



NATIONAL WEATHER ASSOCIATION

228 West Millbrook Road - Raleigh, North Carolina 27609-4304

Tel: (919) 845-1546 - Fax: (919) 845-2956

exdir@nwas.org - www.nwas.org

Use of Storm Shelters

In 2011, over 550 people died in the United States from tornadoes, of these 550 fatalities, 112 occurred in mobile homes and 229 in a permanent building or structure. April 2011 became the most active tornado month on record resulting in 758 tornadoes and 360 deaths. The EF-5 Joplin, MO tornado of May 22, 2011 caused an estimated 158 fatalities and is ranked as the 7th deadliest tornado in U.S. history. One way to reduce these heart-breaking statistics is to install storm shelters at home, at work, and in public places where large numbers of people gather. The National Weather Association, a member-led, non-profit, professional organization, supports the use of storm shelters as a means to save lives during severe weather.

Violent tornadoes, hurricanes and other severe thunderstorms exert an economic, physical as well as emotional toll on communities across the country. The most devastating of these events can completely destroy well-constructed structures and place those without a safe place to go vulnerable to the impacts of extreme wind and flying debris. The severity of the damage exhibited by the storms of 2011 indicates that survival may only be possible below ground. While many people have an idea of a safe place to go when a life threatening storm approaches, a properly constructed storm shelter may be the only way to survive. In addition, a well-built storm shelter can provide peace of mind whenever threatening weather is expected. Here are some important points to review when considering a storm shelter:

- Storm shelters can be easily incorporated into new home construction or installed in pre-existing homes and businesses. Each structure is different. The NWA encourages anyone interested in purchasing a shelter to verify that it is FEMA compliant and to find a reputable installation company. Link to <http://www.fema.gov/safe-rooms> or the National Storm Shelter Association at <http://www.nssa.cc> for more information.
- The southeastern United States, and in particular areas near the coast are especially vulnerable to severe thunderstorms and tornadoes in addition to hurricanes. Here, storm shelters provide a safe refuge from severe weather throughout the year.
- Businesses could provide a storm shelter not only for their employees, but for any customers that might be in or near the building should severe weather develop.
- Mobile home parks are especially vulnerable to tornadoes. Those with a large capacity may be required to provide a storm shelter. Check if that is the case where you live.

- Large venues such as arenas, theme parks, airports and shopping malls face the challenge of securing the safety of tens to even hundreds of thousands of people during severe weather. Outdoor sporting events are often held at great distance from any protective structure and in many cases are also vulnerable to lightning and wind-blown debris. The existence of a storm shelter provides these venues with a safe place for these patrons to go.
- Colleges and universities concentrate large populations of students in dormitories, classrooms and sports facilities necessitating a designated safe location in the event of severe weather.
- Even locations that do not normally experience severe weather should consider installing a storm shelter. Climatologically the record reveals the presence of severe storms during anytime of the year and in all 50 states.

A total of 553 fatalities were reported across the U.S. in 2011 ranking it as the 2nd deadliest year on record. Severe thunderstorms are and will continue to be a threat to the lives and livelihood of our citizens. Storm shelters are an effective tool for mitigating the deadly impact of severe weather.

The National Weather Association strongly encourages everyone to be prepared for the next outbreak by installing a storm shelter. A small investment up front can insure your survival or that of someone you love.

Approved by the NWA Council on December 13, 2012.