



## Northport Housing Authority Educates Residents on Preparedness

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Tuscaloosa County, Alabama*



Northport, AL – The Northport Housing Authority’s mission is to provide decent and affordable housing in a safe and secure living environment for low- and moderate- income residents. The facility offers residents opportunities to participate in a multitude of community, educational, and recreational programs, including preparedness.

What looks like a “picnic in the park” is really the facility’s Real Estate Assessment Center (REAC) Disaster Awareness Day.

“Acting upon a directive from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), I created what’s called the REAC Disaster Awareness Day,” said Ruby Burton, Executive Director of Housing and Community Education and Outreach. “We are required to provide a safe environment for our residents. We needed participation from all of the residents. So we organized a family-day barbeque with fun activities for the kids.”

REAC/Disaster Awareness Day is held once a year. On this day, residents are made aware of the purpose of the REAC and what to do in preparing for disasters. The purpose of REAC is for HUD to ensure that all Public Housing Authorities are providing housing that is adequate, safe, sanitary, and in good repair. HUD contracts with independent inspectors to perform statistically valid samplings of all public housing units. Residents are made aware of what the inspectors will be checking.

During the disaster awareness phase of the program, residents are given an informational booklet, "Preparing for Disasters." The booklet advocates preparing in advance and working with the family as a team in executing the steps: (1) Getting informed, (2) Making a plan, (3) Assembling a survival kit, and (4) Maintaining the plan and kit. Residents are urged to practice their plan. Each resident is given a checklist to use as a guide in preparing the Disaster Supplies Kit and Disaster Plan.

Burton has worked hard to keep residents informed since 2005. Following the 2011 tornado outbreaks that pummeled the state of Alabama, she arranged for a FEMA representative to speak to residents on tornado safety, including knowing the difference between a tornado “watch” and “warning,” indoor and outdoor safety precautions, and the benefits of residential, small business, and community safe rooms.

“We try to heighten interest by telling the residents that emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning. We want them to think about what they would do if their water, gas, electricity, or telephones were cut off due to a disaster. We want them to purchase a weather radio so that they can pay attention to weather conditions in their area. It’s our goal to have them prepare in advance. We want them to know what to do,” said Burton.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Tuscaloosa County**

City/Community: **Northport**

### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**  
Hazard Type: **Tornado**  
Activity/Project Type: **Education/Outreach/Public Awareness**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **06/2005**  
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**  
Funding Source: **Local Sources**

### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**  
Non FEMA Cost: **0**

### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **No**  
Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**  
Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

### Reference URLs

No URLs were submitted

### Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



FEMA CEO Specialist, Troy Jackson speaks to residents at REAC Disaster Awareness Day in Northport, Alabama



Residents gather at Northport Housing Unit located in Northport, Alabama for REAC Disaster Awareness Day