

STORM RESISTANT BUILDING PRACTICES

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If you've always dreamed of retiring in Florida, but the hurricanes of recent years frightened you away, you should take a look at the Florida Building Codes as they relate to hurricane resistance. Following Hurricane Andrew's devastation in 1992 stringent building codes tightened guidelines and requirements to better protect buildings from the forces of nature. In 2005 University of Florida engineers released a report prepared from data after the 2004 hurricane season sent four fierce storms criss-crossing the state. The results: Homes built under the Florida Building Code that became effective in 2002 sustained less damage on average than those built between 1994 and 2001 under the Standard Building Code. Homes completed before 1994, meanwhile, fared worse.

In essence, hurricane-related code addresses the ability of a building to withstand the combined forces of hurricane-strength wind, rain and flooding. Roofs require particular protection against hurricane forces, as a detached roof can rapidly lead to the complete destruction of a building. Chapter 15 of the Florida Building Code defines the load requirements for roofs partially based on the structural materials of the roof. The roof's slope must also provide adequate drainage..

The major cause of damage to structures in a hurricane happens when the outer shell is broken (i.e. open doors or broken windows) and wind enters the structure. The wind places a great amount of pressure on the walls and roof of the structure causing it to collapse in most cases. Double doors, both entrance and garage-type doors, cause a special hazard when exposed to gale force winds. There are special considerations to be made concerning the reinforcement of double doors in the Florida Building Code. The building code is specific concerning the ability for garage doors to withstand wind speeds of a certain measurement.

Tropical cyclones have affected Florida for centuries, certainly even prior to the discovery of the North American continent. The first recorded incident dates back to 1523 when two ships and their crews were lost off the western coastline.

It is estimated that some 486 storms have visited Florida, about a third of them prior to 1900. Of the 327 hurricanes and tropical depressions recorded as having affected the state between 1900 and the present time, only 6 have entered Citrus County, none of which were any stronger than a category 2. Prior to Hurricane Gladys of 1968, damages from storms were primarily limited to crops and vegetation as a result of the sparse population of the county. Gladys, born in the warm October waters of the Western Caribbean, hit Homosassa in Citrus County on October 19th as an 80 MPH Category 1 hurricane. Dropping about 6 inches of rain, Gladys caused some coastal flooding, but wind damages were limited primarily to mobile homes.

During the now notorious storm season of 2004, Citrus County received a visit from Hurricane Jeanne on September 26th, leaving 6,471 homes without power. Jeanne did cause damage to the older structures and mobile homes in the area, but much of the county remained untouched.

All Florida homes are built to withstand 100 mph winds, and most are built to 110 mph standards. At Gold Crest, we offer a variety of suggestions to allay your concerns about severe weather conditions, including hurricane shutters and safe rooms. Feel free to talk to us about products you may want to consider incorporating into your home.