



FEMA

Shoppers Learn Stronger Building Techniques

Pensacola, FL - Pensacola residents who purchased tools at a home improvement store also had an opportunity to learn how to make their homes stronger. The area was hit by two hurricanes, Ivan and Dennis, in less than a year.

Technical experts visited with shoppers at Lowe's and Home Depot stores in the Florida Panhandle within a month after Hurricane Dennis came ashore. These specialists in hazard mitigation promoted steps people could take to eliminate or reduce damage from future disasters. The Mitigation Assistance Clinics are one of the ways the Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) responded to assist people affected by the disaster.

Mitigation specialists discussed recovery and rebuilding issues over a table full of literature, which described how to clean up mold and mildew, elevate a home to avoid damages from flooding and storm surge, purchase flood insurance, and build a safe room. The publications also outline construction techniques for strengthening windows, doors, and roofs against wind. Many of these mitigation measures may make homeowners eligible for significant savings when they purchase insurance to protect their homes.

Michael Guin, manager of the Pensacola Lowe's on Airport Boulevard, says offering information on smart rebuilding techniques in a place where people buy building supplies is a win-win situation. "We want to give our community whatever will be helpful to them to build stronger. Having FEMA experts set up here provides a place for an information exchange."

"Since our teams are placed in a friendly atmosphere of a retail store amidst shoppers, people may feel more comfortable about asking what disaster assistance FEMA offers," said Jay Michaud, FEMA mitigation outreach coordinator.

Guin feels that the clinics are an excellent fit for the Pensacola area. "We are going to keep having hurricanes and we're in an area of tourism and military bases with people living here that have not experienced living in a coastal community before. They don't know how to prepare for a hurricane or flooding. And the more preparation people have, the better off they will be."

Before simply distributing brochures on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the mitigation teams offered some surprising statistics to grab shoppers' attention: "Did you know that buildings located in areas at high risk of flooding have a 26 percent chance of experiencing a flood during the life of a 30-year mortgage, compared to a four percent chance of fire?" and "You don't have to live in a floodplain to experience flooding – 25 to 30 percent of all flood losses occur in low- to moderate-risk zones."

The Mitigation Assistance Clinics are part of a long-term recovery effort that helps people protect their homes and communities. Teams visited Lowe's and Home Depot home improvement stores at 14 locations in the Florida Panhandle over eight weeks. They counseled 5,312 people about disaster assistance and mitigation techniques.



State-wide,
Florida



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Education/Outreach/Public Awareness

Primary Funding:

State sources