

LaHouse Resource Center: A Reality in 2008

Frances C. Lawrence, Claudette Hanks Reichel, and Sandra Scallon, Louisiana State University AgCenter

Key Words

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For the previous two EFERMA conferences, progress on the stages of Louisiana House – Home and Landscape Resource Center (LaHouse) has been reported. At last, after pausing to fulfill a timely educational mission following hurricanes Katrina and Rita, construction has resumed and will be completed in spring 2008. The purpose of the poster presentation was to update conference participants on what Louisiana House has accomplished and what it will offer upon completion. Below are samples of Louisiana House concepts that were disseminated.

Shortly following the 2005 storms, LaHouse Resource Center's demonstration house, in mid-construction with its hazard resistant features exposed, paused construction and was opened to the public and media as an educational resource. An aggressive educational outreach program was launched, involving collaboration and support (funding) from U.S. Dept. of Energy, Building Science Corp., FEMA, ICF, and many corporate and foundation partners.

- Thousands (est. 7000+) toured LaHouse during Mid-Construction Open Houses. Many technical tours were conducted for professional groups, conferences, media reporters, local officials, and organizations.
- LaHouse or its faculty were featured or interviewed by more than 60 reporters, resulting in 18 national and 45 state or local media exposures (TV, newspaper, radio, magazines, and journals, including HGTV-Pro, Coastal Contractor, Automated Builder, and Home Energy).
- Invited presentations about post-storm housing needs and issues were made at more than 30 national, state, and local venues including Rebuilding Post-Katrina: Hindsight is 20/20, Foresight is Priceless featured at the National Building Museum, Urban Crisis conference, and other venues.
- Altogether, more than 130 LaHouse educational outreach activities have been conducted with a total audience of more than 15,000 people.
- An interagency housing information exchange group was assembled to foster state level program connectivity and communication. The LaHouse project has involved more than 260 collaborators.
- A Best Building Practices for the Gulf Region 6-hour curriculum was developed and conducted in 6 cities by national experts, providing regionally tailored training and technical materials to 1100 building professionals. The seminars were highly rated, with 87% adoption rates among surveyed attendees.
- Three hurricane resistant construction seminars, including live hands-on demonstrations at LaHouse LIVE were conducted, and Hurricane Resistant Construction handbooks developed with industry collaborators. The trainings benefited more than 400, and hundreds more received the handbooks.
- The LaHouse LIVE hurricane resistant construction demonstrations were produced into online training videos and are available free 24/7 on the LaHouse Online Training Center link of www.LouisianaHouse.org.
- Build Safer, Stronger, Safer educational campaign tools (video, brochures, website, etc.), the Road Home Professional Services Registry with extensive rebuilding consumer education website, and a new LaHouse Hurricane Edition brochure were created.
- New consumer education materials and training on mold removal guidelines were developed. The Storm Recovery Guide and mold publications were distributed to more than 100,000 storm victims. 20,000 homeowners and builders have obtained the Building Your La. House – Homeowners' Guide book. The book's content has recently been updated and is available online at www.LouisianaHouse.org.

Contact author: Frances C. Lawrence, Louisiana State University, School of Human Ecology, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, Office: 225-578-1726, Fax: 225-578-2697, flawrence@lsu.edu

Most recently or coming soon:

- New additions to the LaHouse Online Training Center are available 24/7 and free at www.LouisianaHouse.org thanks to collaborators and sponsors. They include:
 - Best Building Practices for the Gulf Region seminars (6 modules) and
 - Wind Code Compliance Training on using the prescriptive wind code provisions (for builders) and on conducting wind code inspections (for inspectors).
- Hurricane Resistant Construction and Home Improvement CEU seminars.
- Healthy Home Improvements for the Gulf Region CEU seminars.
- A new Gulf Region High Performance Home Builder or Designer educational designation.
- New High Performance Home (energy efficient) CEU and consumer seminars.
- Research to assess and compare moisture performance of alternative raised floor insulation methods.
- And at last, the completion of LaHouse Resource Center's permanent exhibit house this year.

This showcase of solutions for the gulf coast climate and conditions demonstrates ways to achieve high performance homes. The goal is to integrate and balance five criteria – resource-efficient, durable, healthy, convenient, and practical. It provides consumers, designers, and builders with a local, credible source for finding integrated, objective, and appropriate information to make their homes safer, stronger, and smarter.

The high-performance exhibit house includes four different building and foundation systems, three space conditioning systems, five attic treatments, and a wide variety of materials, products, and technologies with hazard-resistant, green, healthy, and low-maintenance characteristics. The layout and interiors exhibit “universal design” concepts and family-friendly features for diverse and changing needs and abilities. LaHouse also demonstrates Building America (systems building science) and ENERGY STAR (energy-efficiency), as well Fortified for Safer Living (wind and flood resistance) program guidelines, green building, and healthy home principles.

The Web site, www.LouisianaHouse.org, is an excellent source for educational housing information. The 64-page Building Your Louisiana House – Homeowners' Guide is available online and in print. The website also features a photo gallery of LaHouse construction elements, topical articles, and links to many other related sources.

Construction of LaHouse was made possible through private support. Leading sponsors are Mrs. Paula Manship, Entergy, Borate-Treated Wood alliance, Roy O Martin Lumber Co., La. Home Builders Assoc., and more than 80 other Key Contributors. Key Partners with the LSU AgCenter in supporting the program are the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Energy, Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness, FEMA, and other agencies.