

Safe Room Shelters Evacuees from Hurricane Harvey

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Austin, Texas – Nearly 400 evacuees in Victoria, Texas, with nowhere else to go sheltered inside a 168-foot wide steel-reinforced tornado/hurricane safe room the day Hurricane Harvey barreled into Texas.

The community commonly refers to the safe room at the Tom O'Connor Jr. Athletic Center facility as the St. Joseph High School FEMA Dome. It was constructed to serve the Victoria community during catastrophic events.

When the city ordered a mandatory evacuation forcing people to find shelter, St. Joseph High School Principal Tom Maj was ready to help. “This was the first ever use of the facility and it performed as intended,” said Maj.

The safe room was constructed in 2015 for extreme weather events just like Harvey. The dome meets occupancy requirement for both hurricanes and tornadoes. The safe room has 20,000 square feet of protected space, which gives it the capacity to shelter 1,000 occupants during a hurricane and 4,000 people during a tornado.

As spring arrives, tornado season comes with it. About 1,200 tornadoes hit the United States every year and every state is at risk. Since most tornadoes in the United States occur east of the Rocky Mountains with concentrations in the central and southern plains, Texas is one of the states under threat.



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The FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) helped fund the safe room and the Texas Department of Emergency Management administered the funds. FEMA grants have allowed the Texas Department of Emergency Management to award 41 Hurricane Community Safe Rooms along the coast.

For mitigation information and resources for residents and communities in Texas recovering from disaster, visit [fema.gov/Texas-disaster-mitigation](https://www.fema.gov/Texas-disaster-mitigation).

For more information on preparing for tornado and hurricane seasons, visit: <https://www.ready.gov/>.

For more information on Hurricane Harvey and Texas recovery, visit the Hurricane Harvey disaster web page at www.fema.gov/disaster/4332, or Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/FEMAHarvey>, the FEMA Region 6 Twitter account at twitter.com/FEMARegion6, or the Texas Division of Emergency Management website at <https://www.dps.texas.gov/dem/>.



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