

Record wave measured during Hurricane Ivan

5 August 2005

The U.S. Naval Research Laboratory-Stennis Space Center measured a record-size ocean wave when the eye of Hurricane Ivan passed over the Gulf of Mexico.

The NRL-SPC directly measured a wave 91 feet when the eye of Hurricane Ivan passed over NRL moorings deployed last May in the Gulf of Mexico. Some of the destruction done by Ivan has been attributed to a rogue wave, researchers say.

Analysis of the wave data with the winds suggests the wave heights likely exceeded 130 feet near the eye wall of the hurricane, researchers said.

According to industry and national weather sources, the damage done by waves during Ivan has been on the extreme high end for a category 4 hurricane. Ivan has been the most expensive hurricane ever for the oil and gas industry in the Gulf.

The Minerals Management Service reported Ivan forced evacuation of 75 percent of the 574 manned platforms in the Gulf and 59 percent of the 69 drilling rigs, set adrift five rigs and sunk seven rigs entirely.

Aside from obvious leaks, some pipelines were reported to have moved 3,000 feet while others were buried under 30 feet of mud and cannot be found. The findings are published in Science.

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