

## **Builder uses new methods on 2 hurricane-resistant homes**

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### **PHOTOS**



Disaster-mitigating products and techniques were used in two showcase homes built recently by Melbourne builder Mercedes Homes.

These prototype homes in Rockledge were unveiled in June to serve as examples of what can be done to minimize the impact of hurricanes. The builder collaborated with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH), the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the University of Florida and the Florida Energy Extension Service.

For strength, both homes were built with structural concrete exterior walls, which provide protection from hurricane-strength winds. A one-story demonstration model was built using cast-in-place concrete walls.

The company's two-story design featured solid-grouted reinforced-concrete masonry walls on both floors. Typically, the exterior walls of two-story homes are concrete-block on the first floor and wood-frame on the second.

Like many homes along the coast, some Mercedes-built homes had water intrusion during last season's storms, says Stuart McDonald, corporate vice president of operations for the builder. But, he says, the company studied the problem to see how it could be averted in the future and used some of that research to build these prototype homes.

"We learned things and helped identify techniques that can help," he says.

To thwart water intrusion, the homes were built with outward-swinging entry doors, concrete coatings that prevent water absorption and design modifications that help keep water out of the eaves.

The University of Florida plans a case study on the houses, and PATH will be conducting a cost analysis on these new technologies.

McDonald says consumers can tour the homes. But don't expect to see cut-out sections of walls and floors as in many demonstration homes. The Rockledge homes were built to help the company in its future projects, and both hurricane-resistant homes eventually will be sold.

For details on the homes at the Huntington Lakes community, contact the sales office at [mercedeshomes.com](http://mercedeshomes.com) or 321-636-5076.

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For many resources from PATH visit, [www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org)