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Disaster News



Mississippi Emergency Management Agency – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEMA - 662-329-7570

Rebuild Using Wind-Resistant Technology

COLUMBUS, MS -- If your home or business was damaged in the November 10 and 11 severe storms and tornadoes, state and federal recovery officials urge owners who are rebuilding to consider taking steps now to minimize the potential for similar damage in a future disaster.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers free technical advice on construction and rebuilding techniques to make your property safer and less vulnerable to violent weather events and even earthquakes. In some cases, federal financial assistance may be available under FEMA's hazard mitigation program.

"FEMA's long-term policy for disaster recovery emphasizes mitigation to make communities more disaster resistant," Federal Coordinating Officer Michael Bolch said. "We use the lessons of each disaster to mitigate or prevent similar damage in the next."

Mississippi is often a target of tornadoes. FEMA recommends that, when rebuilding tornado-damaged property, owners tie the foundation, wall and roof components together as a single unit for strength against destructive winds. Fortified spaces called safe rooms can provide life-saving shelter from approaching storms. Plans for such rooms in various types of structures are available from FEMA by calling toll-free at 800-480-2520.

"We want to make sure that people living in areas prone to tornadoes know how they can make their properties better able to withstand the ravages of another disaster," said State Coordinating Officer Leon Shaifer. "The cost to implement these measures is minimal and the incentive to act on safety is strong at this time because the image of the disaster is fresh."

Construction experts recommend the following steps when building and rebuilding:

- Hurricane clips: Small metal devices that secure a roof to the top of a structure's walls. They are inexpensive and widely used in areas of the country where hurricanes and floods are a part of life.
- Masonry Ties: Metal strips that help secure brick walls to a wooden structure. The ties are most effective when spaced no farther apart than 16 inches horizontally and 2 feet vertically.

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- **Plywood:** While impact tests show that pressed wood is as strong as plywood, experts nonetheless recommend plywood for roof decking and sheathing for extra protection against storm damage. (Specifically, use plywood that is no less than 7/16 - inch thick. The preferred thickness is 5/8 - inch thick.)
- **Fastening:** To secure 4x8-foot plywood sheathing to walls or roofs, nails should be driven at intervals no greater than 4 inches around the perimeter of the board and 6 inches in the middle lines. Sheathing also should be attached with screws.
- **Garage Doors:** High winds can buckle a weak door, creating entry for wind that can easily lift an unclipped roof. Consider a heavy gauge garage door.

Structures need to be tied to their foundations with correctly installed anchor bolts of the proper dimensions. In structures with concrete block foundations, the bolts should be at least 15 inches into the foundation in order to reach the second course of blocks and to prevent them from being pulled out of the foundation in strong winds.

If the concrete is poured, bolts a minimum of 1/2 inch in diameter should be set at least 7 inches into the concrete and topped with a washer and a nut. Officials also recommend use of 2x6-inch wall studding that is more rigid than the usual 2x4-inch lumber and provides the added benefit of greater space for wall insulation.

Anyone interested in learning more about mitigation can visit with a representative at a Disaster Recovery Center, visit the FEMA web site at www.fema.gov/mit/saferoom or order publications by calling toll-free at 800-480-2520, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST.