

9 Emergency Management Considerations

Disaster preparedness is crucial to quick and effective responses to emergency situations. Potential owners and managers of tornado and hurricane shelters should be ready and able to open a safe room for immediate use in response to an extreme-wind event. The best way to accomplish this is to create a Community Safe Room Plan tailored to the needs of the intended users of the facility. To help emergency managers and facility owners and operators prepare Community Safe Room Plans, this chapter presents guidelines for two types of plans: a Community Safe Room Operations Plan with an accompanying Community Safe Room Maintenance Plan in Sections 9.1 and 9.2, respectively, and a Commercial or Public Building Safe Room Operations Plan in Section 9.3.

Typically, a plan is developed by a Community Safe Room Plan Coordinator whose responsibility is to develop, organize, and coordinate the Community Safe Room Operations Plan. The following guidelines are designed to help the Plan Coordinator organize the process of plan development, which should occur well in advance of any emergency event. While the Plan Coordinator primarily serves a planning role, he or she may also have a role during the activation and operation of the community safe room during an actual emergency. Specifically, the Community Safe Room Plan Coordinator's responsibilities include the following:

- Planning, organizing, and coordinating the development and maintenance of the Community Safe Room Operations Plan
- Ensuring that personnel are assigned roles to facilitate all aspects of the Community Safe Room Operations Plan
- Developing education and training programs relative to the Community Safe Room Operations Plan
- Coordinating practice drills and exercises to test the Community Safe Room Operations Plan
- Conducting regular community meetings to discuss emergency planning
- Preparing and distributing newsletters, as needed
- Distributing phone numbers of key personnel to appropriate individuals and agencies
- Ensuring that the Community Safe Room Operations Plan is periodically reviewed and updated as necessary

The plans described in this chapter should be considered as baseline plans that present the minimum information that should be contained in Community Safe Room Operations Plans. A sample Community Safe Room Operations Plan outlining the many of the recommended procedures that should be part of a Community Safe Room Operations Plan is presented in Appendix C. In addition, an actual tornado safe room operations plan from a FEMA-sponsored safe room project has been included in Appendix D. Although the plan in Appendix D was developed prior to this guidance, it is a good example of a safe room operations plan for tornado hazards and is provided for informational purposes. Designers and operators of safe rooms should review these documents to improve their understanding of how the safe room will be relied upon during an event.

9.1 Community Safe Room Operations Plan

Each community safe room designed according to the guidance in this publication should have a Community Safe Room Operations Plan. The plan should describe the difference between tornado watches and warnings, and hurricane watches and warnings, and clearly define the actions to be taken for each type of weather-related emergency. A Community Safe Room Management Team composed of members committed to performing various duties should be designated. The following is a list of action items for the Community Safe Room Operations Plan:

- The names and all contact information for the managers/leaders detailed in Sections 9.1.1 through 9.1.7 should be presented in the beginning of the plan.
- A tornado or hurricane watch is issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) when a tornado or a hurricane is possible in a given area. When a watch is issued, the Community Safe Room Management Team should be placed on alert. Depending on the type of the safe room and the impending emergency, the timing of the watch announcement, and the availability of personnel responsible for safe room operations, the plan should specify the types of activities to be performed for each contingency. For example, a stand-alone community safe room in a residential neighborhood may need to be opened and prepared for a possible emergency at this early stage.
- A tornado or hurricane warning is issued when a tornado or hurricane has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. When a warning is issued, the Community Safe Room Management Team should be activated and should begin performing the following tasks:
 - Sending the warning signal to the community, alerting them to go to the community safe room
 - Evacuating the residents who need assistance to reach the community safe room
 - Taking a head count in the community safe room
 - Securing the community safe room
 - Notifying and maintaining contact with the local Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
 - Monitoring the storm from within the community safe room

- After the storm is over, determining when conditions warrant allowing community safe room occupants to leave and return to their homes
- After the storm is over, cleaning the community safe room and restocking emergency supplies

A member of the Community Safe Room Management Team can take on multiple assignments or roles as long as all assigned tasks can be performed effectively by the team member before and during an extreme-wind event. Readiness and availability of the Community Safe Room Management Team is of special importance for stand-alone community safe rooms in residential neighborhoods and the Community Safe Room Operations Plan should specify the duties and responsibilities of the team for each type of emergency.

