Partners in Progress…

In tornado- and hurricane-prone areas, safe rooms and community shelters have become an integral part in protecting lives and preventing serious injuries when violent storms occur. Several Federal, state, local government agencies and individuals have collaborated to develop innovative programs to encourage and promote safe room and community shelter construction.

Tornado safe rooms take center stage at a local event, "Public Safety Awareness Day."

National, state, and local agencies, including businesses and individuals across the country, are embracing the concept of ***Disaster Resistant Communities*** with innovative programs and projects:

- Homeowners who receive a disaster assistance loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to repair or rebuild a damaged or destroyed home may use some of the loan proceeds to construct a safe room. The SBA can also increase the approved disaster loan up to 20 percent to cover the cost of adding a safe room.

- FEMA and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) have collaborated to develop incentives and opportunities to promote the Safe Room Initiative. FHA's new initiative will enable a lender to loan a homebuyer up to $5,000 more than the amount needed to buy a home to cover the cost of installing a windstorm shelter.

- Pioneered by Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi, and Oklahoma, several states have now developed initiatives to provide safe room grants and rebates.

- The construction industry has actively partnered with communities by conducting and sponsoring seminars and workshops, donating and building demonstration safe rooms, and participating in national conferences.

- The National Storm Shelter Association (NSSA) was established with the encouragement of FEMA and Texas Tech Wind Engineering Center. The primary purpose of the association is to ensure the highest quality of manufactured and constructed storm shelters for protecting people from injury or loss of life.

- College and university students in Architecture, Engineering and Vocational Education Departments are involved with community safe room projects and are building models that are used for educational events.

- Many builders and developers in tornado- and hurricane-prone areas are now offering safe rooms as an option during new residential construction.

- Safe rooms and disaster-resistant housing are now regularly featured in home shows, conferences, and trade shows.

- In response to the 2004 hurricanes, FEMA is working with the Hurricane Research Advisory Committee of the Florida Building Commission to address updating and revising hazard resistant sections of the Florida Building Code, including those related to shelter design.

- The nonprofit Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) [**www.flash.org**] is a strong proponent of the safe room initiative and is dedicated to strengthening homes and safeguarding families by promoting disaster preparedness and mitigation.

A local resident looks at photographs of tornado damage displayed on the interior walls of a model safe room.

FEMA