



After Andrew, South Florida Family Keeps Vow to Be Hurricane-Ready

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Monroe County, Florida



Monroe County, FL - Barbara Schwartz, who lived for weeks without electricity after Hurricane Andrew ravaged South Florida in 1992, knows how to keep her family hurricane-ready. “We never wait until the last minute once we get the notice of when a storm will hit our area,” noted Schwartz. “Being ready means we will be better able to cope with hardships that can come after the main storm has passed.”

While living in Cutler Ridge, in the southernmost part of mainland Florida, Barbara, her husband Jonathan, and their two young children survived Hurricane Andrew. “I never want to relive the horrible night in 1992 when Hurricane Andrew came ashore,” she said. The Category 5 hurricane destroyed their home.

“We were there almost two weeks without running water and lived in [a shelter we fashioned] from the remains of the house,” Schwartz explained. “We didn’t have power for 42 days. We thought we had prepared for a hurricane, but Andrew educated us about what more we needed. Since then, we have never faced a storm unprepared.”

When the family moved to Pembroke Pines, Barbara and Jonathan purchased a home built in compliance with the improved Florida building codes that were put into effect after Hurricane Andrew. The couple feels safer thanks to the storm-resistant features of the house, such as the doors, garage door, and hurricane shutters for all the windows.

On October 24, 2005, when Hurricane Wilma battered South Florida, the Schwartz family was ready. Their home sustained only minor damage, such as loosened roof tiles. Wilma downed thousands of trees and scores of communities lost power – including Pembroke Pines. “Everyone in our neighborhood was without power,” said Barbara. “But we just started up our generator when the power went out.”

Because the Schwartz family was prepared for the storm, they were able to help others in their community, such as by providing flashlights, batteries, food, hot coffee, water and ice. “Everyone around here knows that we’re prepared and that they can come here and, most of the time, we can provide some kind of help,” she said.

The hardships the Schwartz family experienced after Andrew taught them how to properly stock up in preparation for future storms. Barbara’s emergency preparedness kit contains flashlights, lanterns, bulbs, matches, lighters, and batteries; First Aid supplies; tarps to keep household furnishings dry; cleaning supplies such as bleach, a bucket and mop, and towels; packaged foods; bottled water for drinking and water saved in bath tubs for other uses; plenty of ice; and supplies for the generator.

Barbara conducts an inventory of her kit prior to hurricane season. She replaces any items that are worn out or expired, and checks all items to make sure they are in working condition. The kit contains enough supplies to sustain the family for one month. Barbara also puts copies of important documents in sealable plastic bags to keep with the family wherever they shelter.

“I’ve lived in Florida for 29 years,” said Barbara. “Hurricanes are a fact of life here and there’s real peace-of-mind knowing your home and family are prepared. Oh – and don’t forget to buy a weather radio.”

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

Activity/Project Location

County: **Monroe County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**
Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness**
Activity/Project Start Date: **10/2005**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Homeowner**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**
Non FEMA Cost: **0**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/index.shtm>

Main Points

- Hurricanes are a fact of life in Florida and there is peace-of-mind knowing your home and family are prepared.
- Hardships the Schwartz family experienced after Hurricane Andrew taught them how to properly stock up in preparation for future storms.
- The Schwartz family keeps an emergency preparedness kit.
- The couple purchased a home built in compliance with the improved Florida building codes that were put into effect after Hurricane Andrew.



Barbara Schwartz inspects items in her "readiness bucket."