The following team members would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Community Safe Room Operations Plan:

- Community Safe Room Manager
- Building Manager (for safe rooms in public or commercial facilities)
- Shift Supervisor
- Registration Unit Leader
- Health Services Unit Leader
- Communications Unit Leader
- Food Unit Leader

Full contact information (i.e., home and work telephone, cell phone, and pager numbers) should be provided for all team members and their designated backups. The responsibilities of each of these team members are detailed in Sections 9.1.1 through 9.1.7. Appendix C provides an example of a Community Safe Room Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Appendix C also includes a suggested list of equipment and supplies for community safe rooms in Attachment 11.

9.1.1 Community Safe Room Manager

The Community Safe Room Manager provides overall supervision and management of the community safe room's operations both during its activation and in between the emergency events. The Community Safe Room Manager ensures that the needs of the community safe room occupants are being met. The Community Safe Room Manager's responsibilities include the following:

- Establishing contact with the local EOC and the facility's representative(s)
- Conducting a pre-event safe room walkthrough
- Ensuring that adequate personnel are in place and appropriately assigned to manage and operate the community safe room

- Ensuring that all aspects of the Community Safe Room SOP are implemented
- Ensuring that the community safe room occupants receive accurate and updated information
- Ensuring that health and safety standards are met
- Coordinating the closure of the community safe room

9.1.2 Building Manager

The Building Manager serves as the building owner's representative (i.e., facility owner, school principal, etc.) and provides security, maintenance, housekeeping, and logistical support for sheltering responsibilities within the facility. The Building Manager is responsible for the overall building/facility operations and works closely with the Community Safe Room Manager, who ensures that the needs of community safe room occupants are being met. The Building Manager's responsibilities include:

- Establishing contact with the Community Safe Room Manager and activating the facility when ready
- Conducting a pre-occupancy inspection in collaboration with the Community Safe Room Manager
- Surveying and laying out the space plan for the occupants and the Food Unit in collaboration with the Community Safe Room Manager and Food Unit Leader
- Assigning appropriate staff to implement the extreme-wind protocol and ensure the integrity of the facility; making regular rounds of the interior and exterior portions of the building on a regular basis, weather permitting
- Understanding the operation of all facility equipment (including communications, lighting, and safety equipment, and closures for building openings)
- Routinely inspecting the safety and sanitation of the facility, including the kitchen, occupant areas, bathrooms, exterior, and registration area and ensuring that health standards and occupants' needs are being met
- Completing an inventory of all supplies owned by the facility that were used in the community safe room

9.1.3 Shift Supervisor

The Shift Supervisors are responsible for the operational elements of the community safe room during their shift, including staffing, ordering food/snacks, water, and supplies, monitoring occupants, etc. The Shift Supervisor reports directly to the Community Safe Room Manager. The Shift Supervisor's responsibilities include the following:

- Surveying and laying out the space plan for the occupants
- Posting signage throughout the community safe room
- Recruiting and training personnel and volunteers
- Assisting the Community Safe Room Manager in keeping occupants informed
- Monitoring community safe room occupants to ensure their needs are being met
- Coordinating the completion of an inventory of all supplies
- Performing duties of the Community Safe Room Manager when he/she is off site or unable to carry out his/her responsibilities

9.1.4 Registration Unit Leader

The Registration Unit Leader and his/her staff ensure that persons entering and leaving the community safe room go through the registration process so that there is an accurate tracking mechanism for all occupants. In cases of extreme urgency, the registration process should not impede the occupants' admission to the safe room and may be conducted after the safe room has been secured. The Registration Unit Leader's responsibilities include the following:

- Surveying and laying out the space plan for the Registration Unit near the entrance to the community safe room
- Posting signage in strategic areas that directs evacuees to the registration area of the community safe room
- Recruiting and training personnel and volunteers, especially multi-lingual registrars
- Assisting the Community Safe Room Manager in keeping occupants informed
- Referring appropriate persons to the Health Services Unit (e.g., ill or injured persons, or those on special medications or diets, etc.)
- Maintaining a community safe room census and reporting it to the Community Safe Room Manager as required
- Ensuring that all community safe room occupants have been accounted for during closure procedures

9.1.5 Health Services Unit Leader

The Health Services Unit Leader ensures the provision of quality health services and that applicable public health standards (state, county, or municipal) are met. Health Services Unit personnel should be appropriately credentialed personnel recruited from local health, medical and Emergency Management Service (EMS) agencies (e.g., nurses, paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians [EMTs], etc.). The Health Services Unit Leader's responsibilities include the following:

