



# FEMA

## Couple Fully Braced for Tornado



Volusia County,  
Florida

**Orlando, FL** - Nestled fast asleep in their beds, a senior-citizen couple was abruptly awakened before dawn on February 2, 2007, by a NOAA weather radio alert. The alert was followed by a call from their son in Orange City warning that a tornado had touched down at nearby Lady Lake. The couple saw the sky light up and heard a rumbling as if a jet was on top of them. Immediately, the tornado swept through their neighborhood. Nearly all the homes that blanketed the community were destroyed, and two of their neighbors were killed. On that Friday morning, tornadoes touched down at Lake, Seminole, Sumter, and Volusia counties in Florida with reported winds exceeding 160 mph. The storms caused extensive damage to homes, businesses, and public infrastructure that resulted in more than 20 fatalities.

Louedna Huber, 81, and her husband, Vern, 87, of DeLand lived to see destruction all around their home and throughout the community. Fortunately, the couple was not harmed and their house had minimal damage in the wake of the storm. Tornado winds uplifted their garage, a detached building next to their house, slamming it into neighboring Bear Lake almost 200 feet away. The open porch suffered little damage as strong winds slightly shifted the support beams. The powerful winds of the rapid moving tornadoes partly sucked out one set of windows in front of the house and flying debris shattered one at the back of the house; all other windows held.

"We were surprised that when the whole thing was over, the house survived," said Louedna. "It was a terrible wind and this house withstood."

In 1980 the couple bought a single-level burned-out home of 1960's era. For several months they worked to attach 2" by 4" studs to the foundation and roofing with hurricane straps; the crew then attached 1" by 8" and 1" by 6" boards horizontally and secured them to the studs with four nails each. The couple added building paper over the board to reduce moisture and followed with an overlay of 5/8" plywood finish to create a rigid structure. The house is located in a retirement community surrounded with rows of mobile homes. The Hubers and friends built their lakeside home to brace against the hurricane-force winds that frequent the area. Vern lightly smirks that his wife named the construction crew, "over-the-hill gang" because they were all retirees. Louedna said she nailed the hurricane straps to the house.

The couple and their friends constructed the home with a continuous load path that connected plywood and 1" board walls, roofing, and the foundation with hurricane ties and straps. When the tornado hit, the anchoring system effectively held, shutting out the roaring winds with no structural compromise to the house.

"All homes here should have a weather radio because we have a lot of storms in the summer," Louedna said. "I've told everyone about how the weather radio sounded the alert."



### Quick Facts

Sector:

**Private**

Cost:

**Amount Not Available**

Primary Activity/Project:

**Retrofitting, Structural**

Primary Funding:

**Homeowner**