



A Safe Place To Go: Alabama's Safe Room and Community Shelter Program

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, Alabama

The State of Alabama - In Dec. 2000, strong storms that moved through the State of Alabama resulted in 12 deaths and more than 300 homes being damaged in the six most severely damaged counties. All due to tornadoes.



During the recovery phase of this disaster, Federal and State mitigation staff counseled more than 900 individuals and distributed 2,800 publications on Safe Rooms and wind resistant construction.

In a two-week period, mitigation staff traveled 780 miles throughout the State and set up booths in home improvement stores, shopping malls, county courthouses, and even at outdoor temporary shelters in rural damaged areas. The Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), implemented phase one of a Safe Room grant program. The grant program was administered by county emergency managers, providing grants to 340 individuals to retrofit homes with safe rooms or storm shelters. Phase two of this grant program was approved by FEMA on Nov. 27, 2002.

From Nov. 5-11, 2002, strong thunderstorms and tornadoes triggered widespread damage throughout the State. As a result of this recent event, AEMA's Mitigation staff undertook a telephone interview of a sampling of the 140 grant recipients within the 10 counties that experienced the most damages from the Nov. 2002 tornadoes. Contact was made with 68 individuals. All except one shelter had been completed. Fifty-eight families actually used their safe room during this most recent event, and all 67 families have used their safe room at least once since being built or installed.

When asked if they used the shelter, representative comments were as follows: "Yes, sure did--these things are life savers! Everyone is asking us about ours." "Yes, very pleased with our safe room and how it worked - got my 90 year old parents in there." "Yes, got 14 people in the shelter. It has a handicap ramp for my mother. We are very pleased with the shelter!" "Yes, tornado came up both sides of the house and blew a tree into it. We are very appreciative of the safe room shelter." "Yes, entire family and daughter and grandkids were in the shelter. Sure felt much safer and can't say enough good things about it. You're welcome to come and see it anytime. Safe room is in the basement of our home."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Tornado**
Activity/Project Type: **Retrofitting, Structural**
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/2001**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**
Funding Recipient: **State Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **AEMA**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$1,750,000.00 (Estimated)**
Non FEMA Cost:

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**
Federal Disaster #: **1352 , 12/18/2000**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2002**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/saferoom/index.shtm>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.alabama.gov/>

Main Points

- In a two-week period, mitigation staff traveled 780 miles throughout the State to implement phase one of a Safe Room grant program.
- 2,800 publications on Safe Rooms and wind resistant construction were distributed.
- 340 individuals built safe rooms or storm shelters as a result of the program.