



FEMA

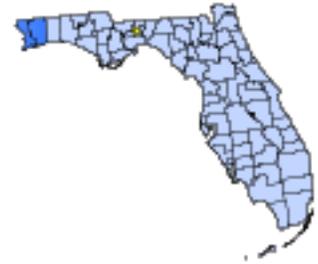
Habitat Houses Stand Against Hurricanes

Pensacola, FL - Approximately 400 homes located in Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties are models for hurricane-resistant construction. These affordable, energy-efficient houses built by Pensacola Habitat for Humanity (PHFH) withstood two hurricanes in less than a year. PHFH is a non-profit Christian organization serving Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties. The organization raises money so that low-income families may own their own home. The homeowners and community volunteers build the houses under trained supervision.

"We heard from many homeowners that they were afraid to come back to their houses to see the damages from Hurricane Ivan," said PHFH Development Director Don Parmely. "But on their return they found their homes had survived with very little damage while many others nearby were badly damaged." Most mortgages for the Habitat houses average \$320 per month. The houses are affordable because the organization depends on many volunteers to build them. More than 5,200 volunteers helped construct 40 houses in the two counties in 2004, under the supervision of volunteer building professionals. The volunteer labor does not diminish the quality or strength of construction, as Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis proved. PHFH builds homes that are in compliance with current building code requirements.

By designing the homes to meet the organization's goals of energy efficiency and low maintenance, PHFH created structures that are more resistant to hurricane damage, according to Construction Supervisor James Salter. The building plans do not include garages. "There's no garage door to be blown in, allowing winds to blow out the roof and cause major damage," explained Salter. Every house is constructed on a concrete slab foundation. The construction uses either "Go-Bolts" or slab tie-downs to firmly anchor the structure to the foundation. Hurricane clips, metal connectors with a minimum of six nails, attach rafters to walls. Double-pane, high-impact windows help reduce energy costs and are rated to withstand 150 mph winds. Every shingle is anchored with six nails per shingle.

When Ivan struck the Gulf Coast, only 50 of 390 houses built by PHFH sustained minor wind damage, such as lost shingles, and only two were substantially damaged. A tree fell on one house, and wind-blown debris from neighboring houses crashed into the second. A housing shortage created by the hurricanes and the publicity surrounding the strength of the Habitat-built houses has generated an increased interest in PHFH housing. More than 150 people attended a Habitat information session held one month after Dennis struck; it was the largest attendance to date. Building techniques that protect houses from hurricane damage do not have to be costly. The majority of Habitat homeowners saved the expense of major repairs that other homeowners in the area suffered. These families were able to remain in their homes after the hurricanes, while their neighbors had to seek housing in shelters, hotels, or with families and friends.



Multiple Counties,
Florida



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Building Codes

Primary Funding:

Private funds