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Cape Coral company's window film does not protect against storms

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I'm always a little skeptical when someone calls complaining about one of their competitor's ads being misleading.

What John Lampila, a sales representative for Advance Hurricane Technologies, is complaining about, however, is not only about losing business but competitor's claims that are endangering people's lives.

The owner of Abat Protective Coatings, a window film company based in Cape Coral, advertises that his product's hurricane protection is comparable to shutters, Lampila said.

"They're misleading people," Lampila said. "I've seen an 80-year-old couple thinking they have hurricane protection because (film) is on their windows."

I called Richard "Poppa" Woolsey, president of Abat, to ask about his claim of shutterless hurricane window protection.

"It's not 100 percent (protection), but it does meet Florida Building Codes, and Citizens (Property Insurance Corporation) accepts it as hurricane protection," Woolsey told me.

Even shutters can fail, Woolsey said, which is why he got out of the shutter business and into window film.

Woolsey sent me the manufacturer's statement on the window film including test results showing the film met the Florida Building Code, high velocity wind zone standards.

The interesting thing about the documents I received, however, was that it showed commercial buildings, not houses.

And that's the difference, said Darius Grimes of Disaster-Smart Consulting Inc. in Pensacola.

"Some of the window films are approved for use if used on commercial buildings above 30 feet," said Grimes, who is also the vice-president of the International Hurricane Protection Association.

Often the test results window film salesmen "wave around" are tests done on commercial windows that have thick glass, not a typical residential window, Grimes said.

"It's misleading and false advertisement," Grimes said. "You have guys with this window film stuff saying you don't need shutters; you can put this up. In my mind it's just a little better than masking tape."

Even the International Window Film Association put out a statement saying window film products, "offer an extremely high level of protection from glass fragments once glass is broken. ... However, statements such as 'hurricane proof' ... are, at best, misleading to the public or, at worst, fraudulent, unless the seller of the product has actual test data from the manufacturer of the product showing that it has, in fact, achieved the stated level of performance on the same type of glass in the same environment in which it is being offered for sale."

And as for the discounts on your insurance because of hurricane protection?

I'm not sure how Woolsey's customers qualify, as he claims.

The Office of Insurance Regulation form used to inspect homes for hurricane protection classifies this type of window film protection as "none."

That's the same form that Citizens Insurance uses and spokesman John Kuczanski confirmed: "There is no (hurricane insurance) discount given for window film."

I think these films are good for protecting your furniture from fading and helping to save on energy.

But when it comes to hurricane protection, the only thing I'd count on window film for is to stop the glass flying all over you when the debris hits and the window breaks.
