



# Hurricane protection in 2007

PLASTICS  
IN NATURAL  
DISASTERS

by Ward Ogle

Last year was a reprieve from disastrous hurricanes in the United States. This was especially welcome for those who live along the Gulf Coast. For the Gulf Coast, 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons were disastrous with damage in the billions of dollars. The area is still reeling and trying to recover from hurricanes such as Katrina. One important lesson learned from these hurricane hits has been the need for hurricane protection to the envelope of buildings. That is the purpose of hurricane protection for windows and doors, especially for homes and condominiums.

The insurance industry is driving change to the consumer concerning hurricane protection. For example, today in Florida, homeowners who want insurance, must show that they have a Florida-approved hurricane protection system for their home. Homeowners must also verify that the approved system was installed prior to a hurricane in their area. There are many types of approved systems available from economical to very

high end. There are also many legitimate providers of these systems available to the consumer. Systems available to the market range from high-end automatic roll up/down aluminum, mid- to high-end accordion, mid-range polycarbonate to low cost steel.

## Advantages of polycarbonate hurricane systems

Polycarbonate systems have distinct advantages over many other hurricane protection systems. Polycarbonate systems allow natural light into the dwelling, provide high impact protection, are light weight and easy to install by the homeowner, and are at an installed price point acceptable to the average consumer.

Most polycarbonate systems are available to OEMs and installers through local plastics distributors. The do-it-yourself (DIY) homeowner can also purchase these systems through their local plastics distributor. Those DIY homeowners who choose to purchase through their local plastics distributor will probably pay more than an OEM or installer, but they will save on labor costs to install. Many installers charge from \$12 to \$15 per square foot installed for a mid-range polycarbonate system during the normal course of business. However, if a hurricane is imminent, installed costs can jump to \$22 or more per square foot installed.

No one hopes for a hurricane to land on U.S. soil. However, now is the time for homeowners in hurricane zones to do two things before a hurricane hits: 1) Install an approved hurricane protection system on their property. 2) Plan their evacuation route. We all must remember that the best installed hurricane protection in the world does not guarantee that Mother Nature cannot or will not be able to break it down. ■

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Interior view of Polygal® Stormguard, a hurricane shutter system for homeowners who want to rely on a certified hurricane protection system.

## HURRICANE CATEGORIES

Hurricanes are evaluated in a number of ways. Storms are assigned a category based on winds and storm surge, using the Saffir-Simpson Scale.

- **CATEGORY ONE**  
Wind speeds: 74 to 95 miles per hour  
Storm surge: 4 to 5 feet  
Damage level: minimal
- **CATEGORY TWO**  
Wind speeds: 96 to 110 miles per hour  
Storm surge: 6 to 8 feet  
Damage level: moderate
- **CATEGORY THREE**  
Wind speeds: 111 to 130 miles per hour  
Storm surge: 9 to 12 feet  
Damage level: extensive
- **CATEGORY FOUR**  
Wind speeds: 131 to 155 miles per hour  
Storm surge: 13 to 18 feet  
Damage level: extreme
- **CATEGORY FIVE**  
Wind speeds: Greater than 155 miles per hour  
Storm surge: Greater than 18 feet  
Damage level: catastrophic



Exterior view of Polygal® Stormguard Florida-approved hurricane system made from high impact 16 mm storm grade (SG) polycarbonate sheet.