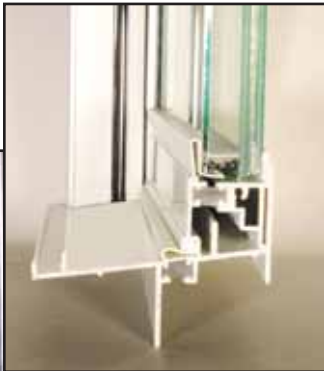


Ask the Mag

EXPERTS ADDRESS
IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

With the incredible devastation resulting from severe weather events in recent years, impact-resistant windows recently have gotten a lot of attention. Some of you may have dealers with new employees who don't know the finer points of impact-resistant windows. To help educate your employees and your dealers' employees on the finer points of impact-resistant windows, **SHELTER** turned to Randy Hile, the vice president of operations for windows for the Florida division of Atrium Companies Inc.



Impact-Resistant Windows

It's More than Just the Glass

Q: *What are impact-resistant windows designed to do?*

HILE: Impact-resistant windows or hurricane windows are designed to prevent penetration of windborne debris that strikes the window during seasonal high-wind events, as well as withstand rough gusts and high-wind pressure. To be effective, the window must withstand flying projectiles striking both the upper and lower panes of glass and the window frame's cross-section in between the panes.

When installed correctly, impact-resistant windows help keep a home's building envelope intact. When combined with other structural reinforcements specified by local building codes, the windows can help keep high winds—and also flood waters—at bay, preventing the structure from being torn apart from the inside out.

Q: *Are the materials used to secure a window to the structure different than those for traditional windows?*


HILE: Specifications may or may not call for

screws made from a non-corrosive material, such as stainless steel. In coastal areas of Florida, we deal with rust and corrosion on a daily basis. The fact that certain screws won't break down over time adds extra assurance that a window will remain anchored during a high-wind event. Non-corrosive screws, although more expensive than standard screws, are easy to come by in Florida. [We want our distributors and dealers to remind customers] this is an easy, yet important, upgrade. It's well worth paying the additional cost to add to the integrity of the building envelope.

Q: *Do you see the Florida code requirements being adopted elsewhere?*

HILE: They already are. Until [Florida Gov.] Charlie Crist signed a new measure into law in late January, we had different requirements around the state. Some areas previously had more lenient code requirements, and some chose to yield to the Miami-Dade County protocols, which were previously the most stringent building code requirements of almost anywhere in the nation.

The effect of Gov. Crist's action is that the entire state is now considered a high-wind zone. Now, the entire state of Florida will have one set of mandated specifications—the Miami-Dade County code. Instead of training people in four or five installation methods, we [and our distributors and dealers] can now train them in one.

Hopefully, using one impact-resistant window product—not just across Florida, but across the nation—will help drive down the cost of these products. Right now, impact-resistant windows really are a niche market due to their high cost, and the average consumer finds it difficult to afford the product. Tightening up the building code will expand the market and enable volume production of the windows, which will make them significantly more affordable and bring added peace of mind to homeowners as they'll know they have an extra level of protection in the event of extreme weather. 



Photos courtesy of Atrium Companies Inc.

A window must withstand flying projectiles striking both the upper and lower panes of glass and the window frame's cross section in between the panes.