



# ***DISASTER NEWS***



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MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY--FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **STORM SAFE ROOMS GAINING POPULARITY**

**Tupelo, MS** – The recent tornadoes and severe weather that have made 50 Mississippi counties a federal disaster area have sparked a fast-growing interest in storm shelters by families affected by the storms.

Since the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) announced that a safe room initiative is available to those who registered for disaster aid with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), inquiries have been so numerous that a list of telephone numbers was released to the news media. (See list for your area).

“Response to the state’s offer of reimbursement grants for safe room construction shows a high level of public concern that is gratifying,” said Robert Latham, director of MEMA. “This is a program that we know will save lives.”

Since, 1950, Mississippi has had nearly 400 deaths attributed to tornadoes. The state has a higher percentage of strong or violent tornadoes than others in the tornado belt. Both MEMA and FEMA are urging construction of safe rooms designed to withstand tornadoes and other extreme wind loads to give families accessible shelter from violent weather.

In addition, disaster officials emphasize the importance of National Weather Service radio broadcasts that can provide violent weather warnings in time to allow listeners to reach safe shelter. Special weather frequency receivers, available at most electronics stores for about the cost of a pair of shoes, can be set to turn on only if a severe weather warning is sent to the listener’s area.

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A special frequency tone is picked up by the radio, the tone turns the radio on and sounds a brief alarm, followed by warning information. Weather radios are becoming standard equipment in schools, hospitals, nursing homes, churches and synagogues as well as in private homes in tornado hazard areas.

As a result of the severe weather during February and on March 12, sixty percent of the state now falls under a presidential disaster declaration. Under this declaration, federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds are available to the state through FEMA for carrying out long-term, cost-effective measures that can reduce loss of life and property in natural disasters.

The state plans to use this funding as a source for assisting families with the cost of installing residential and community safe rooms and storm shelters within the declared counties. The program will be administered by MEMA and county emergency management agencies. MEMA will act as the grantee and the county agencies or local governments will act as the sub-grantees.

A safe room is a fortified shelter built in the normal living area of a home and therefore immediately accessible. Such a room could serve as a bathroom, closet, pantry or computer room. The least expensive way to construct a safe room is during new construction, when the estimated cost is approximately \$3,000. An existing structure can be retrofitted with a safe room for about \$4,000.

The Mississippi safe room initiative will be available to any eligible applicant residing in a disaster declared county. However, due to limited funding, priority is given to homeowners, governmental or private non-profit organizations with documented damage (insurance settlement, contractor receipts) from the storms that drew the disaster declaration.

**Editors: Information on the safe room initiative can be obtained at the following numbers. Please select the ones for your area.**

COUNTY	AGENCY CONTACT	PHONE
ALCORN-Corinth Co. CD	Ray Gene Holloway	662-287-2451
AMITE - Amite Co. CD	Sam Walsh	601-657-9000
ATTALA-Kosciusko Co. CD	D.B. Ballard	662-289-5322
BOLIVAR Co. EMA	Kent W. Buckley	662-843-2300
CALHOUN Co. EMA	Bob Wells	662-983-2727
CARROLL Co. CD	James Harold Scruggs	662-237-9386
CHICKASAW Co. CD	James B. Smith	662-456-9267
CHOCTAW	Board of Supervisors	662-285-2137
CLAY Co.. EMA	Richard Stripling	662-494-2088
COAHOMA Co. EMA	Johnny Tarzi	662-624-3041
FORREST Co. EMA	Terry Steed	601-544-5911
GRENADA Co. CD	George Frazier	662-226-1076

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HOLMES Co. EMA	Elizabeth Peteet	662-653-6123
HUMPHREYS Co. Board of Supervisors	Thomas Bruce	662-247-1740
ITAWAMBA-Fulton Co. EMA	Terry Underwood	662-862-2735
JONES-Jones Co./Laurel EMA	Carl Carlos	601-649-3535
LAFAYETTE-Oxford Co. CD	Jerry Johnson	601-232-2418
LAMAR Co. EMA	James Smith	601-794-5328
LEE-Tupelo Co. CD	Claudia Howard	662-841-9020
LEFLORE-Greenwood Co. EMA	Floyd Peebles	662-453-1428
LINCOLN-Lincoln Co./Brookhaven CD	Clifford Galey	601-833-8561
LOWNDES-Columbus Co. EMA	Larry Miller	662-329-5110
MADISON Co. EMA	Bill Weisenberger	601-859-4188
MARION-Marion Co./Jefferson Davis CD	Charlie Conerly	601-736-9627
MONROE Co. EMA	Bobby Camp, Jr.	662-369-3683
NESHOBA Co. EMA	George Yates	601-656-3121
NOXUBEE Co. EMA	Jacob H. Megehee	662-726-5111
OKTIBBEHA Co. EMA	Jim Britt	662-338-1076
STARKVILLE EMA	Larry Bell	662-323-8012
PANOLA Co. CD	William E. "Son" Hudson	662-563-6245
PEARL RIVER Co. CD	J. D. Wheat	601-795-3058
PONTOTOC Co. EMA	Ricky Jagers	662-489-1637
PERRY Co. CD	Dale Carnaham	601-964-8370
PRENTISS Co. EMA	Ralph Lauderdale	662-728-4610
PIKE Co. CD	Richard Coghlan	601-684-3564
QUITMAN Co. Board of Supervisors	Manuel Killenbrew	662-326-2661
SCOTT Co. EMA	Alvin Seaney	601-469-4100
SUNFLOWER Co. EMA	James A. Whitfield, Jr.	662-887-6253
TALLAHATCHIE Co. CD	Kevin Hodges	662-647-1275
TATE Co. CD	Staci Thomas-Goodwin	662-562-5012
TIPPAH Co. Board of Supervisors	Dennis Grisham	662-837-3655
TISHOMINGO Co. CD	Jerry Bonds	662-423-7004
UNION Co. EMA	Hal Sanders	662-534-1982
WASHINGTON Co. EMA	Joel Sandifer	662-335-1945
WALTHALL Co. CD	Marion McKenzie	601-876-2311
WEBSTER Co. CD	Jimmy Bennett	662-258-7866
WINSTON Co. CD	Clarence Kelley	662-773-3651
WILKENS ON Co. EMA	Eugene Martin	601-888-4140
YALOBUSHA Co. CD	Cecil Harrison	662-675-2902
YAZOO Co. CD/EMA	Bernice McGinnis	662-746-1569