



How to Prepare Manufactured Homes for Storms



Most of the guidelines for preparing a manufactured home for a tropical storm are the same as for other houses. But here are some additional tips issued by the Manufactured Housing Institute of South Carolina, the association representing the companies that build and install the homes:

Know the age of your home. Know what wind level the home is designed to withstand.

Most of the wind damage viewers see on television involves older homes. Prior to 1976 the homes were built to a patchwork of state, local and voluntary codes. Some were well built; others were not.

Wind standards for manufactured homes were revamped in July 1994 following Hurricane Andrew. Federal law requires that a home built and installed after that date in the nine South Carolina counties nearest the coast must withstand winds of 100 mph. These counties include Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Georgetown, Horry, Jasper and Williamsburg. Homes placed inland must be able to withstand sustained wind gusts of 80 miles per hour.

Wind resistance levels are printed in the homeowner's manual as well as on the "data plate" located in each home. Data plates are typically found in the home's utility room, inside a kitchen cabinet, or similar location.

Verify that your home was installed properly.

The most common reason for wind damage in manufactured homes is improper installation, rather than the structure of the home itself. A manufactured home will perform properly in high winds only if it is properly installed.

Persons who use friends, relatives or other unlicensed installers are asking for trouble, according to the Columbia-based trade association. Determine if your home was installed by a contractor licensed by the SC Manufactured Housing Board (SCMHB.) These installers must undergo training, testing, and be licensed and bonded.

If the home wasn't installed by a company licensed by the SCMHB, the homeowner should have a licensed installer inspect the set-up of the home. To check the licensing status of an individual or company, call the Manufactured Housing Board at (803) 896-4682.

Do your own inspection.

Manufactured homes are anchored by a series of 10 to 20 large steel anchors, depending on the size of the home. The anchors are connected by metal anchor straps to the heavy steel frame that the house rests on.

Inspect each anchor strap beneath your home to be certain that there is no slack or play in the strap. Check also for rusted straps and have these replaced. Also, check for signs of movement in the anchors themselves. These inspections are particularly important the first six months after the home is installed (due to settling) and after a storm.

Anchor straps can be tightened with a socket, ratchet and adjustable wrench, but most consumers will want to leave the replacement of straps and resetting of anchors to a professional.

Finally, remember that of course even the best-prepared homeowners should evacuate their homes when local authorities recommend evacuation -- regardless of whether their house is site-built or factory-built. Ignoring warnings and evacuation notices puts homeowners at needless risk.

The Manufactured Housing Institute of SC (MHISC) was founded in 1967 to promote improved standards in the factory-built home industry.

MHISC represents the manufactured home industry on the SC Building Codes Council which promulgates building codes for the state

The association also holds a seat on the SC Department of Insurance Loss Mitigation Advisory Committee. The Committee was formed to develop strategies for reducing loss of life and reducing property losses due to hurricane, earthquake, and fire.

