

Window and Door Protection: Storm Shutters



With hurricane season right around the corner, our experiences of the past have taught us many lessons. One of them was that storm shutters can pose life-threatening barriers to exiting a burning building resulting in avoidable injury and death. If shutters are left in place when they are clearly not needed, lives are at risk.

An ordinance exists prohibiting residents of occupied dwellings from leaving shutters in place in excess of 10 consecutive days after the storm watch or warning has been lifted.

Since September 1, 1994, building codes in effect in Broward County have required that all openings in the "building envelope" such as windows, skylights, French doors and sliding glass doors be provided at the time of new construction with some form of impact protection. With exception, one door, usually the front entry door, must be an impact-test-approved door system that remains uncovered and serves as your means of entry / exit from your home when all other openings are covered.

The loss of windows and doors has been identified as one of the leading causes of building damage, and tough new laboratory tests must be performed on glazing and shutter systems before they can be approved for use in new buildings in our area.



Options for protection are becoming more varied and less expensive, ranging from traditional steel or aluminum panels, accordion shutters, or roll-ups to impact-test-approved screen or glazing systems, and there are advantages and drawbacks to each selection. For pre-1994 homes, the best protection you can provide for your home and family is to do the research and select the units of your choice, then make sure that your contractor

obtains the necessary permit and inspections. The permitting process assures you that your contractor is properly licensed and insured and that the products to be installed in your home are approved for use within the Broward County wind zone.

Now is a good time to review your window and door hurricane impact protection. If using shutter panels, now is the time to do a practice installation to make sure that all panels, hardware, bolts, and other fasteners are in your possession and fit properly. If not, make the necessary repairs and obtain the missing parts.



For handling panels, be sure to use good quality gloves with a gripping texture, and a sturdy, safe ladder. The new City Shutter Ordinance adopted by the City Commission this year mandates that your storm shutters must be removed within ten days after a storm has passed through. In compliance with the City Ordinance and for life safety, please remove shutters when winds have subsided and the Hurricane Warning has been lifted. Additionally, when storing steel or aluminum panels, they should NOT be leaned vertically against the wall. The leaning stack easily becomes unstable and can fall forward suddenly when you start to remove them for installation the next time. It takes more room, but they store most safely in a flat pile