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Wind-Resistant Features in Building Codes Could Reduce Residential Hurricane Damage by as much as 87% in Alabama
New Study Shows \$4.8 Billion Could Be Saved by Requiring Wind Protection in Coastal Areas

ST. LOUIS – Oct. 18, 2007 – What will happen to Alabama the next time a hurricane strikes? A new Louisiana State University (LSU) Hurricane Center study analyzes that question. In findings released today, the study shows that incorporating just three wind-resistant features into residential buildings in Alabama could reduce hurricane damage and economic losses by as much as 87 percent.

Sponsored by Solutia Inc. and conducted by LSU Hurricane Center Director Dr. Marc Levitan, the study used FEMA's HAZUS-MH Hurricane Wind Model to analyze losses from a Category 3 hurricane simulated to strike Alabama's coast. The model was run two ways: once using residential building inventory from the 2000 census, and once assuming buildings were built to the 2003 International Residential Code (IRC) building standards.

The difference was staggering:

	Assuming current building stock	Assuming tougher building codes and construction practices	Percent difference
Buildings Damaged	184,000 (11% of total building stock)	131,000	-28%
Buildings Severely Damaged or Destroyed	33,000	4,300	-87%
Economic Losses	\$6.7 billion	\$1.9 billion	-72%

The study assumed three basic changes to Alabama codes and construction practices, which would bring houses into compliance with the IRC for wind resistance:

- Required use of shutters or impact resistant windows to reduce structural and building damages
- Required use of fasteners to keep roof attached to buildings
- Required installation of metal hurricane clips or straps to prevent catastrophic roof uplift failures

“The study clearly shows that thousands of Alabama homes are at risk of being severely damaged due to a lack of a statewide mandatory minimum building code requiring strong wind protection,” says Nanette Lockwood, director of legislative affairs for Solutia.

“The study showed that the incorporation of just three wind resistant features could reduce the number of homes destroyed or severely damaged by as much as 87 percent. This could lower economic losses, such as damage to buildings and contents, by more than 70 percent.”

Dr. Levitan’s team also examined the financial implications of enacting a statewide code. According to the study, the majority of Alabama residents would experience little or no building cost increase. Those closest to the coast – those below the 120 mph contour line on wind-speed maps – may experience building cost increases of 1.9 to 4.5 percent. However, this region includes only limited portions of Baldwin and Mobile Counties.

“The idea behind a statewide building code is that it protects people and property throughout the state,” says Lockwood. “This study has shown that not only would a statewide building code likely save thousands of homes, it would also likely save homeowners, insurance companies and, ultimately, taxpayers billions of dollars in hurricane-related damage costs. And it would do so with minimal building cost increases for the majority of the state’s population.”

For additional information or to learn how you can help Alabama move toward a safer building standard, contact Nanette Lockwood at njlock@solutia.com.

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Forward Looking Statements

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