



Bibb County Provides Shelter for Its Communities

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Bibb County, Alabama



In 2004, when Hurricane Ivan caused severe devastation in much of Alabama, Bibb County residents knew they needed a community safe room. However, just one community safe room was not sufficient for the county's 21,000 citizens. After extensive research, Bibb County was able to receive Federal funding to construct dual-purpose community safe rooms for three of its elementary schools.

Prior to 2004, the county had no community safe rooms and the schools had only hardened hallways, or refuge areas, to use during severe weather events. Bibb County usually experiences tornadoes or extreme wind events in the spring, but some tornadoes have been reported in the fall. Because school is in session during both of these time periods, the need for safe rooms was evident. Besides not having a true safe space, there were no indoor recreation areas for any of the schools.

"There was not an area for the kids to play," said Bibb County Emergency Manager Wayne Hayes. "They had to use half the cafeteria as a play area during inclement weather."

The Bibb County Commission applied for a grant from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) through the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. HMGP funds up to 75 percent of mitigation projects for states recovering from a disaster, leaving the remaining 25 percent to be covered by the local government. The total project was approved for \$2,063,346, and the local share of \$515,836 for this project was financed by Bibb County's Board of Education and Bibb County Commission.

The three elementary schools are located in rural areas of the county; one in the north, one near the center, and the other in the southeast. Each area is heavily populated with mobile homes. In such places, a safe room is essential not only for the students, but also for the local residents.

The safe room at Woodstock Elementary School, in the north section of the county, is located in front of the school in an old parking lot. Designed as a gym, exactly like the other two safe rooms, it is reinforced as a community safe room able to hold 500 to 600 occupants.

Approximately 400 students, faculty, and staff use the safe room when school is in operation.

"At best, during practices, we get everyone inside in four minutes and start roll call," said Woodstock School Principal Shea Essman. "We have had to use it several times since it has been built, and we practice monthly so everyone knows where to go."

When school is not open, each location has a nearby local official who has the keys to open the buildings during severe weather warnings.

"We use a pager system to ensure the safe rooms are accessible," said Hayes. "The police department in Woodstock has a key and opens the doors for the community."

Currently, the county has received approval for a new community safe room to be built in Brent, in the center of Bibb County. The safe room would be located in an area that houses many businesses. The safe room will be dual-purpose and will serve as the new location for the daily meal program for senior citizens.

"Hopefully we'll get it started soon and complete it this year," Hayes said.

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Bibb County**

City/Community: **Brent; Randolph; West Blocton; Woodstock**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**

Hazard Type: **Tornado**

Activity/Project Type: **Individual/Community Safe Rooms**

Structure Type: **Safe Room/Community Shelter**

Activity/Project Start Date: **07/2006**

Activity/Project End Date: **12/2008**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Local Government**

Funding Recipient Name: **Bibb County Commission**

Application/Project Number: **1549-150**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$2,063,346.00 (Actual)**

Non FEMA Cost: **515836**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1549 , 09/15/2004**

Federal Disaster Year: **2004**

Value Tested By Disaster? **No**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

No URLs were submitted

Reference URLs

Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



This is the community safe room at Woodstock Elementary School.



Picture of Bibb County Emergency Manager Wayne Hayes in front of Woodstock Elementary School