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Lock down: Local contractors prepare for Hurricane Irma's worst-case scenario

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Hurricane Irma now wobbling westward stands poised to knock on the Caribbean's front door — and a turn to the northwest could pose a threat to construction projects in Central Florida if the Category 5 storm makes landfall.

Maitland-based **Winter Park Construction** isn't taking any chances on 180 mph winds with \$150 million worth of projects, its president told *Orlando Business Journal*.

See the photo gallery for a look back at local damage caused by Hurricane Matthew last fall.

"Because of the potential severity of this particular storm and the uncertainty of landfall, we have implemented a hurricane preparedness plan on every project in Florida," **Jeff Forrest** said. "The most important part of this plan is reducing or eliminating any materials that could become airborne in severe winds."

Winter Park Construction has specific staff assigned to check on all employees post-storm and visit each project once the roads are safe to see if any particular damage needs fixing, Forrest told *OBJ*.

Todd Andrew, president at **Andrew General Contractors** echoed concerns about winds: "We are securing all loose debris on job sites. We're going to make sure we don't create any unnecessary wind-borne debris. We're making sure the job site is safe for surrounding neighbors and workers."

One project is of particular concern, the 12,000-square-foot **Orlando Union Rescue Mission** underway on the southwest corner of West Colonial Drive and

North John Young Parkway. "A hurricane could create flooding, it could wash out graded soil and it could undermine foundation," Andrew said.

Keator Construction is putting the finishing touches on the \$20 million Westside Shoppes near Windermere, which is scheduled to be completed this month.

"We brief our superintendents as to the procedures we follow," George Aragon, vice president at Keator Construction, told *OBJ*. "All subcontractors must empty all trash from dumpsters, remove all loose materials from job site, roofs, etc."

Any items that may become a projectile must be secured or removed, Aragon said.

Central Florida has seen its share of hurricanes and severe storms over the past 72 years, said Allen Finfrock, CEO of Apopka-based Finfrock. "We have developed a checklist for ensuring that our manufacturing plant and job sites are secure during severe weather. Our main concerns are wind and/or flood damage, or extended loss of power. We are putting in place action plans now at our job sites and in our plant to withstand heavy winds and are taking other precautionary measures. We currently have projects in Tampa, Orlando and Gainesville in varying stages of completion, and we will ensure that each of these sites will be prepared for the storm."