



Hurricane Protection for Windows and Doors

by Omar Fagundo

Like the grains of sand in an hourglass, pouring down till time runs out, our state is currently living on borrowed time. Many major cities in Florida are long overdue for an assault by a Category Three or higher storm, reported the *Miami Herald* recently on its front page. With headlines like that reminding us of those possibilities, condominium associations must take steps to fully protect their buildings against the powerful forces of hurricanes. A comprehensive assessment should be made to identify areas of vulnerability where wind or water penetration could damage the building. One specific area should be

looked at carefully: the protection system for all window and door openings.

Many condominium associations have opted to choose a single hurricane protection system to protect all of their windows and doors. Other communities have left the option up to their residents, leaving a number of units exposed to the elements of a hurricane. It is important for associations to realize that any unprotected opening, if breached during a hurricane, may cause extensive water damage to commonly owned parts of the building. When an opening is penetrated during a powerful hurricane, strong pressures are exerted on the building's interior, weakening walls and other supporting objects. After several hours of this, most buildings will not withstand the full force of a major storm.

Your community must take action in order to protect all of its vulnerable glass openings. In this

article, we will discuss the different hurricane protection options available for your condominium's residents. We will also review some of the factors you should take into consideration when deciding which product to use. Finally, we will emphasize the importance of having all vulnerable openings protected.

Some of the most aesthetically pleasing protection systems available are the Bahama and Colonial style shutters. They are mounted on either side of the openings with Colonials, or directly over the window with Bahamas. These type of shutters should be made with aluminum louvers and include non-corrosive parts. Careful attention should be placed on the feasibility of opening and closing this particular type of shutter. Units over the third level should seek other forms of protection as Colonials and Bahamas are mostly meant to be secured from the outside. There is a high price for beauty. Cost should be considered with the price starting at \$28 a square foot and running up as much as \$40 a square foot or more.

How do you protect a glass opening on the face of a high-rise building without climbing onto a scaffold? The answer is with one of the most convenient shutter systems available: the roll up shutter. Many high-rise condominiums with fixed non-impact windows will want to consider using roll up shutters. These shutters are perfect for the out-of-town owners because they can easily be closed through a switch, timer, or remote control. The extruded aluminum slats are highly effective at preventing wind and water penetration. During times of power outages, they can be opened or closed manually using a crank and handle system. Roll up shutters include a storage and motor box placed on top of the opening where the slats roll in to. Once professionally installed, residents will find this shutter system as a very convenient option for hurricane protection. The cost of roll up shutters will play a major factor with prices ranging from \$27 to \$50 a square foot. The high price is often worth it for the peace of mind offered by roll ups.

Looking for a strong hurricane protection system without breaking the bank? For many condominium owners, accordion style shutters seem to provide the perfect combination of protection and affordability.



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Accordion shutters are composed of aluminum slats that fold on either side of the opening using a track system. They are very easy to close and are secured using a lock and key. Accordion shutters are an excellent solution for protecting balconies along the coast. This shutter system is great for upper level single hung and sliding windows, as they can be easily closed from the inside without the use of a ladder. Accordions are left open most of the time, but should be maintained and lubricated at least once a year to ensure smooth operation. Pricing makes accordion shutters a popular option, starting at around \$18 a square foot and running as much as \$28 a square foot.

Several different factors should be considered when choosing a hurricane protection solution. Foremost on the list are budgetary constraints.

Shutter systems require large amounts of material, which can add up in costs fairly quickly. As with many other things in life, you get what you pay for. High quality roll up shutters don't come cheap, but the convenience may well be worth it. Condominiums must see this as an investment. A good guide to follow is that for every dollar spent on shutters, five dollars worth of property are protected.

Before signing any contract for hurricane shutters, make sure that the protection system is approved by the Florida Building Code or that it has a Miami Dade County Product Approval. Miami Dade County has the most stringent requirements for storm protection products, putting all systems through a vigorous small and large missile test. Your contractor should be able to provide you with several options according to price and feasibility. Do your homework. Request several bids if your community has decided to completely protect all of its openings. Please remember that any shutter is only as good as its installers. Having a professional hurricane shutters company is absolutely crucial in order to have sound protection. Peace of mind has a price, but in the heart of a storm, it's well worth every penny. Don't allow the hourglass to run out on your community. Get prepared with a protection plan today.

Omar Fagundo is president of All World Shutters in Hialeah. For more information, visit www.realpagesites.com/allworldshutters. ■

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