

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **IHPA Forms Consumer Safety Task Force for Hurricane Protection Products**

December 1, 2008 — Bill Feeley, President of the International Hurricane Protection Association (IHPA), announced today the formation of the Consumer Safety Task Force for Hurricane Protection Products, intended to collect and convey information to the Florida Attorney General's office to protect consumers who have been, and are being subjected to deceptive or misleading trade practices by unscrupulous hurricane profiteers. "The IHPA has been made aware of a continued increase in advertising and marketing misleading consumers into buying products that do not meet the Florida Building Code (FBC) requirements for hurricane protection." Feeley said. "The difference in choosing approved or non-approved Hurricane protection systems can dramatically affect the survival of a home and its contents and in some cases can be a life or death decision. This type of deceptive trade practice needs to stop and the companies profiting from this should be held accountable." Feeley continued, "Florida is an attractive target for deceptive schemes due to our high exposure to hurricanes, large retired population, and constant influx of new residents. This creates an opportunity for deceptive and misleading profiteers playing on the worries and fears of consumers who may have never experienced, or understand, the potential for damage to homes or property associated with strong wind storms."

Holding up a newspaper advertisement from a Sarasota company advertising "Hurricane Window Film", Feeley said, "This is incredibly dangerous. A consumer sees this in their newspaper and believes that it must be legitimate. Unfortunately, consumers are purchasing these products in good faith thinking they are protecting their homes and families." It is estimated the deceptive practice of selling window film as hurricane protection to consumers in the state of Florida alone, runs in the tens of millions of dollars. Feeley cited a statement from the International Window Film Association (IWFA) website, a worldwide window film industry trade association addressing this type of advertising; "*Statements such as "hurricane proof" or "meets Dade County standards" are, at best, misleading to the public or, at worst, fraudulent.*"

Feeley was quick to point out, "'Hurricane Window Film" advertising schemes, though widespread, are not the only unapproved hurricane protection products being advertised this way."

The IHPA lists several simple guidelines that consumers can follow to better protect themselves before entering into a contract:

- Does the product have an approval number issued by the Florida Building Commission or the Miami-Dade Building Code Compliance Office?
- Is the Contractor licensed and able to pull a permit for the installation of the product? Currently, most jurisdictions require a building permit be issued for the installation of impact resistant coverings or impact resistant glazing (glass). After March 1, 2009, building permits and inspections will be required for the installation of required impact resistant coverings.
- Does your insurance carrier accept the product as hurricane protection? According to the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (Form OIR B1-1802) and Citizens Insurance Company (Form WBDR 1802-01-09); after-market installed window films are rated the same as having no protection at all (None). Systems that do not meet the FBC or Miami-Dade Approvals are also rated as "None".

"Unfortunately, many consumers are not aware they have been deceived until they contact their insurance company for a discount or, have a qualified inspection and receive the form that is required to apply for windstorm credits or meet new renewal requirements from Citizens."

Any consumers who believe they have been misled by a company or have purchased window film as hurricane protection on their home should contact the Attorney General of Florida's Fraud Hotline at 1-866-966-7226. Out of state call 1-850-414-3990. Consumers may also file complaints on the Attorney General of Florida's website at <http://www.myfloridalegal.com>. Consumers who think they are being unfairly denied discounts for hurricane protection products or have more questions about windstorm discounts should contact the Florida Department of Financial Services at 1-877-693-5236.

#### About the International Protection Association

The IHPA is a non-profit organization with a membership of over 200 manufacturers, suppliers, contractors and government agencies providing quality hurricane protection systems, information, and education to insure the public's welfare and safety, therefore minimizing the loss of life and the destruction of property associated with hurricanes.

For more information, go to their website at [www.inthpa.com](http://www.inthpa.com) .