

The 100 year storm.

This from Environment Canada for March 2012

Winter Bomb Dropped on BC

Weather forecasters called it a weather bomb – a rapidly deepening intense weather system that packed winds close to 100 km/h. On March 12, powerful winds across Vancouver Island blew trees onto houses and cars, and forced the cancellation of 14 ferry routes and some flights. The winds buffeted the shoreline sweeping boats onto the rocks in Sidney Harbour and knocking out power to more than 100,000 BC Hydro customers. In Alert Bay, several waterspouts were sighted. Among the maximum observed wind gusts were 187 km/h (101 knots) at Merry Island, 143 km/h at Solander Island and 122 km/h at Estevan Point.

Report by Capt Pete Kimmerly.

December 11th 2006. The wind sounded like a heavy passenger jet on take off roll. It didn't stop. I was in the house but quickly decided that was not a good place to be. Tree branches were being driven into the side of the house - not the roof, as happens now and then in a strong gale. This was way more than a strong gale. It was a full category 2 hurricane. I ran to my truck and parked it in the largest clearing on the property, away from falling trees. Power was out. Phone lines were down. It was pitch black. Then I started assembling what I knew I was going to need to get down to check on the ferry. This was chains, ropes a large fallers chain saw and extra gas. It took me a whole tank of gas and over an hour to cut my way down to the ferry dock. The Arbutus tree on the ferry causeway was GONE. Not just blown over but ripped out by the roots and propelled over the spit by the wind. An 8 foot diameter hole was the only evidence. Harry was in the right dock with Tachek luckily. They had lost 2 complete boxes of lifejackets when the hurricane broke open the lids and sucked them all out. They drifted ashore the next day when the wind changed and most were salvaged. Harry was going to try one last trip to get the, by now large lineup that were trapped on the other side. All roads on Denman were impassable at this time. It took two days with snowplows and chain saws to clear Denman's roads. I parked the truck with bright lights on in line with the flashing battery powered nav light to give Harry something to line up on. With the power out, Shingle Spit is awfully dark. We got everybody home.

My wife was in the Gravelly Bay line up. She knew the ferry couldn't run in those conditions. She was getting the car hit by so many branches, she decided to get out of there. She was the last car to get across Denman that night, dodging falling branches. Once the wind subsided enough for Kahloke to run at Denman, she got off the islands and headed back down to Duncan for the night, which turned out to be 3 days. We were without electricity for eight days. I picked up enough firewood to last 2 winters in those eight days.

Surveying the damage the next day revealed about ten acres of Mount Geoffrey deforested. The dock at the Thatch pub was GONE. A causeway on piles with nothing left but the piles. It ended up taking a crew of three fallers plus a bobcat to regain access to Vance Link's house. There is no question about it. This was an EVENT.

This is from a Denman Firefighter on December 11th 2006.

Denman Island Hit by Hurricane!

Denman Island was hit on Monday night by a storm that, in all but name, was a category 2 hurricane. At the height of the storm, between 4:00 and 6:00 pm Monday, winds were measured at the Chrome Island lighthouse, just off the south tip of Denman, at 177 km/h, (96 knots) just 1 km/h short of being a category 3 hurricane. In addition, two separate observers on boats in the Lambert Channel reported seeing a waterspout, which is a tornado at sea.



There was considerable damage on Denman Island. Numerous trees were uprooted or broken off, many onto power lines. At least 70 spans of high-voltage power line were brought down, and one house had four trees crash down on it while the occupant was inside. Luckily, there were no reports of serious injuries.

Shortly after it seemed to have blown itself



out, but no, no such luck, around 4:00 p.m. she put it into overdrive and things started going sideways, literally. We went to meet Ashley at the ferry and the road was riddled with debris. Parents huddled in the waiting room to get out of the wind and stinging ice pellets. “There’s no way the ferry is going to come across in this”, I was told by an off-duty ferry employee just as the [Kahloke](#) came out of the fog.



That's when the steel street-light pole folded into



the ocean and I decided being inside, looking out of a sheet glass window, while 100k+ winds hit it straight on, was not the brightest thing. The canoe that is chained at the roadside became a windsock, the cross-member of a power-pole snapped and signs bent in half. Within the 15 minutes (that I was at the ferry landing) two trees fell across the power lines along the road home. The school bus in front of me could just squeak under the power lines and tree.



Tuesday - No power! Luke warm shower & Coleman cooking.
Wednesday - No Power! Went on a reconnaissance mission around the island. McFarlan Road was a war zone. Shown in the pic with the barricade across the road, I was able to return later that night. Simply indescribable. Hundreds of trees criss-crossing the road mixed with cables, phone, and power lines in a tangled mess. By 7:00 pm the truck could squeeze through the chain saw created tunnel.... just big enough for residents to get out for provisions. Thank goodness that there were no fires as there is no way a truck could have navigated the road. These pictures are not a good indication of the real



damage, but gives you an idea of what things were like between Monday and Wednesday when BC Hydro began to appear in force. The picture of the school bus squeezing under the power lines and tree is on the main road by the ferry. The bent speed limit sign gives an idea of the power of the wind.



Thursday... Had to get off the island for a small dose of sanity, heat and light. Walking off the ferry @ Buckley Bay I counted 14 Hydro trucks with baskets.

Next is the Metars official report from Environment Canada describing a SPECIAL report at 16:15 involving FC (funnel clouds) waterspouts. And 83 knots of wind.

December 11th, 2006

Comox Airport, METAR CYQQ

between 1:00 and 2:00 pm the max. wind was reported from 130 at 40G54kt special at 4:15 pm with wind from 130 at 33G48kt, reported a 300ft tornado/waterspout 5 naut. mile west of Qualicum, moving west towards Hornby/ Comox.
+FC TOPS 300FT REPORTED 5NM W OF QUALICUM MOVG W TWD HORNBY/COMOX

Chrome Island Lighthouse

at 3:40 pm from SE at 35G45kt
special report at 4:15 pm, wind shift and max. wind from S at 50G83kt

The following is an account from a member of the Denman Ferry crew: December 11th 2006 16:15 PM.

It was the school run. When we left Buckley Bay the Kahloke was encountering following winds. Very strong, deep valleys between the crests of rolling breakers. By the time we were half way across the tops of the waves were being chopped off by the wind, visibility was almost zero with spray. It took the captain about 7 minutes to dock the boat once we were inside the slip. Both engines were roaring. School kids who had come out on the deck for the fun and exhilaration 15 minutes earlier, were now crying and hanging on to each other and vehicles. When docked, I was about to head up the ramp to put in the pin, but could not physically walk up the ramp. I hung on to the railing on the apron and could not make forward progress for 30 seconds at least. As I finally made it to the crank to put in the pin, I heard a crash. A metal lamp standard on the trestle had come down in the wind crashing onto the causeway, smashing the lamp assembly and then crashing overboard and into the water. If I had been at the gate I would have been hit and likely killed. Parents waiting for their children in the parking lot and waiting area were screaming. We unloaded all the students and cars, only to find there were several cedar trees down on the ferry hill. We cancelled the next 2 sailings.

And finally this is from the final report of Ferries consultant team. I leave you to draw your own conclusions.

1.6.1
December 11th 2006 storm.

Adjusting the Comox Airport and Chrome Island measured winds using equations (1)-(4), we obtain an estimate of the winds at the Baynes Sound BCFT sites during the December 11th, 2006 storm. The results are plotted below in Figure 1.8. The results show good agreement through the Dec 11th event with wind speeds peaking at about 13 m/s (26 knots).