

Don't be *Blown Away* by High Winds

According to the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS), more than 60% of the United States is vulnerable to damage from high-wind events such as hurricanes, straight-line winds and severe thunderstorms. These events can produce high winds and heavy rains. IBHS engineers have determined that simple steps can make a big difference when it comes to reducing damage caused by wind and wind-driven rain. It pays to prepare early so that when severe weather threatens, management focus can shift to gathering supplies, protecting employees and heeding potential evacuation orders.

Maintenance and preparation:

Windows, Doors, Walls and Roofs:

- Check for leaks around windows and doors, especially near corners.
- Check for peeling paint, which can be a sign of water infiltration.
- Inspect for discolorations in paint or caulking and swelling of doorframes, windows and surrounding materials.
- Check flashing, which is typically a thin metal strip designed to prevent water intrusion in spaces where two different building surfaces meet.
- Replace wood siding and sheathing if it appears to have water damage.
- Check the roof for signs of deterioration or leaks. Make sure all drains and gutters are clear.
- All vents should be well-anchored to the roof, flashed and sealed to prevent

leaks. Just before a storm, close restroom and any other vents with duct tape (but remove it after a storm and before using the vents).

- Shutter and seal gable end vents to prevent wind-driven rain from entering attic space.
- Check for water and termite damage. Any wood exposed to the elements can decay and lead to moisture intrusion and insect infestation.
- Make sure that basement windows and doors have built-up barriers or flood shields.

Landscaping:

- Landscape features should not include soil or other bedding material mounded up against walls.
- Keep trees trimmed so that branches are at least 7 feet away from any exterior building surface.
- Vines should be kept off all exterior walls.

Protect your wall openings:

Windows:

The highest level of protection normally available for windows is professionally produced shutters that meet Dade County (FL) standards for opening protection. These standards require the shutter be able to resist the impact from a 9-pound piece of 2-by-4 lumber traveling at 34 mph without penetration of the shutter. If installed per manufacturer's recommendations, the impact should not



break the glass behind the shutter. IBHS has created a Shutter Selection Guide to help make the process of choosing window protection easier.

Doors:

All doors should have three hinges and a dead-bolt lock with a minimum 1-inch bolt throw length. Metal or solid wood doors may withstand hurricane pressures and windborne debris, but if you have French doors, doors with glass or hollow-core doors, you may want to shutter them. Also for French doors, add barrel-bolt restraints to the inactive door to help keep them from bursting open during a storm. Make sure the bolts connect through both the door header and the threshold into the subfloor.

Commercial and Industrial Garage Doors:

Because of their height and width, commercial and industrial overhead doors are typically more susceptible to wind damage than residential garage doors. Wind may buckle the door, force it out of the roller track, or the track could be vulnerable to the pressure. Wind coming into your building through an opening this large poses grave problems for the

rest of the building—especially the roof. Consider installing an overhead door that is hurricane resistant (tested and approved for your area), or shutter the door opening with a wind pressure and impact rated system appropriate for your area. IBHS offers information about state building code requirements, but it's also a good idea to check with the local building department.

Act quickly if water intrusion occurs:

The building has survived the storm, but water intrusion has soaked documents, computers and other valuable supplies. Water damage can threaten a business's ability to quickly bounce back after a storm. Leaks can find their way in through any opening, so it is important to plan for the worst before it happens. If your building becomes damaged by a catastrophic event, as soon as it is safe, take appropriate actions to prevent further water damage which, if left unattended, could result in structural failure or mold growth.

Here's what to do:

- After dealing with the immediate crisis, contact your insurance agent to report the loss.
- Remove standing water and all damp or wet materials from the building.
- Board up damaged windows and doors.
- Consult a licensed building professional, who can determine the extent of the repairs necessary.

For more information on high winds and severe weather, visit the website: <http://www.DisasterSafety.org> and use the IBHS ZIP code tool to help evaluate and understand the risk in your area.