



**1992 GRAND JURY HURRICANE ANDREW**  
(Arvida Country Walk above)

#### IV. CODE INSPECTIONS

A lack of proper building inspections was a major contributing factor to the widespread destruction caused by Hurricane Andrew. Faulty construction and shoddy workmanship were hidden until uncovered by the storm. This must never happen again. Since the hurricane, Dade County Building & Zoning has

Of all the damage caused by Hurricane Andrew, the most prevalent was damage to roofs. Design flaws, approval of poorly performing substitute products and shoddy workmanship were all to blame. The reformed SFBC, along with the adoption of the ASCE 7-88 wind load standards, now offers the opportunity of

The amount of shoddy workmanship uncovered by Hurricane Andrew emphasizes the need for a specific and enforceable "workmanship standard". Our predecessor grand jury recommended also known as "planned unit developments". The sheer graphic, widespread and apparent uniform destruction of many of these developments invited the focused examination of disaster analysts, the community and the media. Film crews, locally and from all over the world, documented the widespread destruction. Daily film clips revealed the domino-like rows of collapsed roofs and walls of what were once thriving family communities. These scenes of destruction provoked frustration, sadness and anger; emotions still felt today.

Our review leads us to believe that, to a great extent, Hurricane Andrew's devastation in the planned unit developments was aggravated by an inadequate building code and inadequate inspections by building officials. These inadequacies, as evidenced by the building code violations and shoddy construction we found, appeared in several subdivisions. Our predecessor grand jury began an inquiry into the many questions the damage raised.

Everyone could see that some types of construction fared substantially worse than others. Most disconcertingly, some of the worst damage occurred away from the area of the strongest winds. One specific inquiry centered on the issue of whether or not the damaged homes were constructed in accordance with the approved plans and specifications and the SFBC. In other words, had the developer/builders sold something other than what they represented to the home buyer?

Another cause of the total damage resulting from Andrew was the massive failure of roof framing systems. In those planned developments studied, we found that the typical roof framing system was composed of prefabricated wood trusses and plywood sheathing. In many instances, the construction documents relied upon the sheathing to supply the only permanent bracing for the roof trusses. In our opinion, the lack of adequate lateral bracing contributed significantly to the systematic failure of roof framing systems.

There was also substantial evidence of substandard workmanship in the anchoring of the plywood sheathing (or oriented strand board, in some cases) to the roof trusses. We observed example after example of inadequate or non-existent nailing or stapling of plywood sheathing to trusses. We feel that the use of braced truss roof systems, sufficient to resist lateral wind forces independent of the roof sheathing, should be required by the SFBC. Roof bracing should also be included as part of the newly adopted sheathing inspections.

ends. The structural integrity of the overall building depends not only on the strength of the primary structural systems (i.e. exterior load-bearing walls and non-loadbearing wall panels, the roof structure and diaphragm, and foundation) but also on the adequacy of the connections between them. The improper installation, and in some cases the absence of framing connections, hurricane straps, or bracing from non-loadbearing walls to connecting wall and roof components, was observed. These conditions contributed significantly to the catastrophic failure of the framing system of the wood-frame residences.

---

No better example of this is the present requirement of Florida Statute 455.225(10) which forces the BPR to withhold from a homeowner the very information that homeowners need before giving money to a contractor. Unless a lengthy administrative process has resulted in a finding of probable cause, this statute precludes the disclosure to a homeowner of the existence of any complaints pending against a contractor. The administrative process usually takes one year or longer to complete. In the interim, an unscrupulous contractor, with numerous complaints pending, is able to defraud homeowners of thousands of dollars while appearing to have an unblemished record. During our term we learned of one such contractor who allegedly defrauded over 40 homeowners out of almost \$500,000 in the period after Hurricane Andrew. Many of these homeowners had contacted BPR prior to giving him their money. Due to the requirements of this statute, the homeowners could only be told that no formal complaints existed when numerous complaints were pending. This is inexcusable. The law should be amended in a manner that would

Contributing to enforcement problems can be the enforcement agencies' own bureaucratic processes which slow informational

- 11 -

---

movement from location to location and agency to agency. For instance, it can take BPR three weeks from the date of receiving a complaint in its Tallahassee office, to review, assign and ultimately return the case to an investigator back in Dade



Florida's contracting laws allow licensed individuals to "qualify" unlicensed persons and therefore provide them with access to permits which would otherwise be unobtainable. This has resulted in instances where, although a fraud was committed by the unlicensed individual, the "qualifier" remained beyond the reach of administrative or criminal action since the direct involvement of the qualifier could not be proven. The 1989 Fall Term Grand Jury addressed this problem and recommended that anyone functioning as a "qualifier" have a managerial or a financial interest in the company being qualified. Additionally, it recommended that qualifiers should be present on the construction site. Unfortunately, Dade County Building &