



How to Save Big on Wind Insurance

Windstorm Mitigation Inspection Can Cut Your Premium in Half!

by Magda Siwinska

In times of increasing insurance premiums, condominium associations and homeowner associations are looking to cut corners and find ways to save money. Economic conditions are making it difficult for unit owners to pay association dues—putting the associations in an even worse position. Learn how to save thousands of dollars every year on your windstorm policy by having a mitigation inspection done.

The State of Florida has spent millions of dollars over the last year or so advertising and supplementing *My Safe Florida* windstorm

mitigation inspections program for homeowners. By having these inspections completed, the average Florida homeowner has been able to save hundreds of dollars on their windstorm premium. Even though the state sponsored free inspections are over, the discounts are still available. Most people are not aware, however, that condominium associations can save money as well. These premium discounts can be very significant, while the inspection costs are relatively inexpensive.

The goal of the windstorm inspection is to determine the presence of certain structural features that raise the resilience of a building to the wind and wind-born debris damage. If certain criteria are met, condominium complexes and homeowners organizations can get significant wind policy reductions on an annual basis. In general, items taken into consideration for discounts are:

- Roof coverings—the coverings on the structure’s roof must be up to the 2001 Florida Building Code (1996 in South Florida). As a general rule, if coverings have been replaced since 2001 (1996 in South Florida), you will qualify for a discount.
- Roof deck attachment—this is how the roof is attached to the structure. For many condominiums, especially along the beaches, they are made up of reinforced concrete and integrally attached to the wall system.
- Opening protection—the windows and doors are checked to see if they comply with hurricane protection, basic impact or class C guidelines. If they are, your condominium association can save even more. Other elements, like secondary water resistance, for example, can pump up your savings.

In addition to those universal wind mitigation reduction elements, there are a few more indicators. These are slightly different depending on whether the structures within condominiums or homeowners associations are less or more than three stories high. If the buildings are one or two stories high, roof to wall attachments, roof geometry, and wall construction are taken into account as well. In cases when buildings are three stories high or more, terrain exposure category and certification of wind speed need to be assessed.

It is important to know that in order to receive discounts not all criteria have to be met. In fact, many associations save large amounts of money on their premiums by only having one or two items on the inspection that meet discount specifications. Nearly every building should qualify for one or more discount items. It is definitely worth the effort to have an inspection done to find out what discounts your association might qualify for.

According to Chris Fulton, a condominium insurance specialist and vice president with Brown and Brown, Inc., “We have had customers save up to 50 percent on their insurance premiums by having mitigation inspections done. I had one association save over \$20,000 a year on their premiums.”

The process of having the windstorm inspection done is relatively fast, easy, and inexpensive. The inspection form is provided by the state and must be filled out by a certified professional. In most cases, depending on the number of buildings in the complex, the field inspection can be completed within one day. Processing the report data and images takes approximately three to four business days. As the next step, the inspection report is sent to the insurance agency. The agent then forwards the information to the insurance company. Finally, the company’s underwriter applies a discount to your windstorm policy.

Individual home and condominium unit owners can qualify for savings as well. Citizens Property Insurance Corporation, for example, states on their website that one’s savings might be up to 45 percent based on hurricane mitigation features found on the home/condominium. To see if you might qualify, call your insurance agency or use the Wind Insurance Savings Calculator provided by the Florida state online at: www.floridadisaster.org/mitdb/index.cfm?fuseaction=Wizard.begin.

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