- Determining the needs of the community safe room occupants and arranging to meet those needs by referring the ill or injured to other health care providers and treating minor illnesses or injuries
- Being available at the registration desk to help screen arriving evacuees for communicable diseases, major medical conditions, etc.
- Arranging for the care of those occupants requiring assistance (e.g., infants, elderly, those with disabilities)
- Arranging for the inspection of the community safe room facilities to ensure that all health and safety standards are met, including food handling procedures
- Maintaining appropriate records and ensuring the confidentiality of all medical information
- Ensuring that all community safe room occupants have been accounted for during closure procedures, especially those with any medical needs (to the extent possible), ensuring continuity of care
- Transferring medical records to appropriate authorities, as needed

9.1.6 Communications Unit Leader

The Communications Unit Leader is usually a full-time, 24-hour position required to provide communications between the community safe room, the EOC, and other components of the disaster relief operation when telephones are out of order or anticipated to be out of order. It is recommended that local amateur radio operators (HAM) and/or Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) members be recruited to fulfill this function. The Communications Unit Leader's responsibilities include the following:

- Establishing contact with facility representatives and/or Building Manager to determine the appropriate location for radio and communications equipment
- Determining, in collaboration with the Community Safe Room Manager, which people have the authority to transmit messages
- Establishing initial (pre-event) contact with the local EOC and other components of the disaster relief operation
- Establishing and maintaining a communications log
- Arranging for the return of any equipment once the community safe room is closed or communications are restored to normal

9.1.7 Food Unit Leader

The feeding responsibilities in a community safe room include supervising on-site food preparation and service for community safe room occupants and staff. The Food Unit Leader advises the Community Safe Room Manager of supplies that are needed, ensures that safe food

handling procedures are followed, and sees that menus are planned. The Food Unit Leader may prepare and monitor the food service staff work schedule and record the hours of personnel as requested. The Food Unit Leader's responsibilities include the following:

- Surveying and laying out the space plan for the Food Unit (e.g., food preparation, food storage, disposal, and dining areas)
- Coordinating meal times with the Community Safe Room Manager
- Identifying supply sources for utilities, food, water, and supplies
- Completing an inventory of food supplies on hand
- Overseeing the preparation of meals with the assistance of occupant volunteers
- Restocking food, water, and supplies as needed
- Cleaning food service and preparation areas, including a final clean prior to closure
- Maintaining records for documentation purposes

9.1.8 Equipment and Supplies

Safe rooms designed and constructed to the criteria in this publication are intended to provide safe refuge from an extreme-wind event. These safe rooms serve a different function from shelters designed for use as long-term recovery shelters after an event; however, Community Safe Room Managers may elect to provide supplies that increase the comfort level within the short-term safe rooms. Appendix C, Attachment 11, lists suggested equipment and supplies for community safe rooms.

9.2 Community Safe Room Maintenance Plan

Each community safe room should have a maintenance plan that includes the following:

- An inventory checklist of the emergency supplies (see Appendix C, Attachment 11)
- Information concerning the availability of emergency generators to be used to provide power for lighting and ventilation
- A schedule of regular maintenance of the safe room to be performed by a designated party

Such plans will help to ensure that the community safe room equipment and supplies are fully functional during and after tornadoes and hurricanes. The Community Safe Room Maintenance Plan should be included as part of a Community, Commercial, or other Safe Room Operations Plan.

9.3 Commercial or Public Building Safe Room Operations Plan

A safe room designed to the criteria of this manual may be used by a group other than a residential community (e.g., the safe room may have been provided by a commercial business for its workers or by a school for its students). Guidance for preparing a Commercial or Public Building Safe Room Operations Plan is presented in this section. Please note that, although the sample operating procedures outlined in Appendix C are more tailored to residential safe rooms, there are many elements within the sample procedures that are applicable to preparing a Commercial or Public Building Safe Room Operations Plan.

9.3.1 Emergency Assignments

It is important to have personnel assigned to various tasks and responsibilities for emergency situations before they occur. An Emergency Committee, consisting of a Site Emergency Coordinator, a Safety Manager, and an Emergency Security Coordinator (and backups), should be formed, and additional personnel should be assigned to serve on the committee.

