



FEMA

New Building Codes Reducing the Risk Along Gulf Coast

Orange Beach, AL - Following Hurricane Ivan's landfall Sept. 15, 2004, Alabama homeowners with houses built to a higher-building standard were rewarded with significantly less damage. The higher-building standard, contained in the International Building Code (IBC), requires far better construction materials and sturdier framing for winds up to 140 mph.

Understanding the risk of hurricanes, Al Bradley decided to build his home in Orange Beach to minimize potential damages from hurricane winds and tidal surges. Though Bradley had received his building permits before Orange Beach adopted the new IBC in June 2004, he decided to incorporate the new code into his construction. As a result, he had virtually no damage. Wade Nofziger, of FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Team in Alabama, said, "Compared to all the damage around the home, its survival was quite a visual contrast to the devastation in the area - even the back deck steps survived."

The Town of Dauphin Island adopted the new IBC in March 2004. Most of the 91 homes constructed over the previous 18 months were built to IBC in anticipation of the new requirement. According to Jim Reaves, the Town's Building Official, these houses fared far better than older homes standing nearby. None of the newer homes was significantly damaged, even though some were built on the exposed south side of the island and were near homes that had been badly damaged. An initial estimate of Hurricane Ivan's destruction on Dauphin Island's older homes was 44 destroyed houses and 100 homes with damages which may result in demolition.

The City of Gulf Shores, recognizing the need to rebuild homes to be stronger and less vulnerable to high winds and tidal surges, adopted the IBC on Sept. 27, 2004. The adoption was unanimously approved by the Council members and the Mayor. Therefore, homes rebuilt during the recovery from Hurricane Ivan will be better able to withstand future hurricanes.



Multiple Counties,
Alabama



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Building Codes

Primary Funding:

Local Sources