

Preparing for a Hurricane

Plywood Installation by Bob Miller

Last summer I finally went to the trouble of installing plywood protection for hurricanes. For years I just “didn’t get around to it”. The year before we had hurricanes pass within 40 miles on all sides of St Pete. I decided it was time to stop dodging the bullet and do some things to prepare. Never having done anything like this before, I learned a few things the hard way. I’m writing this article to pass along some of those lessons.

I’m only going to discuss masonry and stucco structures. Actually this will be limited to the type of structures pictured but a lot of homes in our neighborhood are built like this.

Former JTCA President, **Tom Killian**, asked me for advice on this so the pictures are of Tom doing the work. The first step is to decide how much plywood you will need. Here Tom is measuring one of his windows. The plywood will sit on the window sill. You should plan to have the plywood extend 4-5” on both sides and on top. You will also need some tools. A

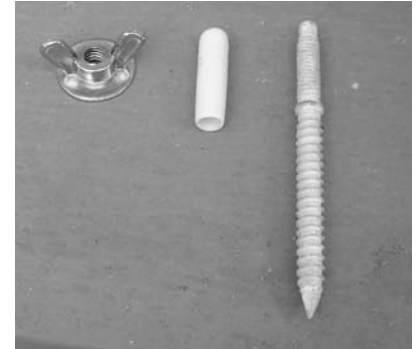


Here Tom measures the width (above) and Height (below). Plywood comes in 4’ by 8’ sheets so plan accordingly.



large square, a hammer drill, a circular drill, saw horses or something to lay the plywood on for cutting and drilling, measuring tape, and a 1/4” ratchet. The plywood is pretty heavy so having a friend to help with the lifting is a good idea. The fasteners I used can be purchased at one of the local supply

These fasteners come in a package of 40. The threaded studs, Wing nuts, and protective covers.



stores like Home Depot or Lowes.

The next step is to use a circular saw to cut the plywood to the proper size. Again the plywood should extend 4-5 inches to either side and top. Saw horses make this much easier. You will probably find that you only have three or four different size windows on you house so you can use the first one of a size as a template.

Next you need to decide where you want to put the fasteners. I was told by one of the assistants at the store that drilling the block is preferred to drilling the mortar joint on a concrete block wall. Of course with Stucco you don’t know where the mortar joint is so place the studs as recommend on the kit instructions.

After you have the plywood sized the next step is to use a 1/2” bit to drill the wood in the locations where you want the fasteners. A regular drill is fine for this. **This must be done**



before drilling the hole in the masonry.

Next put the plywood on the location where you want to attach it. A 2 x 4 can be used to hold it while you drill the masonry. For this step you will need a hammer drill with a



masonry bit.

DO NOT use the hammer drill and masonry bit to drill the plywood and masonry wall at the same time. If you try this you will melt the masonry bit! The damp plywood will not allow the masonry bit to cool. The wood must be drilled first with the larger 1/2" bit.

Below Tom is using a hammer drill to drill the holes for the studs. With a good bit the hammer drill makes short work of this



task. If you try to use a regular drill you will be at it a long time.

Next Tom screws in the stud (upper right). Here he uses a ratchet wrench with an adapter that comes with the fastener kit.

After the studs are installed, the wing nuts are put on. To remove the plywood just remove the wing nut and install the protective cover on the studs.

A coat of paint is recommended to protect the plywood.



Tom uses a 1/4" ratchet and an adapter that comes with the fastener kit to install the studs into the masonry. Below is the plywood with the wing nut install and ready for the wind.



Small rubber covers are included in the fastener kits to protect the studs when not in use.

