



# FEMA

## *Disaster Survival House Brings Message of Preparedness to Community*

**Deerfield Beach, FL** – In 1997, Deerfield Beach became the first community to participate in a FEMA mitigation grant program that encouraged the building of disaster-resistant communities. The City formed a partnership with State Farm Insurance Company to build a fortified house to bring the message of hazard mitigation and disaster safety to local architects, builders, and residents.

State Farm funded construction of the house, and donated it to the community in 2004. Since then, Deerfield Beach has transformed the house into an educational museum devoted to the science of hurricanes and the realities of mitigation and disaster preparedness.

The more than 100 disaster-resistant features built into the house are demonstrated through cutaway displays, where visitors can view the construction and design techniques and materials that comprise the finished house. After the City took ownership, designers incorporated changes that enhanced the educational value by turning the entire house into an exhibit about hurricanes and aspects of disaster preparedness. Erik Salna, Hazard Mitigation Coordinator at the Disaster Survival House, explained that each room of the house addresses a specific topic. Not only has the house been reconfigured to demonstrate and display examples of mitigation and safety techniques, but it also offers a historical and educational overview of hurricanes and other disasters.

Visitors are greeted in the Welcome Room by artwork, photographs, and news articles that tell Florida’s hurricane history. An audio/visual presentation featuring surround sound and simulated lightning demonstrates the power and scope of storms that have struck Florida over the years.

The bathroom and laundry room demonstrate different fortification techniques, and display messages from the National Safety Council about in-house safety for families.

The wind demonstration area is located in a screened-in porch, where a wind tunnel provided by Florida International University’s Hurricane Research Center demonstrates wind effects on houses using scale models. The models are subjected to simulated hurricane force winds, and visitors can evaluate the effects on different types of construction designs.

The garage area contains a display of various roofing materials designed for strength and damage-resistance, as well as an exhibit on properly reinforced garage doors. Generator safety concerns and precautions are also presented in this area.

Deerfield Beach’s Disaster Survival House is a unique and valuable tool for educating the public about hurricanes and other disasters. According to Salna, “It’s here for the community, for education. I like to call this place an ambassador. We’re bringing the message of preparedness, teaching the history of hurricanes, the science of hurricanes and how to fortify against them. The bottom line is, everybody needs to have a plan. Everybody needs to be prepared.”



**Broward County,  
Florida**



### **Quick Facts**

Sector:  
**Public**  
Cost:  
**Amount Not Available**  
Primary Activity/Project:  
**Building Codes**  
Primary Funding:  
**Private funds**