

Steel Vs. Hurricane Charley...And The Winner Is?



Today, thanks to innovative planning and product selection, the work of Echo and Builders Without Borders goes forward with little disruption from Charley's aftermath. This enables both groups to work in their own backyard and help out the recovery work from Hurricane Charley. Do you think they're recommending steel framing and Aerosmith Pins? You bet they are!

Steel framing used for the 25,000 sq. ft. dormitory (left) in North Ft. Myers, FL, was tested—and passed—while facing winds up to 145 mph. Other conventionally-framed structures did not fare as well (below).

By Robert J. Shluzas
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Be it the fight against world hunger or standing up to Mother Nature's Hurricane Charley, The Echo Group, headquartered in North Ft. Myers, FL, proves you need both innovation and training to come out a winner!

Echo's mission is to provide innovative ideas and agricultural training to missionaries and volunteers who travel the world implementing life-saving food programs for the needy. As part of their helping hand they teamed up with Builders Without Borders to include home construction in their package.

To provide people in need with both agricultural and home construction training is no simple task. They needed a house package that was easy to understand and communicate in different languages; went up fast; shipped easily; and most importantly....was durable! Innovative thinking leads them directly to steel!

Echo and Builders Without Borders went about 'training the trainers' by building their own four bedroom, four bath, 2,500 sq. ft. dormitory right there in North Ft. Myers. Little did they know that their "durability" requirement was about to be severely tested by the 120 mph winds from Hurricane Charley!

The structure was under construction when Charley hit the Punta Gorda and Ft. Myers area of Florida's western coast with winds as high as 145 mph. The building was "dried-in" over 7/16" OSB sheathing and roof deck attached to 20-gauge steel framing using pneumatically-driven hardened steel Versapin Gripshank pins from Aerosmith Fastening Systems. Each sheet was fastened 6" on the perimeter and 12" in the field. Steel framing and trusses were spaced 24" on center.

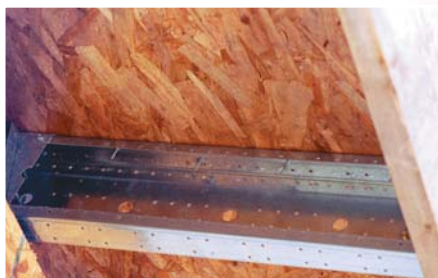
After almost four hours of ever increasing winds, Charley passed over the area leaving these



parts of Florida declared a Federal Disaster Area.

As John Gillmore from Builders Without Borders felt Charley's winds subside, he knew it was time to collect his damage report on the Echo Dorm. Gillmore recounted, "I drove up to the building site fully expecting the worst. I thought the decking and sheathing would have been the cause of more damage to the surrounding neighborhood. Instead I was amazed to see that not only were all panels firmly in place, but that they passed re-inspection as well! The neighborhood damage seemed to be confined to the concrete block homes, truly amazing and a testament to steel!"

OSB sheathing attached to 20-gauge steel framing, using pneumatically-driven VersaPin Gripshank hardened steel pins from Aerosmith Fastening Systems, remained intact.



If you wish to help Echo and their work on world hunger, please contact them at ECHO, 17391 Durrance Rd., N. Ft. Myers, FL 33917; phone: (239) 543-3246. More information is available on their website echonet.org.

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