



Bringing Shutters to Those In Need

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Miami-Dade County, Florida



Miami-Dade County, FL - Frank Reddish, the Emergency Management Coordinator for Miami-Dade County, asserts that installing storm shutters is key way to protect a home or business from storm damage.

"It's important to have shutters in Florida," Mr. Reddish said. "Shuttering is one of the best things you can do for benefit-cost ratio, practicality, and great protection for the building envelope."

Mr. Reddish spearheads the County's Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Group and has been involved in many successful projects designed to reduce damage from future storms. For example, the Alternate Spring Break Program was introduced by FEMA in 1999 as part of the agency's effort to encourage the building of disaster-resistant communities. The project gave college students the opportunity to volunteer their spring break to perform a valuable community service – installing storm shutters on vulnerable homes.

Students from Mississippi State University were the first to participate in the spring break program. The home improvement store chain Home Depot provided supplies, and local construction businesses provided volunteer supervision to assist the students with installing solid panel hurricane-proof shutters on the homes of four elderly, low-income families. The following year, University of Pittsburgh students participated in the program, installing shutters on four more houses.

"If you have the money, and you don't install shutters, you're making a big mistake," said Mr. Reddish.

For low-income homeowners, however, the Miami-Dade LMS is making shutters available to qualified applicants at no cost through the In-Need Shuttering Program. This program evolved from the original spring break project as Mr. Reddish and the LMS sought to widen the program's scope and coverage throughout the community. Low-income households can now qualify for the program without age restrictions, and help is made available to install and remove shutters for applicants who may need assistance in the event of a storm.

"My wife and I are an elderly couple," said Arthur Bentley, a shuttering program recipient. "We're not strong enough to put up and take down plywood with every storm. But now we have the shutters, and people come and put them up for us when a storm comes. We're more at ease with this coming hurricane season. We need more things like this in our community."

Community residents can obtain applications for shutters written in English, Spanish, and Creole at several locations throughout the county. According to Mr. Reddish, the program has received more than 100,000 applications, and provided shutters for 1,500 homes as of summer 2006.

As the program grows, manpower will become an issue, because solid-panel shutters must be hung and removed with each storm event. To resolve this problem, the group is converting to permanently-installed accordion shutters, which need only to be closed and locked prior to a storm.

Currently, Miami-Dade's Community Action Agency Weatherization Program is responsible for the shuttering. There are two crews that can install shutters on a total of four homes each day. The shutters, hardware, and equipment are purchased through local suppliers at reduced rates, with the cost of shuttering a single house totaling between \$1,500 and \$2,000. Taking into consideration the potential savings in home repair, reduced property losses, and reduced human suffering, the advantages of protecting a house through the relatively simple technique of storm shutters are clear.

Originally, funding for the In-Need Shuttering Program came from the State of Florida's Residential Construction Mitigation Program in the form of a \$300,000 grant. An additional \$1 million allocation came from the Miami-Dade County Commission. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, administered by Florida's Department of Community Affairs, provided \$900,000 in program development funds following tornado events in 2003, and this amount was matched by the County.

“The 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons were the worst in Florida’s history,” Mr. Reddish said. “We went out and looked to see how the shuttered houses fared and we found zero damage, not just the houses that we shuttered with this program but any house with shutters suffered no significant damage. Shuttering works, and this is a great program, because we’re bringing shutters to those who can’t afford them on their own.”

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

County: **Miami-Dade County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness; Retrofitting, Structural**

Activity/Project Start Date: **05/2003**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Technical Assistance Program (HMTAP); Local Sources; State sources**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$2,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1460 , 04/25/2003**

Federal Disaster Year: **2003**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.miamidade.gov/CAA/elderly.asp#Hurricane>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/>

Main Points

- Miami-Dade County's Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Group and has been involved in many successful projects designed to reduce damage from future storms.
- The Miami-Dade LMS is making shutters available to qualified applicants at no cost through the In-Need Shuttering Program.
- Originally, funding for the In-Need Shuttering Program came from the State of Florida's Residential Construction Mitigation Program in the form of a \$300,000 grant.



Student volunteers install shutters.



One of the 1,500 homes.