



Partners in Prevention

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Group Gets Behind New UF Wind Mitigation App

The University of Florida ResRe Advisory Panel academic experts and leaders in government, nonprofit and private sectors met last month to brainstorm a new mitigation project: a smart phone app for wind mitigation. The app will help homeowners reinforce their homes against high wind.

“We need to protect what we have, as the damage we often see is preventable,” said University of Florida professor Dr. David Prevatt, whose years of experience studying the effects of hurricanes on residential structures brought important insights to the meeting.

With smart phones revolutionizing much of how we do things today, using the technology makes sense for homeowners to protect their largest investment. Using the app, homeowners will be able to enter information about the design characteristics of their home and then perform calculations based on tested modeling methods to generate suggestions for a clear path to wind mitigation. Suggested measures may include a new code-compliant roof, windows or shutters, or the need to install roof-to-wall connectors known as hurricane straps or other structural improvements.

Property owners will also learn about insurance discounts available when they complete mitigation improvements. As a tool for effective decision-making, the app also will highlight the financial benefits of insurance savings.

Florida’s Hillsborough County Hazard Mitigation Manager, Eugene Henry, supports the use of his county as a geographical test bed for the development project. “You’ll see more mitigation work done when the individual has the information to make things better,” Henry said. “It’s just a matter of making citizens aware of what they can do to help themselves.”

With approximately 550,000 homes in Hillsborough County, 75% are at significant risk due to construction practices prior to the inception of the Florida Building Code in 2002. Those structures represent an estimated economic risk of \$35 billion dollars.

FLASH convened and helped host the meeting to launch a multi-year project that will involve key collaborations among partners over the course of its progress. Discussions revolved around software logistics, how the app would be made available, and how the information would be presented. Attendees agreed that the information had to be understandable and user friendly to be effective.