The Site Emergency Coordinator's responsibilities include the following:

- Maintaining a current Safe Room Operations Plan
- Overseeing the activation of the Safe Room Operations Plan
- Providing signage
- Notifying local authorities
- Implementing emergency procedures
- As necessary, providing for emergency housing and feeding needs of personnel isolated at the site because of an emergency situation
- Maintaining a log of events

The Safety Manager's responsibilities include the following:

- Ensuring that all personnel are thoroughly familiar with the Safe Room Operations Plan
- Conducting training programs that, at a minimum, include the following:
 - The various warning signals used, what they mean, and what responses are required
 - What to do in an emergency (e.g., where to report)
 - The identification, location, and use of common emergency equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers)
 - Shutdown and startup procedures
 - Evacuation and sheltering procedures (e.g., routes, locations of safe areas)
- Conducting drills and exercises (at a minimum, twice annually) to evaluate the Safe Room Operations Plan and to test the effectiveness of the emergency procedures

- Ensuring that employees with special needs have been consulted about their specific disabilities and then determining how best to provide them with assistance during an emergency (FEMA's United States Fire Administration's publication *Emergency Procedures for Employees with Disabilities in Office Occupancies* is an excellent source of information on this topic.)
- Conducting an evaluation after a drill, exercise, or actual occurrence of an emergency situation, in order to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of the Community Safe Room Operations Plan and the appropriateness of the response by the site emergency personnel

The Emergency Security Coordinator's responsibilities include the following:

- Opening the safe room for occupancy
- Controlling the movement of people and vehicles at the site and maintaining access lanes for emergency vehicles and personnel
- "Locking down" the community safe room
- Assisting with the care and handling of injured persons
- Preventing unauthorized entry into hazardous or secured areas
- Assisting with fire suppression, if necessary

In addition, the Emergency Committee's responsibilities include the following:

- Informing employees in their assigned areas when to shut down work or equipment and evacuate the area
- Accounting for all employees in their assigned areas
- Turning off all equipment

9.3.2 Emergency Call List

A Community Safe Room Operations Plan for a commercial or public building should include a list of all current emergency contact numbers. A copy of the list should be kept in the designated community safe room area. The following is a suggested list of what agencies/numbers should be included:

- Office emergency management contacts for the building
- Local fire department (both emergency and non-emergency numbers)
- Local police department (both emergency and non-emergency numbers)
- Local ambulance
- Local EOC

- Local emergency utilities (e.g., gas, electric, water, telephone)
- Emergency contractors (e.g., electrical, mechanical, plumbing, fire alarm and sprinkler service, window replacement, temporary emergency windows, general building repairs)
- Any regional office services pertinent to the company or companies occupying the building (e.g., catastrophe preparedness unit, company cars, communications, mail center, maintenance, records management, purchasing/supply, data processing)
- Local services (e.g., cleaning, grounds maintenance, waste disposal, vending machines, snow removal, post office, postage equipment, copy machine repair, elevator music supplier)

9.3.3 Tornado/Hurricane Procedures for Safety of Employees

The following procedures should be followed in the event of a tornado or a hurricane:

- The person first aware of the onset of severe weather should notify the switchboard operator or receptionist, or management immediately.
- If the switchboard operator or receptionist is notified, he or she should notify the management immediately.
- Radios or televisions should be tuned to a local news or weather station, and the weather conditions should be monitored closely.
- If conditions warrant, the management should notify the employees to proceed to and assemble in a designated safe area(s). A suggested announcement would be “The area is experiencing severe weather conditions. Please proceed immediately to the designated safe area and stay away from all windows.”
- Employees should sit on the floor in the designated safe area(s) and remain there until the Site Emergency Coordinator announces that conditions are safe for returning to work.

9.4 Signage

The Community or Commercial Safe Room Management Plan should summarize all activities and strongly encourage community involvement. Potential area community safe room occupants should be given a list of all key personnel and associated contact information. The plan should also describe the type of signage occupants are to follow to reach the safe room. The signs should be illuminated, luminescent, and obvious.



ICC-500 CROSS-REFERENCE

Signage for a FEMA 361 community safe room should be installed as described in Section 3.9 of this publication and as defined in Section 108 of the ICC-500.

