

## Storm Shelters Old and New - Still a Good Idea

**Ripley County, IN** - When Don Wood built his storm shelter 25 years ago, he didn't know how often he'd have to use it. As it turned out, Wood and his family sought protection in that shelter through several windstorms and a few tornadoes during those 25 years. Will Jeremy Shireman, who is incorporating a storm shelter in the basement of his new home now under construction, have occasion to use his shelter that often?

After tornadoes ripped through southern Indiana in early March 2012, anyone pondering whether or not to install or build a storm shelter, or perhaps "harden" an existing basement against future extreme wind storms, might consider Wood's experience and advice. Those recent twisters, which damaged or destroyed several homes and other structures in the small community of Holton a few miles west of Wood's Ripley County home, came close enough to convince Wood, once again, that he'd made a wise decision to build that storm shelter so many years ago.

Wood's home, where he has lived since 1967, doesn't have a basement, so the entrance to his storm shelter is nearby, just a few steps beyond the back door. Access to the shelter is through a trap door in his deck, and then down a short flight of stairs to an inward-opening steel door. The shelter itself, which Wood designed and built, is an 8-foot by 12-foot by 8-foot-high concrete enclosure. The walls are 8-inch-thick concrete-filled concrete blocks, and the roof a 12-inch-thick slab of reinforced (with rebar) concrete. The shelter rests on a 6-inch-thick concrete slab.

Asked about the cost of a stand-alone storm shelter (located adjacent to or near a residence) similar in size and design to his, Wood estimated that he could build one today for about \$6,000; the cost to a homeowner would be greater if the shelter were built by a professional contractor/builder.

Shireman has lived in several homes that had basements, but when he had his own home built just west of Corydon, Indiana (it was under construction during the most recent tornadoes to strike southern Indiana) he decided that it just "made sense" to go for the greater protection provided by a dedicated storm shelter, and incorporated one in the basement of the home. Shireman's storm shelter will occupy the space below the front porch of his home, and the concrete floor of the porch will serve as the roof of the shelter. Because the walls of the shelter were poured at the same time as the rest of his home's foundation, Shireman estimates the concrete required for the storm shelter added no more than 5 percent (approximately \$2,000) to the total cost of that phase of his home's construction.

Don Wood claims his wife tells him that building the storm shelter "was the best idea I ever had." Will Jeremy Shireman be able to say that 25 years from now? Shireman considers the cost of his storm shelter not only as an investment that will provide safety and protection for his family, but also as an insurance policy on which he hopes he will never have to make a claim. But if any windstorms or tornadoes threaten his home and property in the coming years, he's pretty sure he will be ready for them.

**NOTE:** It is recommended that your local fire department, local emergency management agency (EMA), and other relevant local officials be given the location of your storm shelter. That information can be vital in post-disaster recovery efforts. In the event that debris is surrounding or on top of your shelter, this will allow officials to check on it to make sure any occupants are not trapped inside.