FLORIDA BUILDING COMMISSION

FLORIDA PANHANDLE WINDBORNE DEBRIS REGION WORKSHOP II

REPORT TO THE FLORIDA BUILDING COMMISSION

February 16, 2006

Okaloosa County Regional Airport, Florida

Meeting Design & Facilitation By

Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium

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OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

Panhandle Hurricane Ivan Study (SB 442 Section 39). The 2005 Florida Legislature debated whether to revise the definition of the windborne debris region along the panhandle coast from Franklin County to the Alabama border and determined further study was warranted. It directed the Florida Building Commission to review the effects of Hurricane Ivan on damage caused by windborne debris and other data, and in conjunction with building officials from the impacted areas, to develop a recommendation for consideration by the 2006 Legislature.

On September 13, 2005 the Commission conducted the first workshop which was held at the Okaloosa County Airport, for the purpose of soliciting input from local building officials and other stakeholders in the Panhandle region of the State. At the conclusion of the workshop, there was consensus for the strategy of conducting a study on the treed environment effects and historical wind data effects, in order to provide additional data for consideration in developing recommendations to the Legislature.

It should be noted that although the building officials from the Florida Panhandle expressed support for the study, all but one agreed that changes were not warranted at this time to the definition of the windborne debris region of the Florida Panhandle region. The local building officials’ comments ranged from most damage was related to surge and not windborne debris, to the Panhandle is a unique environment that ASCE 7 does not adequately reflect, to extra windborne debris protection should be voluntary and not mandatory, to mandatory protection will increase the cost of already unaffordable housing in the region.

Subsequent to the Panhandle workshop, at the October 2005 meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to request budgetary authority to contract with a consultant to conduct an engineering based risk assessment of hurricane windborne debris protection options for the Panhandle in order to analyze the risks, costs, and benefits of windborne debris protection for the region. The research will focus on factors unique to the Panhandle region including treed areas inland of the coast, and consider historical wind data effects. The requested funding authorization was approved, and the consultant scheduled to update the Commission at their February 2006 meeting.
At the February 2006 Commission meeting, the consultant reported that the goal of the study is to perform wind tunnel tests for houses located in treed environments characteristic of the Florida Panhandle, and to develop computer models for analysis of wind borne debris protection effects for representative Panhandle houses. The consultant is currently updating the wind-borne debris model in preparation for the wind tunnel tests designed to perform hurricane simulations of the representative houses located at various positions in the Panhandle, designed to evaluate building damage and loss with and without windborne debris protection. To date, wind tunnel tests have been conducted, hurricane data has been analyzed, and computer models modified.

At the conclusion of the Panhandle Study update, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Legislature remove the Panhandle Windborne Debris Region definition from law, thereby authorizing the Commission to adopt a new definition within the Code by rule.

It should be noted that the Commission’s decision to proceed with this strategy, is consistent with State policy of recognizing that Florida is a diverse State geographically and climatically, and risks are not uniform throughout the State. On this basis, the Florida Building Code and National Engineering Standards consider requirements specific to different regions of the State, when and where appropriate, such as, the High Velocity Hurricane Zone (HVHZ) provisions of the Code specific to Miami-Dade and Broward counties in Southeast Florida, and variations of design wind speeds relative to proximity to Florida’s coasts. In addition, the Commission has always advised that Code should be developed by the Commission in a consensus process and not written into law.

The Commission is committed to working with stakeholders to develop consensus on a new definition to be developed and adopted by rule into the Code. To this end, the Commission conducted a second Panhandle region workshop for February 16, 2006, and will continue to work with stakeholders in a consensus based process once the Study is complete.

The second Panhandle Workshop was conducted in order to provide Panhandle region stakeholders with an update on the Panhandle Study, as well as the Commission’s recommendations to the 2006 Legislature.
REPORT OF THE FEBRUARY 16, 2006 WORKSHOP

Opening
Rick Dixon, Florida Building Commission Executive Director, opened the workshop and explained the scope of the workshop.

