

Roofers: Charley not a 'pot of gold'

BY SHARON CONNERS / RSI Contributing Editor

One Florida roofing contractor explained the situation simply: "For roofing contractors looking for a 'pot of gold' at the end of a rainbow, Charley is not it. There are problems that anyone who comes into the area is going to have to face. The best thing to do is team up with a roofer who needs help. Don't think that you are going to get rich overnight. Nobody is going to win in this."

On Friday, August 13, Hurricane Charley made landfall in Punta Gorda, FL, on Florida's Gulf Coast. By the time the storm was over, it managed to cause an estimated \$11 billion in damage. Hurricane Andrew, which hit the Miami area in 1992, caused \$30 billion in damage and was later upgraded to a Category 5 storm.

Kenneth Kelly, president of Kelly Roofing in Naples, said in the areas referred to as "Ground Zero," there are no structures left standing to put roofs on.

The day after the storm hit, Kelly Roofing took to the streets with almost all of its crews—about 35 workers—and with all the materials it had in the shop. Crews drove up and down the streets of some of the hardest hit areas in Naples, giving away the materials and the labor to at least get homeowners in the dry. Kelly said it cost the company about \$8,000 in materials and labor. In response, the company received overwhelming support and gratitude from the populace.

In the first week after the storm, the company had accepted work for 400 out of 1,000 calls for roof estimates. It turned some away that were too far north of its service area. So far, there are only shortages on felt paper and nails, according to Kelly.

Compared to Andrew, Kelly said emergency workers were much better organized. The next day there were hundreds of trucks from power companies going up and down the interstate. "The Salvation Army and the Red Cross, were here and very well organized setting up relief centers and shelters. If anything good came out of

Andrew it was definitely how to deal with a (hurricane)."

George Manson, co-owner of Manson Roofing in Bradenton, said, "The papers reported 1,200 cases of price gouging. I bet there were 12,000 acts of kindness and giving. Mostly we have blown off shingles, and in some cases, sheathing lifted off. The houses that had windows and doors protected suffered the least amount of damage—there was no entrance point."

Steve Munnell, executive director of the

Florida Roofing, Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors Association (FRSA) said that the association office located in Winter Park was using a generator to provide power.

In the aftermath of Charley, the association has been active in sending out press releases to the media to educate the public on hiring legitimate licensed contractors. They are also distributing brochures in Spanish and English to building departments.



The most severe damage from Hurricane Charley was on buildings that did not have windows and doors protected. (Photos courtesy of Kenneth Kelly, president of Kelly Roofing, Naples, FL.)

Munnell said, "This hurricane came ashore in Punta Gorda near Ft. Myers and came all the way up through the middle of the state. It went through some major metropolitan areas that stretched about 180 miles. The area was much broader than Andrew.

"In the impact area of Punta Gorda, the damage is just as dramatic as Hurricane Andrew," according to Munnell.

Obviously, some contractors are reportedly having to turn work down. If you are interested in contacting Florida contractors to help them re-roof, obtain listings of contractor members in the state by logging on to: www.floridarooft.com. ■