

# ***REAL ESTATE WEEKLY***

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## **Crazy Billy takes on Hurricane Irene....and wins**



**By Liana Grey**

When Hurricane Irene swept through the New York area last Sunday morning, it didn't shatter windows or flood the streets of lower Manhattan as feared.

But there's a good chance that the wind, which gusted up to 65 miles per hour, would have damaged Crazy Billy's, a liquor shop and warehouse in Deer Park, Long Island, had owner Bill Peterson not been prepared. "I was here for

Hurricane Gloria," Peterson recalled. "We nearly lost the roof then."

Rather than replace the roof a second time when it collapsed during last December's blizzard, Peterson built a sturdier and more energy-efficient warehouse from the ground up.

He purchased structural insulated panels, or SIPs, a storm-resistant material that also reduces heating and cooling costs by up to 35%, from OceanSafe, a Long Island-based manufacturer.

In New Orleans, Mississippi, and even northern Iraq, the company has ensured that dozens of homes and commercial buildings are prepared for natural disasters.

Following the deadly tornado that struck Joplin, Missouri in May, the company helped build an office complex elsewhere in the state that can withstand gusts of wind up to 230 miles per hour. "During a mandatory hurricane evacuation, you can stay there," said Robert Fusco, the company's vice president.

In fact, when the Joplin twister struck, 20 people ran into a supermarket and took shelter in a walk-in cooler made of SIPs. As surrounding buildings were flattened by 200-mile-per-hour winds, leaving over 100 people dead and dozens injured, the structure stood intact. "No one got hurt," said Fusco.

At the end of July, construction began at Crazy Billy's. Three contractors knelt on the roof of the 1,600 s/f warehouse, clipping together SIPs. Each panel weighed 500 pounds and was painted white to reflect sunlight. Another worker stood on a ladder on the side of the building, securing a wall of sage green panels.

The material, which can be coated with anything from aluminum siding to stucco to wood, cost Peterson a total of \$40,000. Labor didn't add much to the price tag. "It only takes four men to install the 40-foot panels," Fusco said. "It takes a third of the time as normal construction."

The team would have been finished four or five days after ground was broken, had a TV crew not been scheduled to track their progress. "We told them to slow down," said Fusco.

By the time the reporter and cameraman arrived, two remaining panels were being prepared for installation behind the warehouse, near a small black dumpster filled with scraps. Because the panels are manufactured elsewhere, arriving on site in blue shrink-wrap, the lot was tidier than the average construction zone.

In the distance, clouds threatened rain — a reminder that tropical storm season was on its way. While it was the promise of weather-resistant construction that led Peterson to consider purchasing SIPs in the first place, it was the environmental benefits that sealed the deal.

Dozens of pounds of polystyrene might have wound up tossed at sea, he said, had it not been used to insulate the panels. According to Fusco, 30% of the coating is made of recycled steel. And because Peterson must store 12,000 bottles of wine at 65 degrees year round, the idea of reduced energy costs was appealing.

Thanks to their efficient insulation, SIPs are growing in demand elsewhere in the New York area.

Hollister Construction, a company based in Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey, recently broke ground on the Newark Farmer's Market, a 160,000 s/f distribution center in the city's Ironbound District, which will be built entirely with SIPs.

Like Crazy Billy's, the warehouse, which will provide fresh produce to ShopRite outlets across the northeast, is being fitted with a reflective white roof to keep cooling costs down. Elsewhere in Newark, the company is building a charter high school, Newark Collegiate Academy, out of insulated steel panels.

"It has a long life," CEO Chris Johnson said of panel construction, adding that SIP buildings are virtually maintenance free.

The panels are one of a handful of green technologies Hollister works with, including solar panels and hydrogen-powered fork lifts.

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Soon, OceanSafe will begin work on a hotel in Williamsburg, Brooklyn that will use an abandoned factory as its base. And next month, a barn at Whispering Vineyards, a winery in St. James, Long Island, will be dismantled and rebuilt using OceanSafe's panels.

The vineyard's owner requested that the exterior be coated with the original wood of the barn, to lend the durable new structure a rustic feel.

In the meantime, the Petersons have been debating what color to paint the Crazy Billy warehouse, which, like Whispering Vineyards, will be the site of wine tastings.

As of now, they are leaning towards leaving the seafoam-colored coating. After all, Peterson said, "the big thing was going green."