

## Broward gets own 'hurricane house'

*by Biz-Journal-SF*

Florida's insurance commissioner took part in ceremonies, Thursday, to dedicate a hurricane house in Davie. The 3,000-square-foot house - officially known as the Broward County Windstorm Damage Mitigation Training and Demonstration Center - demonstrates how existing homes can be made more hurricane resistant. The house is at the University of Florida's Fort Lauderdale Research and Education Center at 3205 College Ave. It is built to withstand winds of more than 140 mph.

The house in Davie is one of four demonstration facilities located at UF Extension Service offices around the state. Other hurricane houses are in Fort Pierce, Pensacola and St. Augustine.

Insurance Commissioner Kevin McCarty said such hardened structures prove people can build homes that will withstand a Category 4 or 5 hurricane with little or no damage.

Hurricane houses use materials, products and construction methods that meet or exceed new state building codes and can be used in new homes or to retrofit existing structures.

Homeowners and builders can visit the homes to be educated on building materials including three types of window shutters, impact resistant doors and garage doors and insulated concrete forms with reinforcement bars.

The houses are also used to teach the latest windstorm mitigation construction techniques.

The Florida Department of Financial Services provided \$2.3 million for the four houses.

Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher, who oversees the department, said when the eye of Hurricane Frances passed through St. Lucie County in 2004, the hurricane house in Fort Pierce withstood the storm with little or no damage.

"This is the kind of protection I would like to see every Florida family have," he added.

Gallagher's office is presently developing a program to provide free inspections and \$5,000 matching grants for Floridians to strengthen their homes against hurricanes.

Lawmakers have earmarked \$250 million for the program, scheduled to be under way by mid-August.

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