



JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

Disaster News



Mississippi Emergency Management Agency – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEMA-DR-1443-MS-NR26

Date: November 26, 2002

MEDIA CONTACTS: MEMA - 601-960-9039 or 601-953-3622
FEMA - 662-329-7570

Mississippi Residents Urged to Build Safe Rooms

COLUMBUS, MS -- Having a safe room built into your house can help you protect yourself and your family from injury or death caused by the dangerous forces of extreme winds.

In the wake of the deadly tornadoes that caused widespread damage throughout eastern Mississippi earlier this month, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster recovery officials urge residents in tornado-prone areas to consider constructing a “safe room” in their home.

“A safe room is essentially a roomy closet built to withstand extreme winds such as those that occur in tornadoes,” explained Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch, who is heading recovery efforts for the Mississippi tornadoes. “Safe rooms are not expensive to construct, and they can save your life.”

The Wind Engineering Research Center at Texas Tech University has developed specifications for a safe room designed to withstand sustained winds up to 250 miles per hour and to resist penetration by a 15-pound, 2 x 4 stud traveling at 100 miles per hour, according to the university research.

A safe room model will be on display beginning Tuesday, November 26, at 1 p.m. in front of the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) which is in the former Lowe’s Home Supply, 2320 Highway 45 North. Anyone interested in learning about a safe room can talk to disaster recovery experts there, and pick up information about building safe rooms.

“Emergency response personnel and people cleaning up after tornadoes often have found an interior room of a severely damaged home still standing, when little of the rest of the house remains,” said State Coordinating Officer Leon Shaifer. “Having a safe room is a vital step in protecting you and your family from harm during the devastating chaos of a tornado.”

A safe room can be constructed either above or below ground, with either reinforced concrete or wood-and-steel walls anchored to a concrete slab foundation or floor. FEMA offers a free 25-page illustrated publication, “Taking Shelter from the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House,” available by calling toll-free 800-480-2520 (press option three at the recorded message). For more information, visit the FEMA website at www.fema.gov/mit/saferoom.