



School-Based Safe Rooms Protect 100,000 Children

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, Arkansas

The State of Arkansas - From 1950 through 2003, Arkansas has been affected by 1497 tornadoes. More recent tornado data through 2003 indicates an average of 27.7 tornadoes occur annually in Arkansas. In 1999, Arkansas was slammed with 107 tornados, which is the most for a single year in the State's history.



More than 100,000 children, teachers, and local residents in 60 school districts across Arkansas are safer because of safe rooms built to protect them through mitigation grants from the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is now part of the Department of Homeland Security.

The "Arkansas School Safe Room Program" began during Disaster 1266 in 1999 and has continued through Disaster 1516 in 2004. At least 350,000 square feet of shelter space has been constructed during this period totaling 66 safe rooms across the State. These rooms are being used on a daily basis by the schools as libraries, computer rooms or physical education areas. Parents and friends can rest assured their children are safe from tornados during school hours. At a cost of only \$395 per child, this is one of the most proactive mitigation actions in the nation.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**
FEMA Region: **Region VI**
State: **Arkansas**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**
Hazard Type: **Tornado**
Activity/Project Type: **Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**
Structure Type: **Safe Room/Community Shelter**
Activity/Project Start Date: **05/1999**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **Arkansas Public Schools**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$39,510,253.00 (Actual)**

Non FEMA Cost:

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1266 , 01/23/1999**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2000**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.adem.state.ar.us>

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

Main Points

- Over 100,000 Arkansas children and their families now have a safe place to turn to during a tornado--their local school.
- At a cost of only \$395 per child, the school-based storm shelters serve double duty as libraries, computer rooms and other functional spaces
- In a cooperative effort, FEMA and Arkansas Department of Emergency Management built shelters at community schools throughout the State. To date, 66 shelters protect more than 100,000 children.



College Station Safe Room/Activity Building



Safe Room on Harrisburg campus 2004