Project Webpage
Information on the project, including agenda packets, workshop reports, and related documents may be found at the project webpage: http://consensus.fsu.edu/FBC/wd.html

Agenda Review
Rick Dixon reviewed the agenda with workshop participants. The agenda included the following objectives:

- To Review the Charge to the Commission by Senate Bill 442
- To Hear Commission’s Recommendation to the Florida Legislature
- To Receive a Report and Update on the Panhandle Windborne Debris Study Results
- To Hear Building Officials’ Views and Recommendations
- To Discuss Report’s Findings and Commission’s Recommendation
- To Consider General Public Comment
- To Review Next Steps

Review of the Legislature’s Charge to the Commission
Workshop participants were reminded of the Legislature’s charge to the Florida Building Commission regarding conducting a review of the definition of the windborne debris region along the panhandle coast from Franklin County to the Alabama border. The Legislature directed the Florida Building Commission to review the effects of Hurricane Ivan on damage caused by windborne debris and in conjunction with building officials from the impacted areas, to develop a recommendation for consideration by the 2006 Legislature.

Report on Commission’s Recommendation to the Florida Legislature
At the first Panhandle Windborne Debris Region Workshop conducted on September 13, 2005, local building officials were invited to present their observations and opinions regarding windborne debris effects in the Panhandle region during Hurricanes Ivan and Dennis, as well as past hurricanes affecting the region. Members of the North West Florida Chapter and Panhandle Chapter of BOAF offered their observations and recommendations.

Nine Building Officials from the Panhandle Region offered their opinions, and with one exception, agreed that changes were not warranted at this time to the definition of the windborne debris region of the Florida Panhandle region. The one exception expressed support for converting to the existing ASCE 7 definition. The other eight building officials’ comments ranged from most damage was related to surge and not windborne debris, to the Panhandle is a
unique environment that ASCE 7 does not adequately reflect, to extra windborne debris protection should be voluntary and not mandatory, to mandatory protection will increase the cost of already unaffordable housing in the region.

In addition, during the discussion and evaluation of options portion of the workshop, local building officials expressed support for conducting studies specific to the region that would evaluate the affects of the treed environment, other unique features of the region, and consider recent wind data and research related to windspeed revisions, prior to considering changes to the existing windborne debris region definition.

the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the Legislature remove the Panhandle Windborne Debris Region definition from law, thereby authorizing the Commission to adopt a new definition within the Code by rule.

As a result of Building Officials’ and stakeholders’ views expressed at the September 2005 Panhandle Workshop, the Florida Building Commission contracted with a consultant to conduct an engineering based risk assessment of hurricane windborne debris protection options for the Panhandle in order to analyze the risks, costs, and benefits of windborne debris protection for the region. The research is focusing on factors unique to the Panhandle region including treed areas inland of the coast, and consider historical wind data effects.

Based on the status of the Study and consistent with the Commission’s commitment to work with stakeholders to build consensus on policy decision, the Commission voted unanimously at their February 2006 meeting to recommend that the Legislature remove the Panhandle Windborne Debris Region definition from law, thereby authorizing the Commission to adopt a new definition within the Code by rule. In addition, the Commission has always advised that Code issues should be developed by the Commission in a consensus process and adopted into the Code, and not written into law.

Report/Update on the Panhandle Windborne Debris Study Results
Dr. Kurt Gurley from the University of Florida provided Workshop participants with an update on the Study’s status and answered participants’ questions.

Dr. Gurley reported that the goal of the study is to perform wind tunnel tests for houses located in treed environments characteristic of the Florida Panhandle, and to develop computer models for analysis of wind borne debris protection effects for representative Panhandle houses. The consultant is currently updating the wind-borne debris model in preparation for the wind tunnel tests designed to perform hurricane simulations of the representative houses located at various positions in the Panhandle, designed to evaluate building damage and loss with and without windborne debris protection. To date, wind tunnel tests have been conducted, hurricane data has been analyzed, and computer models modified.
Building Officials Views and Recommendations
Local building officials were offered an opportunity to comment. In general, participants asked questions during the Panhandle Windborne Debris Study presentation, but did not offer comments preferring to discuss the issue once the Study is complete.

Discussion of Report Findings and Commission’s Recommendation and Public Comment
In general, participants asked questions during the Panhandle Windborne Debris Study presentation, but did not offer comments preferring to discuss the issue once the Study is complete.

Next Steps and Process Review
Rick Dixon informed participants that when the Study was complete, an additional Workshop would be conducted in the Panhandle region prior to the Commission adopting a new definition into the Code.

At the March 2006 Commission meeting, Dr. Larry Twisdale and Dr. Kurt Gurley will provide the Commission with preliminary results from the Panhandle Windborne Debris Region study and the final results should be delivered to the Commission at the May meeting. At the May or June meeting, the Commission will have the Legislature’s decision regarding removing the definition from law and final results from the Study. The Commission will then implement changes to the definition during the 2007 Code Update process. This schedule will ensure multiple opportunities for stakeholder input into the process.