

FORT MYERS

Man rides out Ivan in fortress dome house on the beach

The Associated Press

PENSACOLA BEACH — Mark Sigler was probably one of the few people who slept soundly with Hurricane Ivan's battering waves, 130-mph winds and flying debris slamming into his house.

Ivan was the first test for his Dome of a Home on the Gulf of Mexico, a veritable fortress built to withstand winds up to 200 mph.

"I was afraid at first when the storm started whether it was going to work or not," he said.

But his fear didn't last long. The house is made of a single slab of steel-reinforced concrete shaped like a dome and is covered by waterproof foam. It weighs about 850 tons, compared to about 25 tons for a normal house, Sigler said.

"You have a one-piece concrete house with five miles of steel in it," he said. "The house did exactly what it's supposed to do."

The Gulf's water washed neighboring houses out to sea,

but caused little damage to his.

"We could hear pieces of the other houses breaking up and smashing into the house," he said.

An NBC television news crew rode Ivan out in the house with Sigler to beam live feeds for broadcast. Sigler hoped the national attention would promote his building style, but the excitement wasn't enough to keep him awake.

"I went to sleep about 11, and I just woke up," he said at dawn.

Sigler spent years planning to construct what he calls a hurricane-proof building after seeing his previous house severely damaged by Hurricane Opal in 1995. He found that the dome shape was stronger architecturally and got a federal grant to help with construction, which was finished 14 months ago.

The house looks like the cross section of an egg. Two break-away staircases led up to the entrances, but they ripped away as they were designed to do when Ivan's force became too strong.