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For immediate release

**Tour a tornado and winter storm-resilient home: Canada's insurers
contribute to Emergency Preparedness Week**

The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) invites members of the media to tour a tornado and winter storm-resilient home. As part of the insurance industry's ongoing commitment to educate Canadian homeowners about disaster safety, ICLR has once again chosen Emergency Preparedness Week (May 6-12) to unveil its latest home retrofit project, this time in Edmonton, Alberta. The event marks the 20th anniversary year of the Edmonton Tornado, July 31, 1987.

Where: 240 Norwich Bay, Sherwood Park, Alberta

When: Wednesday, May 9 at 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Glenn McGillivray, Managing Director of ICLR, will conduct a media tour of the home. Says McGillivray: "Actions taken to make a home more resilient to natural catastrophes should reflect local hazard risk. The Edmonton area – indeed much of Alberta - represents an active zone for tornado and winter storms. Homeowners living in these areas, and in other places in Canada that are subject to different extremes, can prepare now for hazards that will inevitably strike in the future."

The Edmonton home retrofit includes:

- Anchoring cabinets, office equipment, and bedroom furniture to walls
- Bracing TV stands, televisions and refrigerators with appliance straps
- Outfitting the washing machine with armoured water supply hoses
- Anchoring the hot water heater
- Securing pictures to the walls
- Applying safety and security film to windows
- Taking measures to prevent pipes from freezing
- Installing carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and a fire extinguisher
- Reinforcing the front, rear and garage doors
- Installing snow melt cables on roof edges and gutters to prevent the formation of ice dams
- Installing basement flood and sump pump sensors.

On average, the tornado season in Canada ranges from April to October – about 160 days. However, this is not an absolute, as the three latest tornadoes ever to touch down in recorded history in Canada occurred on December 12, 1946 (Exeter, Ontario), November 29, 1919 (Leamington, Ontario) and November 9, 2005 (Hamilton, Ontario).

Canada ranks second in the world for tornado occurrences after the United States. According to Environment Canada, in the summer, an average of one tornado every five days is reported in Canada. However, on August 2, 2006, eleven separate tornadoes were reported in Ontario, from Burlington/Oakville in southern Ontario, to the Peterborough and Haliburton areas. An average of 16 occur in Alberta each year.

On July 31, 1987, a tornado cut south to north through Edmonton, ripping a continuous damage swath 37 kilometres long, and up to 1,000 metres wide. Immediately to the West, an area of 125 square kilometres was struck by tennis ball-size hail. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, there were 60,000 successful automobile and building insurance claims, 50,000 of them for hail damage. Of the 32,000 successful homeowner claims, approximately five-sixths (or 27,000) were for hail damage. This represented about 18 percent of all homes in the Greater Edmonton area at the time. Twenty-seven people were killed in the event, making it the second deadliest tornado in Canadian history.

Just after 7 p.m. local time on July 14, 2000, a tornado measuring F3 on the Fujita Tornado Intensity Scale, touched down five kilometres west of a campground/trailer park at Pine Lake, Alberta, located about 90 kilometres north of Calgary. Travelling east, the kilometre-wide twister remained on the ground for 15 to 20 kilometres - about half-an-hour - carving a swath of damage ranging from 800 to 1,500 metres wide. It is estimated that winds reached 300 km/h. Baseball-sized hail was also reported. Several hundred trailers were flipped over, boats and cars were tossed into the lake, buildings were levelled, trees were uprooted and common items were turned into deadly missiles. Approximately 400 camp sites were destroyed. The storm claimed 12 lives and injured 140.

A September 7, 1991 hailstorm in Calgary, Alberta, caused insured damage of \$342.7 million (2004 dollars), making it the most destructive hailstorm and third-largest insured natural catastrophe loss in Canadian history. The storm dropped 10-centimetre diameter hail in Calgary subdivisions for up to 30 minutes, splitting trees, breaking windows, damaging roofs and siding and denting cars. All told, more than 116,000 insurance claims were filed as a result of the event, a Canadian record which held until the Great Ice Storm usurped it in early 1998.

According to McGillivray: “We can prevent natural hazards from becoming disasters if people undertake simple, appropriate preventative measures beforehand. Such actions and measures are affordable and take little time to do. We showcase them today in this home.”

This is the fifth year that ICLR has retrofitted an existing home as part of Emergency Preparedness Week. In 2006, a home in Ottawa was made more resilient to earthquakes and winter storms. In 2005, a home in Vancouver was made more resilient to earthquakes, and in 2004, a Halifax home was protected against hurricanes. In 2003, a home in London, Ontario was made more resilient to tornadoes. The Institute has also retrofitted several child care centres as part of its “Protecting our Kids from Disasters” program.

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Established in 1998 by Canada’s property and casualty insurers, ICLR is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Toronto and at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. ICLR is a centre of excellence for disaster loss prevention research and education. ICLR’s research staff is internationally recognized for pioneering work in a number of fields including wind and seismic engineering, atmospheric sciences, water resources engineering and economics. Multi-disciplined research is a foundation for ICLR’s work to build communities more resilient to disasters.

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