



Windows Manufacturer's Hurricane Preparedness Plan

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Charlotte County, Florida



Venice, FL – When Rod Hershberger, president and chief operating officer of PGT Industries, tasked his executive team with establishing a mitigation/business contingency plan, his goal was clear ... “We will take care of our PGT family, whatever it takes.” When Hurricane Charley, a Category 4 hurricane, threatened Western Florida, the management of PGT Industries stepped up and looked after their workers more than most companies would have.

PGT Industries, a leading manufacturer of custom windows, doors and sunrooms, has had an ever-evolving hurricane preparation plan in place since the early part of 2002. It also has a business continuity plan, and an insurance policy that guarantees employees full pay for one year, in case the company is forced to close its doors because of a disaster. “We did a lot of things in advance,” says Dave Olmstead, public affairs and code compliance manager. “Every department has a hurricane plan in place.” Periodically, work-time drills are scheduled to assure that everyone learns what to do and where to go in the event of a major storm.

Employees also developed a mitigation plan for interfacing with the corporate plan. They participated in many ways, even funding their own readiness. They raised money by conducting bake sales and raffles and selling special parking permits to support their emergency readiness fund. Employees in each department signed up volunteers and established skill category lists so they could match volunteers to specific needs in an emergency situation.

As Charley approached, the hurricane teams reviewed employee rosters checked addresses and phone numbers and prepared to put their plans into action. On Wednesday, August 11, 48 hours before the hurricane hit, the company went on standby. Departments were issued everything they would need to lock down, including batteries and plastic bags to cover computers.

“On Thursday, it was looking more and more likely that we were in the danger area, and we went onto ‘hurricane watch’...at that point we locked down the plant,” said Olmstead.

The storm made landfall south of the PGT plant near Port Charlotte on Friday, Aug. 13. PGT managers mapped out locations where employees were most affected and, utilizing the crisis communication plan, coordinated the rapid delivery of assistance. That plan also included full-page newspaper ads telling employees where to go or whom to contact if they had special needs. PGT even had an airplane fly over the area pulling a banner telling employees to call or come to PGT for relief assistance.

Relief efforts by PGT to its employees were comprehensive. They delivered food, water, diapers and medical supplies. Four-hundred generators were delivered to those who were without power. Employees could keep the generators after the storm for a small payroll deduction. The company also set up a temporary relief center near the plant that served three hot meals a day, provided laundry and show facilities and had staff working to assist with employee needs. On company time, maintenance department workers were assigned to help repair employee homes and office workers formed a team to find homes for those who were displaced.

“All our folks displaced from their homes, had housing within a week,” says Olmstead. “Statistically we found that 25-30% of our workforce was affected,” Olmstead explained, “We had 50 people that lost their homes.”

Although the plant was not directly impacted by the storm, all the planning worked. Employees were served so well they were able to return to work quickly in numbers sufficient for PGT to continue operations only two days after the hurricane. “It could have easily have cost \$600,000 for a week of lost production. It didn’t, because employees were back at work,” said Olmstead. “The personnel were in place, everybody knew their jobs, and it wasn’t haphazard.” Company executives give credit for the quick recovery to having a plan of action and the fortitude of their employees.

“You don’t become a great company because of how you handle an event, the event just allows the community a bit of an inside look at how a great company responds to its folks,” said Rod Hershberger. Employees showed their appreciation by taking out a full-page ad thanking the executives of the company.

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

County: **Charlotte County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness**

Activity/Project Start Date: **08/2004**

Activity/Project End Date: **09/2004**

Funding Source: **Private funds**

Funding Recipient: **Business/Industry**

Funding Recipient Name: **PGT Industries**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.fldisasterkit.com>

Main Points

- When Hurricane Charley, a Category 4 hurricane, threatened Western Florida, the management of PGT Industries stepped up and looked after their workers more than most companies would have.
- Employees also developed a mitigation plan for interfacing with the corporate plan. They participated in many ways, even funding their own readiness.
- Although the plant was not directly impacted by the storm, all the planning worked.