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EXTREME GARAGE DOORS = EXTREME WIND PROTECTION

Extreme weather happens. Increasingly, manufacturers are building garage doors to withstand extreme wind loads to better protect your home and everything inside you've worked so hard for.

High winds from hurricanes, tornados and severe storms can reduce homes to splinters. We've all seen jaw-dropping storm devastation played over and over on TV news and on the Internet. We've all known someone affected by killer storms. And we all hope beyond hope that it will never happen to our homes.

Researchers studying the wind effects of devastating storms note that garage doors are often the entry point for damage. The garage door is typically the largest opening on a house. If it's a flimsy door, it could blow in when exposed to pounding, heavy winds. And that can lead to a catastrophic chain of events.

"Garage doors are common weak points," wrote Dr. Charles A. Doswell III at the University of Oklahoma's Meteorological Studies department in a National Weather Service handbook. "Any high wind event seeks out the weakest link it can find in a structure. When the garage door gives way, the wind then pressurizes the garage. The roof then often comes off, and the failure of the garage can [spread] into the home itself. In such events, the house tends to 'unzip' from the initial failure point."

The point: A strong garage door is an integral part of maintaining the structural integrity of a home.

NEW STANDARD OF STRENGTH

The latest International Residential Code calls for garage doors to be tested to withstand 90 mph winds, and even higher in some parts of the country. Manufacturers have responded with heavily reinforced garage doors that often include extra horizontal struts, vertical posts, long-stem rollers, double hinges, extra track brackets, stronger track and stronger fasteners.

Strength comes in two flavors: active and passive reinforced garage doors.

Active reinforced doors require a little sweat equity from the homeowner when a storm is on the way. Posts are installed in the garage floor and in the header of the garage door to brace for extreme winds. When the storm calms down, the reinforcing posts come down until the next serious windstorm.

Passive systems are already in place and ready to go as soon as a storm hits. If homeowners are evacuated, for example, they simply lock the system and it's ready to go. If there's a sudden evacuation notice and you need to get out in a hurry, all you need to do is flip a latch.

While nothing can stand up to a direct hit in a monster storm, stronger garage doors mean homes are better equipped to stand up against powerful winds. The extra protection means a few extra dollars for a reinforced door, but for the extra investment, homeowners can sleep a whole lot better while your home rides out the storm.