

Hurricane & Tornado

▶ “When deadly tornadoes strike communities, there’s little you can do to prevent damage if you’re in the direct path of the storm but there is something you can do ahead of time to potentially save your loved ones. You can build a safe room in your house.”

Senator James Inhofe, Oklahoma

▶ “Storm shelters save lives. Perhaps, more important, they offer peace of mind, knowing a safe place is available when severe weather threatens.”

▶ “As alternatives to evacuation, in-residence shelters offer significant individual and societal benefits to those in hurricane-prone regions. Residential shelters might be the most feasible way to eliminate shelter deficits, leaving public shelters and evacuation routes open to those who must leave their houses.”

Ernst W. Kiesling, P.E., Ph.D., Director of Shelter Program, Wind Engineering Research Program, Texas Tech University

▶ “Thanks to work sponsored by FEMA, we now have a good understanding of how citizens can protect themselves during tornadoes and hurricanes. FEMA’s publications on residential safe rooms and community shelters provide easy to follow design and construction guidelines for homeowners, contractors, and designers.”

▶ “FEMA’s work on both residential and commercial safe room design guides makes it possible to build economical shelters that can protect people from the devastating effects of tornadoes and hurricanes.”

Lionel Lemay, Portland Cement Association

▶ “It’s human nature to wait and see, but we want people to think about what could happen and prepare for it now, even if it’s something simple like buying hurricane-resistant glass or strengthening gables.”

Keith Cranford, Baton Rouge Office of Emergency Preparedness, The Baton Rouge Sunday Advocate

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► “It is the public’s perception that their children are safe from tornadic wind events while at school because their school has an established tornado shelter. However, it may be a tornado shelter in name only; in fact, the only reason that area may be a “shelter” is because someone called it one. A tornado safer area designed by an experienced architectural and engineering team is essential in providing what FEMA has labeled “near-absolute” protection from tornadoes.”

Corey Schultz, PBA Architects, Wichita, Kansas; John Metz, Building Data Services, Wichita, Kansas

► “It is critical that school boards and officials at the federal, state and local level establish a partnership with design professionals and local emergency management personnel to be proactive in planning, designing and constructing engineered tornado shelters that meet the FEMA 361 guidelines. They cannot afford to wait until a disaster causes student deaths and serious injuries. An engineered tornado shelter should be an essential part of the core educational space of any school facility.”

► “Tornado shelters in educational facilities should be multi-use spaces, that is, a space in which the tornado resistance of the shelter serves as the backdrop to daily teaching and learning activities. This provides the best value for taxpayer funds. For the most part, single-use shelters, those used only for tornado protection, are not good economical choices. Although they may have a lower cost per square foot than educational space, they add cost to the project yet provide no additional usable area to the educational process. Their cost per hour of use over the life of the building is extremely high. Therefore, single-use shelters are not a good value.”

► “There are no guarantees in life. This is especially true in dealing with natural disasters. From an educational facility designer’s point of view, it is our intent to design and engineer tornado safer areas that dramatically increase our children’s odds of surviving a severe wind event without major injuries.”

Corey Schultz, PBA Architects, Wichita, Kansas

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▶ “The last few hurricane seasons have demonstrated the ruthless power of storms. But the last few years have — in equal measure — demonstrated the refreshing promise of preparedness.”

▶ “It’s important that people living in harm’s way understand there are actions they can take not only to help prepare for storms — but also to help prevent some of the storm damage from occurring in the first place.”

▶ “The results of a recent poll of persons living in coastal areas indicates that many of those most vulnerable to the devastation of hurricanes and related flooding underestimate their risk and, as a consequence, have not taken the steps to protect their homes and families from the storms. I urge anyone living near the coast state to recognize that disasters do not only happened in other peoples’ communities. Hurricanes and the widespread flooding they often bring can — and do — affect towns whose residents never thought it would happen to them. We must all learn to be prepared.”

▶ “Hurricane season lasts a few months. But disaster resistance must be a priority year-round.”

▶ “The devastation of the next storm will not be decided in the weeks in which it rakes across the ocean or the days in which it pounds our shores. The impact of the next hurricane is being decided right now — in the days, weeks and months of preparation that are required to make communities resistant to disaster.”

▶ “When vicious tornadoes tore through Oklahoma City last year, broadcast alerts were responsible for saving hundreds of lives — perhaps more — by warning people to get out of the way.”

▶ “FEMA and NEMA now cooperate in setting the annual priorities for hurricane evacuation studies nationwide. We have studies under way from Maine to Texas and in the Caribbean and the Pacific.”

Senior FEMA Officials

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▶ “Here in Oklahoma after the May 3rd tornadoes, a new awareness in severe storm protection was born. Our firm, fortunately, has clients who are willing to spend the little extra funds required to protect their apartment tenants from these natural disasters.”

▶ “Over the past year, we have provided the necessary design for five shelters ranging in size from 10 to 300 persons.”

▶ “The response from the tenants in these housing projects has been overwhelming in their acceptance. The comments range from “the shelter is the reason we moved here” to “just knowing that the shelter is available provides a peace of mind.”

Larry K. Blackledge, Blackledge and Associate Architects

▶ “Hopefully, when people rebuild, every person who is rebuilding will have a safe room.”

Bobbie Freeman, Mayor, City of Choctaw, Oklahoma