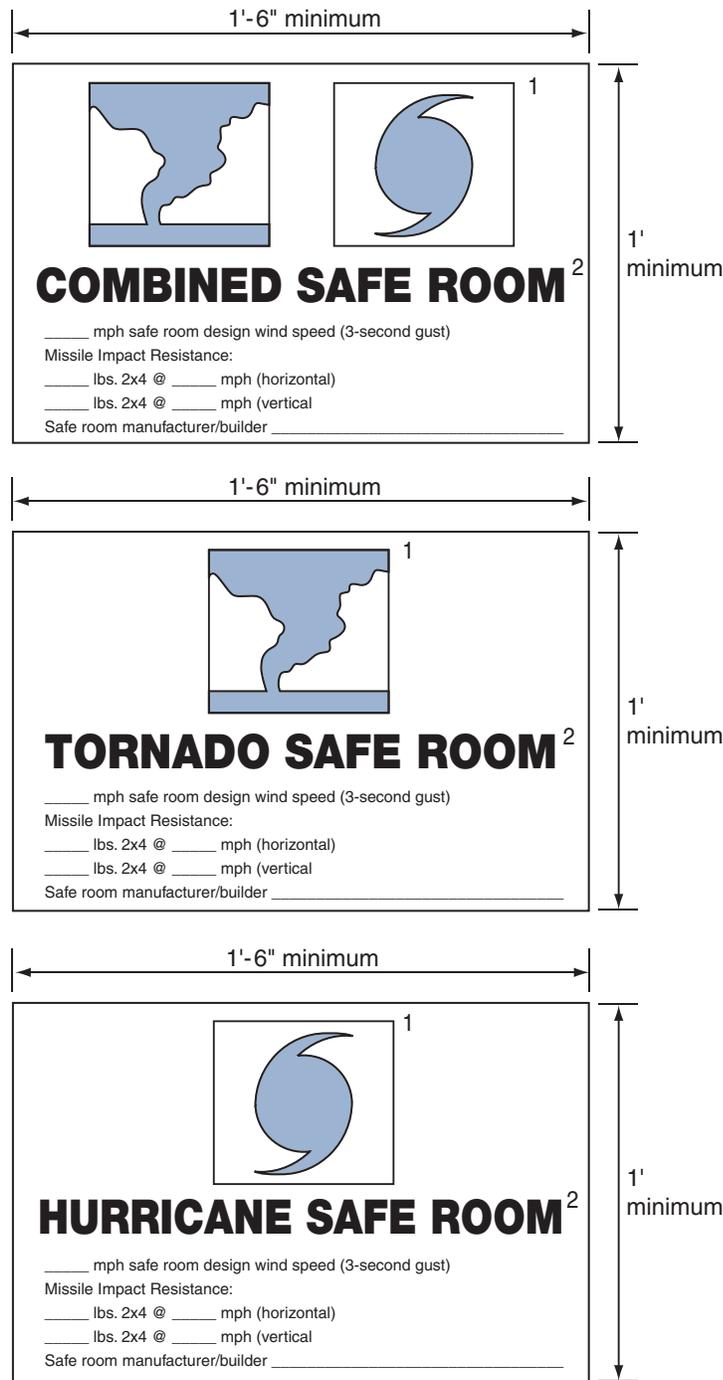
9.4.1 Community Signage

It is very important that community safe room occupants can reach the facility quickly and without chaos. Parking is often a problem at community shelters and safe rooms; therefore, a Community Safe Room Operations Plan should instruct occupants to proceed to a community safe room on foot if time permits. Main pathways should be determined and laid out for the community. Pathways should be marked to direct users to the community safe room. Finally, the interior or exterior of the community safe room should have a sign that clearly identifies the building as a community safe room, indicating whether it is a tornado, hurricane, or combined community safe room.

9.4.2 Building Signage at Schools and Places of Work

Signage for safe rooms at schools and places of work should be clearly posted and should direct occupants through the building or from building to building. If the safe room is in a government-funded or public-funded facility, a placard should be placed on the outside of the building designating it an emergency safe room (see Figure 9-1). It is recommended that signage be posted on the outside of all other types of safe rooms as well. The sign should indicate whether the facility is a tornado, hurricane, or combined community safe room.

It is important to note, however, that once a public building has been identified as a tornado or hurricane community safe room, people who live or work in the area around the safe room may expect it to be open during an event. Safe room owners should be aware of this and make it clear that the times when a safe room will be open may be limited. For example, a community safe room in an elementary school or commercial building may not be accessible at night.



“SAFE ROOM” and logos shall be reflective, using 3M Scotchlite Diamond-Grade reflective sheeting or an equivalent product. Yellow in color. Verify with manufacturer that the sign will glow for a minimum of 6 hours, in the event of power loss.

¹ The applicable picture should be shown for the hazard(s) the safe room has been designed to resist – tornado, hurricane, or combined (show both pictures).

² The applicable hazard should be shown here. For a safe room designed to resist both hurricanes and tornadoes, use the term “combined.”

Figure 9-1. Example of a wind safe room sign (see Detail 201, Sheet A2, Schedules and Details, in the drawing titled Community Shelter, Hurricane Floyd Housing Initiative, North Carolina – Appendix C of this manual)