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Protect your home with hurricane window film

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Q: My parents own a home in Florida. What is the best and most cost-effective way for them to protect their home from hurricane damage? They told me about hurricane window film, but I have never heard of it. What is it, and is it a good product? I also get bad storms where I live, so I wonder if I should consider some of this window film for my own home. Is this a do-it-yourself product? - Jennifer T., Joplin, Mo.

A: Hurricanes are front and center in the news lately, since our southern states have been pummeled by many serious storms in the very recent past. The damage to both lives and property is almost beyond comprehension. The fierce winds of a hurricane can pick up large objects with ease, and throw them like you or I might toss a tennis ball. But the difference is the objects carried about in devastating hurricane winds are often traveling at 120 to 175 mph.

When small objects such as pieces of wood or even rocks or sea shells get transported toward glass windows or large patio doors, they can break them with relative ease. Imagine what happens when a mailbox or patio table is hurtling toward a window or door at 175 mph. Not only will regular glass and even tempered glass shatter, anyone behind the glass could be seriously injured or possibly killed.

That is not all that can happen. The torrential rains that are part of hurricanes can be driven indoors once the windows and patio doors have been breached. The inside of a home can be seriously damaged as furnishings, fixtures and building materials are saturated.

The winds from the storm also can wreak havoc with homes once they are allowed inside. In the event windows are broken and the glass has fallen from the frame, the howling winds can pressurize the inside of the house, and in some cases, blow off a home's roof. If this happens, the walls of the house lose a critical means of support and can be blown down with ease.

The fantastic hurricane window films can prevent all of this from happening. These passive protection products are crystal-clear sheets of high-strength plastic that adhere to the inside of window and patio-door glass. If an object strikes the glass, the glass will in all likelihood break. But the destruction stops at that point. The durable window film keeps the glass in place and does not allow it to pop out of the frame. The horizontal sheets of rain stay outdoors, and the winds are not allowed to blast the inside of the home.

Some hurricane window films offer other cost-savings benefits. They can block massive amounts of ultraviolet light that send rugs, fabric upholstery and drapes to early graves. The best hurricane window films also block tremendous amounts of direct solar radiation that tries to stream into windows on sunny days. The light enters the house, but the heat stays outdoors. This lowers air-conditioning bills.

When your parents do comparative shopping for window protection, they are going to be pleasantly

surprised. Hurricane window films are not nearly as costly as many of the hurricane shutters and other exterior products that cover over windows to keep objects from breaking the glass. Plus, many of these other products are thought by some homeowners to be unattractive. Some also require work to secure them in place before the storm hits. On the other hand, once a hurricane window film has been applied, it is invisible. What's more, the homeowner never has to do anything to protect his or her windows before a hurricane arrives.

These films would be a smart choice for your own home if you live in an area where you are worried about flying objects striking glass. But they are by no means a do-it-yourself project. To achieve professional results, hurricane window films must be installed by highly trained individuals. Anyone who tells you that the films are just peel-and-stick is not telling you the entire story. Once you have been trained, you might be able to get fantastic results. Still, I would suggest you have a professional installer take care of the job for you.

TIPS

- A critical component of hurricane window film is a wet-glaze anchoring system. These are specialized caulks that bond the clear window film to the interior window frame. If this anchoring system is not used, the shattered glass can pop out of the frame along with the window film. If this happens, rain and wind are allowed to damage the home.
- The specialized caulks come in several different colors to match the interior look of just about any window and any type of painted or stained wood trim one might find in a home. When installed by a professional, the anchoring systems look like a wide bead of caulk.
- Do not call a hurricane window film company a week before a storm is expected to strike. Some of the window films and the wet-glaze anchoring caulks need a curing time of 30-90 days before they can offer full protection. Not only that, many of the installers have a significant backlog of work since window films are so affordable.

Do you need more information about this and related topics? Extra in-depth content can be found at AsktheBuilder.com.