elevations, such as on top of a mountain, use the effects of one level lower for every 5,000' above sea level.

| <i>Beaufort Scale</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Wind Speed (mph)</i> | <i>Wave Height (ft)</i> | <i>Move Effect</i> | <i>Character Effects</i> | <i>Artifact Effects</i> |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---|---|
| 0 | Calm | < 1 | 0 | - | - | - |
| 1 | Light Air | 1-3 | 0-1 | - | - | - |
| 2 | Light Breeze | 4-7 | 1-2 | - | - | - |
| 3 | Gentle Breeze | 8-12 | 2-3.5 | - | - | - |
| 4 | Moderate Breeze | 13-18 | 3.5-6 | - | -1 to all DX rolls | - |
| 5 | Fresh Breeze | 19-24 | 6-9 | - | -1 to all DX rolls | - |
| 6 | Strong Breeze | 25-31 | 9-13 | - | -1 to all DX rolls | - |
| 7 | High Wind | 32-38 | 13-19 | Move/2 | -2 to all DX rolls; -1 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | - |
| 8 | Gale | 39-46 | 18-25 | Move/2 | -2 to all DX rolls; -1 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | - |
| 9 | Strong Gale | 47-54 | 23-32 | Move/2 | -2 to all DX rolls; -1 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | - |
| 10 | Storm | 55-63 | 29-41 | Move/4 | -3 to all DX rolls; -2 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | 2 points of damage per minute of continuous wind |
| 11 | Violent Storm | 64-72 | 37-52 | Move/4 | -3 to all DX rolls; -2 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | 10 points of damage per minute of continuous wind |
| 12 | Hurricane | >73 | >46 | Move/10 | -4 to all DX rolls; -3 to all IQ, ST, skill, and self-control rolls | 50 points of damage per minute of continuous wind |

Do you know why hurricanes have names instead of numbers? To keep the killing personal.

*– George Carlin, **Brain Droppings***

ADVENTURE SEED: EVACUATING THE JAIL

The storm is bearing down and everyone is evacuating. Local officials have debated whether to evacuate the jail. Leaving the prisoners in place is easier, but if something happens, someone might escape (and then there's the bad publicity . . .). So, the heroes are tasked with evacuating the jail. The team has to keep the inmates safe and fed. Certain prisoners might see this as an opportunity to escape. Can the team transport the detainees to the evacuation site without losing any? Can the group keep the convicts from harming each other? Can the inmates and security work together to survive? Alternatively, the PCs themselves are the prisoners – what are their odds of escaping?

ADVENTURE SEED: RAISING THE DEAD

A hurricane has hit a small town that is not often struck by tropical cyclones. The flooding washed the loose dirt from freshly dug graves, revealing a number of coffins. Before long, undead are climbing out of the cemetery. With each living human bitten by one of these creatures, the zombies convert another to their army of the living dead. If the PCs cannot stop the zombie invasion, it will spread. The storm destroyed the town, severely limiting resources (including fresh water, food, ammunition, and other supplies) and giving the zombies an edge. (See *GURPS Zombies* for more details on running games featuring zombies.)

ADVENTURE SEED: SUDDEN STORM OF FANTASY

The protagonists are ordinary fantasy adventurers looking for gold, fame, and maybe a dragon to slay. In their travels, the group comes upon an empty village. They go from building to building, checking out

the contents. Everything is wet, and some of the buildings are gone. The occasional body turns up. Without the context of a storm, nobody can tell what has happened. And then . . . the villagers who survived start to return home.

The conflicts start when the villagers find the adventurers and blame them for the storm. The band may defend themselves, but the villagers are convinced that the heroes caused the tragedy. The adventurers must figure out how to show that their arrival was coincidental, which may be difficult if they have picked up some trinkets from their search of the buildings and the bodies.



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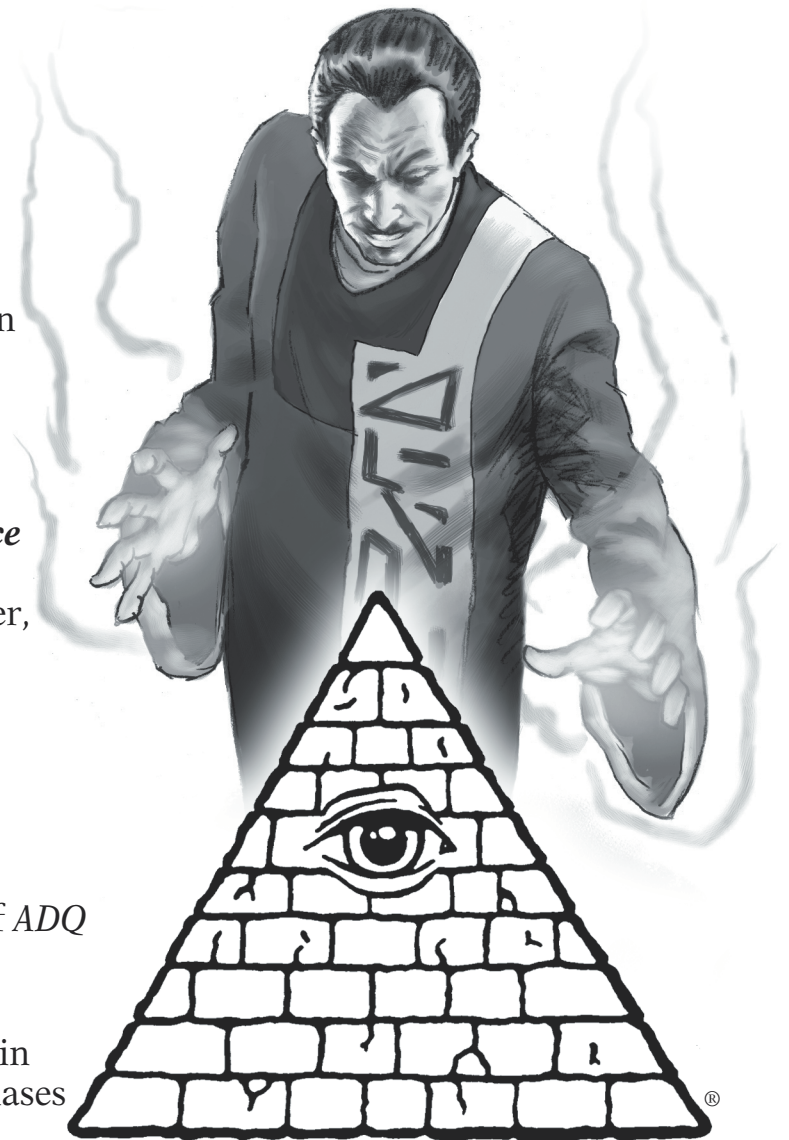
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