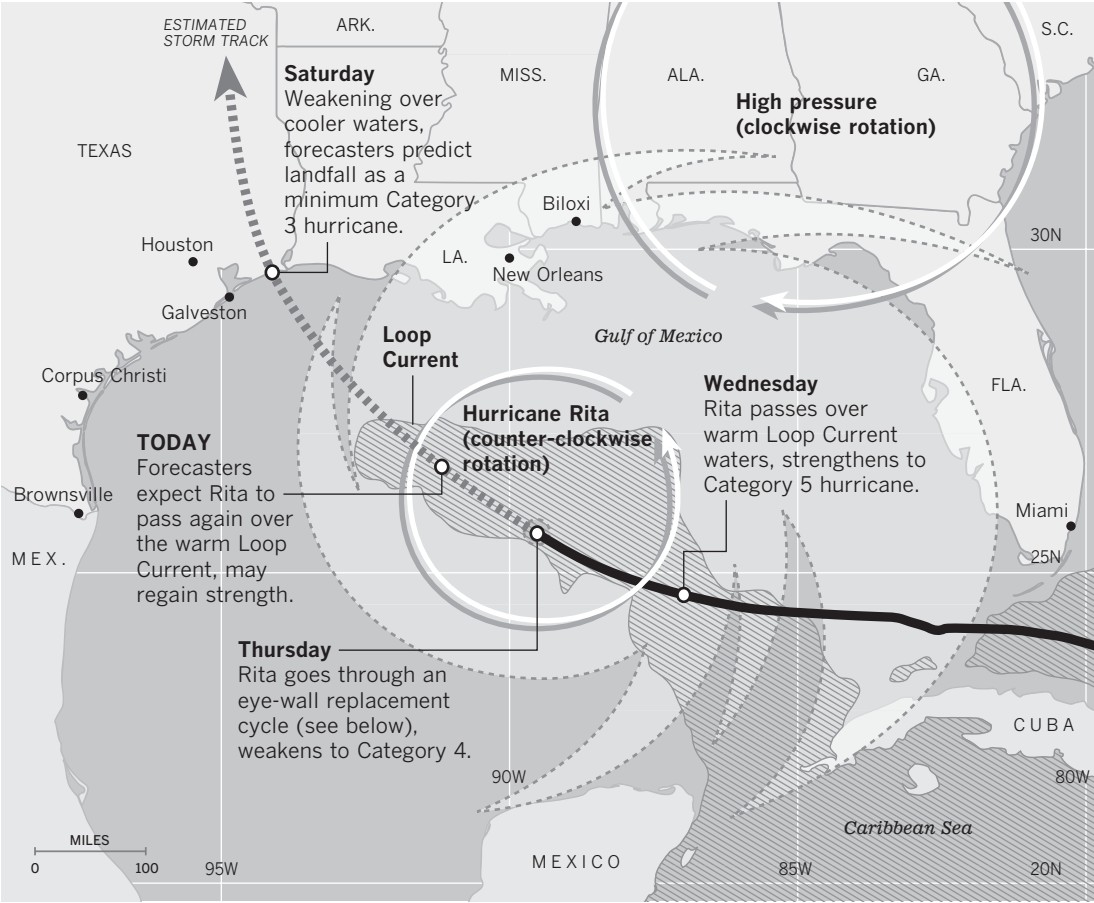


The factors feeding, impeding Rita

Hurricane Rita is expected to track to the northwest as a high pressure system moves out of the storm's projected path. It may regain intensity as it again crosses the Loop Current, a section of the Gulf Stream that carries warmer water from the Caribbean to the central Gulf of Mexico.



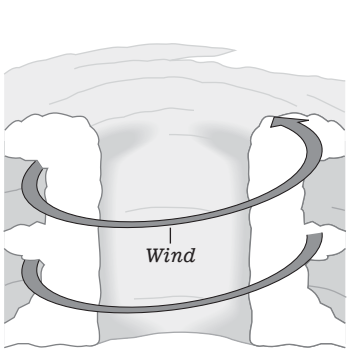
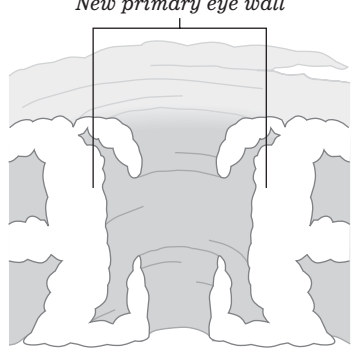
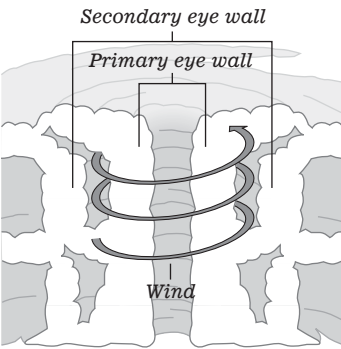
Eye-wall generations

In powerful hurricanes such as Rita, outer bands of storms encircle the primary eye wall, thus forming a second eye wall.

The secondary eye wall begins to rob the primary eye wall of its energy and the storm's intensity declines.

The primary eye wall eventually disintegrates, leaving the outer ring as the new eye wall.

Because the center of circulation is now broader, the wind speeds decrease.



Over time (usually several hours), the new eye wall may contract, shrinking the eye again and causing wind speeds to increase. At the end of a full regeneration cycle, hurricanes are often significantly more powerful.

Sources: NOAA, Accuweather, South Florida Sun-Sentinel. Graphics reporting by BRADY MACDONALD