



Safer Shelters Become a Reality in Sarasota

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Sarasota County, Florida



Sarasota, FL - Florida's hurricane shelter deficit and a State initiated shelter construction survey resulted in an ambitious 9-year Shelter Retrofit Program in Sarasota County. Although State inspectors found Sarasota County Government supported shelters useable, the shelters were still in need of improvement.

Sarasota County has 33 hurricane shelters located in 116 separate buildings. Most of the 116 buildings need improvement to meet State hurricane shelter standards. The hurricane safety of the shelters, most of which are located in school buildings, are or may be marginal due to such deficiencies as masonry walls that are not reinforced, open spans or lack of an engineering analysis.

The County's Emergency Management Department has undertaken an ambitious 9-year Shelter Retrofit Program to correct these deficiencies and expand shelter capacities. The Shelter Retrofit Program is also consistent with the County's Local Mitigation Strategy, which was adopted by the County in 1999.

The retrofit program is being funded from the local one-cent sales tax extension approved by voters in 1999; State- and FEMA-funded mitigation grant programs, matched by County infrastructure funds. The program includes evaluation of all current shelters and where necessary and cost beneficial, retrofitting of existing buildings. Phase One will retrofit 10 buildings at a cost of \$1.8 million funded by a grant and a local 12.5 percent local contribution. Phase Two will retrofit 23 buildings at an estimated \$2.8 million funded by a grant and 12.5 percent in local funds. The total cost of the future Phased Shelter Retrofit Program will be an estimated \$4.6 million to retrofit and expand Sarasota County's hurricane shelters and will be funded by local, State and Federal monies.

Sarasota County partnered with the Sarasota County School Board to undertake this program and to work cooperatively to ensure that present and future new school construction would provide hurricane safe buildings. The retrofitting of the following three school buildings was completed in 1999 and 2000 with local funds: Tuttle Elementary School, which went from the ability to shelter 500 people to 1700; Ashton Elementary School, which went from 500 to 1500 shelter spaces; and Brookside Middle School, which went from 500 to 1100 shelter spaces. The construction of a new high school that meets higher shelter standards and provides additional shelter space in the southeastern portion of the County has also been completed. The school was funded by the school district. Over \$3 million in additional funds were necessary to construct the building to meet these higher hurricane standards.

When the project is completed, hurricane shelters will provide a higher degree of safety to those using them during disasters. In addition, the retrofit program will result in several thousand more safe shelter spaces over the current shelter capacity.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Florida**

County: **Sarasota County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**
Structure Type: **Masonry, Un-reinforced/Plain**
Activity/Project Start Date: **06/2000**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Local Sources; State sources; Other FEMA funds/ US Department of Homeland Security**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **Sarasota County Government**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$4,600,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>
Reference URL 2: <http://floridadisaster.org/>

Main Points

- Most shelters, located in school buildings, are or may be marginal due to such deficiencies as masonry walls that are not reinforced, open spans or lack of an engineering analysis. The County's Emergency Management Department has undertaken an ambitious 9-year Shelter Retrofit Program to correct these deficiencies and expand shelter capacities.
- The retrofit program is being funded from the local one-cent sales tax extension approved by voters.
- Sarasota County partnered with the Sarasota County School Board to undertake this program and to work cooperatively to ensure that present and future new school construction would provide hurricane safe buildings.