

Southeast Tornado MAT

Daily Report

Monday 09MAY2011

OVERVIEW:

The three field teams for the MAT deployed to the greater Birmingham, AL, area, Northeast Georgia (Ringgold), and Northeastern Mississippi (Smithville). The map at the end denotes where the teams traveled. Notable findings from the teams are provided below.

OBSERVATIONS:

Pleasant Grove

Large portions of Pleasant Grove were completely destroyed. This house in Pleasant Grove was recently purchased. When the owner first identified the home for consideration, they were not aware that there was storm shelter on the property. However, when they looked at the home during a viewing they were informed that not only was there a shelter, but that its construction had been funded in part by FEMA. The homeowners stated they decided to purchase the home because it had the FEMA safe room. The safe room was occupied during the tornado.



Pleasant Grove: FEMA 320 compliant safe room Occupied during Storm

The team also visited a very hard hit area of Pleasant Grove with homes constructed in the 1980s and 1990s. In this neighborhood, several residents worked with their builders to construct hardened refuge areas in the basements of their homes. This two story home was completely destroyed during the tornado, the refuge area housed 3 people during the storm and all occupants of the refuge were unharmed. The owner had the roof slab thickened to 9 inches of concrete and extra reinforcing installed. The walls however are unreinforced CMU.



Pleasant Grove: Home with a planned refuge area in the basement. While not compliant with FEMA 320 safe room design criteria, features of this house (such as the thickened, reinforced concrete slab) helped provide safe refuge during the event.

Smithfield/Green Leaf Heights

Smithfield Green Leaf Heights Volunteer Fire Department was mostly destroyed. The apparatus bay completely failed but the personnel portion of the station remained standing (with damage).



Smithfield Green Leaf Heights Volunteer Fire Department: The Apparatus Bay was completely destroyed. The Fire Engine is still sitting in what was the apparatus bay. (A rental truck being used for clean-up occupies the second bay.)

Ringgold, GA

Critical facilities and residential building performance were noted during the visit to Ringgold. Two sites visited by the team are noted below.

Location: Ringgold Middle School

- Extensive damage to unreinforced exterior end wall and roof deck.
- No students were in the school at the time.
- Clean-up and construction crews already cleaned debris from this area



Ringgold: Severe damage at one wing of the middle school

Location: Cherokee Valley Road (Ringgold, GA)

- Residential structures located in between two ridges.
- Residential structures in this area varied from minor damage to completely destroyed.
- Significant tree damage along entire far ridge.



Ringgold: Home on hillside in impacted area of Ringgold. Topography may have affected wind speeds from the tornado in this area.

Smithville, MS

The field team was able to view several HMGP funded and non-HMGP funded safe rooms in Smithville. In most all cases where the team was able to speak with someone (either the owner or someone who had knowledge of the shelter), it was discovered that the shelters were used in the storm. The buildings in the central corridor of Smithville were almost completely destroyed, including the police station, fire station.



Smithville: FEMA 320 complaint safe room which performed well during the tornado.

Smithville: Court Street Safe Room



Smithville: Shelter #2: Housed (10) people during the storm – the door had to be held shut

