

## **Let It Blow, Let It Blow, Let It Blow** *Hurricane-proof designs keep the roof over your head.*

By Karen J. Bannan

The news channels played the haunting images over and over: gorgeous homes being ripped to pieces as their roofs flew off. Americans were voyeurs of the devastation and damage brought forth by the 2005 hurricane season, which started with Arlene and ended with Epsilon—26 in all.

It is no wonder then that a growing number of home building manufacturers are launching or highlighting products designed to keep a home's contents safely inside when dangerous winds are howling outside.

Dr. Bill Applegate, a Shell Point, Fla., resident, is taking advantage of one such technology. Applegate recently moved into a **Topsider Home**, a prefabricated post-and-beam house designed to withstand hurricane-force winds, heavy snow loads and earthquakes. The 2,300-square-foot unit was completed in July 2005, three days before Hurricane Dennis hit. The home, which can be built out up to 12,000 square feet, withstood the storm because of its octagonal shape, special glass fittings and concrete pedestal.

"The wind got up to around 90 miles per hour and the tides were up pretty high, but we were fine," says Applegate. "Some homes not terribly far away simply disappeared."

While building a new home is an attractive idea, manufacturers know some people prefer to retrofit their existing house with weather-resistant materials... While using the best building products is important, for instance, they are just part of the equation. "You could have the best [roof] shingles in the world, but if you just put one nail in each shingle, the shingles are going to fly off," explains Paul Fissette, professor and director of the Building Materials and Wood Technology program at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. "You have to meet code. You have to pay attention to a product's claims."

Applegate agrees. "I thought my home was attractive, but it came down to everything being hurricane resistant and the construction method being solid," he says. "You have to plan for every eventuality."