

# State Inspectors Tell Different Story About Hurricanes' Destruction

By FRANK WILLIAMS

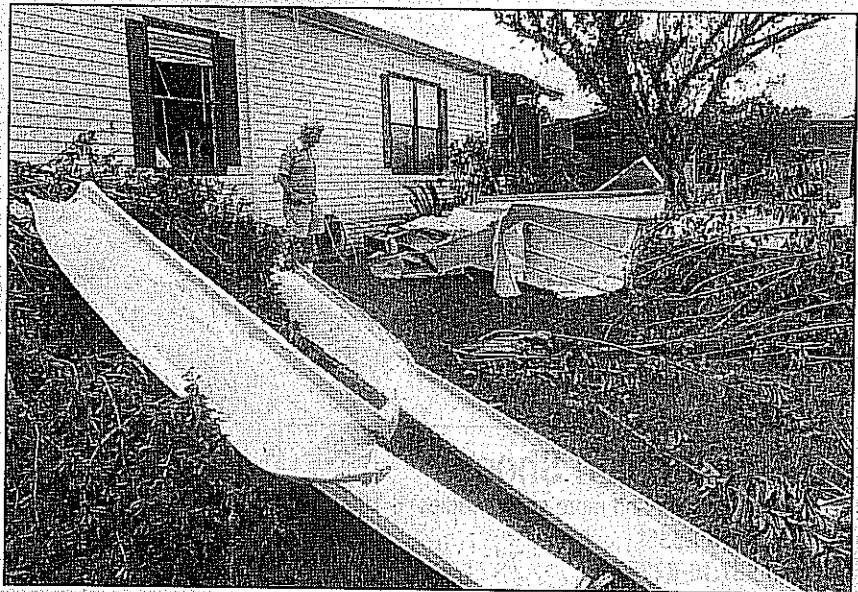
In the story "Many In Area Ignored Hurricane Evacuation" (Metro, April 3), the writer engaged in some biased, inflated rhetoric that unfairly painted all mobile homes with the same broad brush.

Speaking of Hurricane Charley's impact on the Punta Gorda area, he wrote that "Charley missed Tampa Bay, striking Punta Gorda as a Category IV hurricane with 145 mph winds [and] turned mobile homes there into kindling with only pipes and toilets left standing in the rubble."

Indeed, a statewide study of all four hurricanes by the Florida Bureau of Mobile Home Construction did show much damage among older units.

But the state agency says those constructed to standards imposed by HUD in 1994 — after Hurricane Andrew — and installed to the stringent tie-down and anchor systems mandated in 1999 "performed without exception admirably."

The bureau inspected more than 30,000 manufactured homes in the path of all four hurricanes and found that none of the manufactured homes built after July 13, 1994 (the date the tough new requirements became effective), sustained any major damage.



Tribune file photo (2004)

**A survey of 30,000 manufactured homes in the path of Florida's 2004 hurricanes found that the storms destroyed older homes but spared newer ones built to current standards.**

For example, at Charley's ground zero at Punta Gorda, more than 200 manufactured homes built and installed since 1999 received only cosmetic damage. None of the homes sustained major damage or became dislodged from their foundations.

The Tribune article served a good purpose — telling how too few residents take evacuation orders seriously when hurricanes approach.

Unfortunately, the writer painted all mobile/manufactured homes with a broad brush.

We hope that over time this biased approach will change and the media will acknowledge the facts about today's manufactured homes.

*Frank Williams is executive director of the Florida Manufactured Housing Association.*