HURRICANES

HURRICANES CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO HOMES, PROPERTY, DESTROY FURNITURE AND KEEPSAKES. IT CAN ALSO DISRUPT YOUR LIFE.

In this guide, the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) outlines Five Spots where some work can make a big difference in how well your home survives a hurricane.

SHUTTERS, SOFFITS, SHINGLES, SEALS AND SURROUNDINGS

By paying attention to these Five Spots, you reduce the chance wind and water will damage your home.

Regardless of the age of your home, most homes were not built using hurricane resistant materials. The IBHS outlines some areas to update your home that may prevent damages during a hurricane.

Most of these updates can be accomplished in a day. And by doing them now, you will be prepared if a hurricane strikes.

SHUTTERS

Protection of openings is probably the most important thing you can do to improve the chance your home will survive a hurricane.

Openings include all windows, entry doors, sliding glass doors, garage doors and gable end vents.

What could potentially threaten your home from the force of hurricane winds? Wind pressures are one factor; but also look at the types of roof covering on nearby houses and buildings; because older tile and shingle roofs often shed debris in high wind.

Unanchored sheds, carports and screen enclosures frequently fail in these conditions and become airborne, as do trees, shrubs and yard objects.

When replacing existing windows and doors, or building a new home, consider installing impact resistant products. They provide full-time protection and will not require any work just before a storm.

WINDOWS

Protect windows before a hurricane strikes. When wind speeds climb above hurricane force, impact resistant panels will provide protection from flying debris that can break window panes and can also reduce water intrusion. If you intend to use plywood, prepare and label the panels ahead of time, and install permanent stainless steel anchors around the windows.

ENTRY DOORS

Entry doors can be forced open by window pressure or the impact of flying debris. All doors should have at least three hinges and a security lock with a dead bolt at least 1" long, and the door framing should be securely anchored to the wall structure. Some doors indicate that they are rated for wind pressure and flying debris. Doors installed in wood frames rarely provide the recommended protection from windborne debris or wind pressure. Wooden doors, with raised panels, are particularly vulnerable to splitting apart when they are hit by debris.

You can shutter doors with a code approved pressure and impact rated shutter system, but you must keep at least one door operable from inside the living space.

This can be done by using an accordion shutter system that can be operated from inside or outside the house.

Also, consider replacing at least one door with one that is code approved for wind pressures and debris impact appropriate for your area.

Double entry or “French doors” have been susceptible to failure from wind pressure and should have the highest priority for strengthening or shuttering. If you have glass panels in the doors or wood doors with raised panels, your least expensive option will be to shutter the door. If they are solid doors, at a minimum, you should improve the anchorage of the fixed door by adding heavy duty barrel bolt anchors at the top and bottom with barrels that extend into the header and floor.

PATIO DOORS

Newer sliding glass doors use tempered glass which is significantly stronger than regular window glass. If it is tempered glass, the label is etched in one of the corners.

Shuttering the doors, as stated above, is one of the most effective ways to protect them.
SHINGLES
Make sure that shingles are well fastened and do not extend beyond the roof edges. Shingles can be easily checked by gently trying to lift the lower edge. If it comes up without much effort, then you need to secure it. To secure, use roofing cement for a caulk gun and place three 1” diameter dabs under each shingle tab near the edges and the middle. This is extremely important!

SEALS
In addition to water entering through soffits and gable end vents, it can invade homes when it is being blown horizontally. Look for holes where wires, cables and pipes enter and exit the house. In addition to openings for cable TV and telephone lines, seal all the way around electrical boxes and circuit breaker panels. Pipe penetrations include Air Conditioner (AC) refrigerant lines and water pipes. Also, seal cracks around wall outlets, dryer vents, bathroom and kitchen vents and electrical devices such as wall lights. Water damage can lead to mold.

SURROUNDINGS
Limiting possible sources of windborne debris, before a hurricane will help prevent damage to your home. Move anything outside that can become flying debris into a safe enclosed area. Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed.

GABLE END VENTS
Water entering your attic space can damage the insulation and can lead to collapsed ceilings. Water can get in where roof covering is lost, through gable vents and soffits. Gable vents can be sealed with sheets of plywood or polycarbonate as if they were windows.

WHEN A HURRICANE THREATENS
1. Fill your bathtub with water that can be used for flushing toilets or washing;
2. Follow weather and news reports to heed evacuation orders especially if located in a surge or flood prone area;
3. Stay in a sheltered area and keep away from doors and windows, even if they are shuttered.

For more information about how to protect your home against hurricane damage and other property loss, please visit the Institute for Business & Home Safety’s Web site at www.DisasterSafety.org.