

ACAI NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Hurricane Preparedness -- Is Your Business Ready?

Fort Lauderdale, FL (May 2008) -- "In South Florida, one doesn't slip quietly into hurricane season," states Adolfo Cotilla, president of ACAI Associates, an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties in Florida. "It's difficult to avoid the media's reminders of what awaits those who don't plan ahead, and that's a good thing. The bottom line is that you can ward off some of the danger if you are prepared."

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) scientists are predicting an 85% chance of an above-normal "hurricane season" (June 1 through November 30), with the likelihood of 13 to 16 named storms, with seven to nine becoming hurricanes, of which three to five could become major hurricanes (Category 3 strength or higher on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale). Standard preparedness suggestions run the gamut from getting your family together and agreeing on a plan; preparing your food supply; securing your home and property; making sure your insurance coverage is adequate; taking inventory of your property; preparing for needed special assistance; dealing with the family pets; knowing what to do when the storm hits ... and more.

But what about your business? Are there pre-windstorm activities that can be attended to that would bring peace of mind to business owners?

"Absolutely, there are elements of a building that can and should be inspected on an annual basis, and the months prior to the start of hurricane season are a good time to go through that checklist," says Cotilla, whose firm generates an in-depth Hurricane Needs Assessment Report that businesses can keep on file in the event that damage occurs that prompts a call to their insurance company.

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The logo for ACAI, featuring the word "acai" in a lowercase, red, sans-serif font.

The first step tied to ACAI's Hurricane Needs Assessment Report occurs when the firm's construction professionals carry out a detailed field inspection of a property. Their checklist includes (but is not limited to) a thorough review of items such as:

- Roof -- Includes analysis of type of roofing material; pitch/slope; age; location of building (east or west of I-95); number of stories; penetrations; condition of parapet cap; flashing and counter flashing; debris; antennas/dish/communications; stair towers; roof ladders.
- Generator -- Includes analysis of type and age of generator; type and supply of fuel; last testing; auto/manual switching; protection for generator (covers or enclosures).
- Structure --Includes analysis of age; number of stories; type of construction (block, stucco, curtain wall); doors, windows.
- Site -- Includes analysis of surrounding area for possible debris; observations related to adjacent buildings/sites.

The resulting Hurricane Needs Assessment Report provides business owners with a thorough, certified record of existing, pre-storm conditions (including a photo record), produced by qualified, licensed experts. "Our unbiased, detailed inspection not only generates useful documentation for insurance companies, it also provides building owners with a sensible working checklist of items that should be attended to in order to maximize the life and efficiency of a building," says Cotilla. "We have several clients who tap us for regular -- even monthly -- inspections of their facilities, and those reports become the basis for prudent follow up and preventive maintenance."

The cost for the windstorm-preparedness report varies depending on property size and number of buildings to inspect, but generally ranges from \$1,500 to \$3,500. Conscientious businesses are encouraged to check with their insurance companies to see if having the report on file might shave a few premium dollars off property insurance rates. ACAI stands behind its assessments, including, if called upon, being accessory and expert witnesses to the pre-windstorm condition of a property and building(s).

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Roofing consulting has been a mainstay for ACAI since the firm's founding in 1985. ACAI is a member of the Roofing Consultants Institute and the National Roofing Contractors Association, as well as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the United States Green Building Council, and, of course, the American Institute of Architects.

As licensed architects, ACAI's professionals understand all aspects of building construction, enabling the South Florida-based, project-tested team to analyze and design roofing and waterproofing systems as they relate to an entire building or structure. The ACAI Roofing Division has more than two million square feet of roofing design experience, with specific involvement in all types of membranes and systems (e.g., coal tar pitch, modified bitumen, built-up, single ply, standing-seam metal and liquid applied). ACAI's roofing projects -- from design to full replacement -- have run the gamut from major sports venues to governmental and healthcare facilities of all sizes (both public and private) to schools and office structures.

"In recent years, codes and standards have evolved in response to evaluations of roof performance during some noteworthy storms," says Cotilla. "We make it a priority to stay ahead of the curve on all aspects of the construction industry, and that certainly includes roofing. That experience combined with our overall knowledge of design has enabled us to provide some keen, value-added products to our valued clients such as this Hurricane Needs Assessment Report."

For more information concerning standard preparedness topics, consult your trusted local news stations' websites, as well as those of the National Hurricane Center (<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>).

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ACAI is an award-winning, full-service architecture firm with offices in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach Counties. Founded in 1985, ACAI's project-tested architects, engineers and construction professionals consistently deliver innovative, functional, sustainable and cost-effective design solutions. A minority-business enterprise, ACAI has built a longstanding reputation for excellence in the planning and design of universities, schools, local and state government buildings, healthcare facilities, industrial and commercial businesses, and private and public corporations. To learn more, contact Sandra Smerkers, LEED AP, ACAI's director of marketing, at 954-484-4000, ext. 38, or ssmerkers@acaiworld.com.