

Eight Municipalities Receive Multimillion Dollar Assignment for Safe Rooms Against Hurricanes

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These rooms will provide shelter and protection for vulnerable people

San Juan, Puerto Rico –The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved nearly \$24.4 million to build ten community safe rooms that will protect residents of eight municipalities from the threat of hurricanes. The funds for these projects come from FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

These spaces, which can range from a single room to an additional structure, can withstand winds of up to 160 to 235 miles per hour and provide near absolute safety in the event of a hurricane due to their reinforced construction. All the rooms meet FEMA safety parameters and will be located in areas accessible to the public. The project covers the municipalities of Ceiba, Guayama, Las Marías, Orocovis, Peñuelas, Ponce, San Germán and San Juan.

Community safe rooms are generally equipped with food, water and emergency supplies for the people who will occupy it, although this varies according to the size of the room or building and the use it will be given.

One of the places that will have a safe room will be the Sor Isolina Ferré Centers (CSIF, for its Spanish acronym) in Ponce, who know firsthand the importance of having a safe shelter in case of a strong hurricane.

“During Hurricane María, the Sor Isolina Ferré Centers helped vulnerable communities. These projects represent an additional pillar to support transformation through advocacy and self-management, and achieve community resilience,” said María Julieta Lecompte Shiba, Director of Planning and Innovation at the CSIFs.



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The CSIF were allocated funds to build safe rooms in the community support buildings located in the Ponce and Guayama centers; \$1.6 million and \$4.7 million, respectively. Among the services provided by the CSIFs are temporary housing for people in their human development programs and programs to prevent the use and abuse of controlled substances, among others.

“Although we cannot prevent hurricane activity, we can take measures that protect the people, especially the most vulnerable populations. Safe rooms are a definite step in that direction,” said FEMA’s Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator Jose G. Baquero.

Like the CSIFs, the municipal government of Peñuelas will also build a safe room for its residents. It was recently approved an allocation of over \$287,000 for the design phase of a safe room to be built in the Quebrada Ceiba neighborhood. The proposed structure consists of a 10,340 square foot multi-purpose building with the capacity to house up to 350 people. The construction phase is estimated at over \$1.7 million.

“The purpose is to preserve the safety and life, as well as the continuity of the operations of aid that will be offered by the government and entities that offer services in cases of emergency,” said Miguel Figueroa, Municipal Secretary of Peñuelas.

Among the seven municipalities that were approved for HMGP funds, Las Marías was one of the most affected, as it was practically isolated from the rest of the country due to Hurricane María. FEMA approved over \$1.5 million in hazard mitigation funds to build a safe room at the Francisco Bonilla Municipal Coliseum.

According to the Mayor of Las Marías, Edwin Soto Santiago, this structure will be of great benefit to the town. “It’ll provide assistance and better safety to face any atmospheric event that we may experience, and the response would be faster. If the municipality would’ve had a safe room when Hurricane María passed, our administration would’ve responded more quickly and the aid to the citizens would’ve been better channeled,” he explained.

Except for some cases, the funds for these projects will be distributed in phases, as sub-recipients of these federal allocations meet the design and construction conditions established by FEMA.



For more information about Puerto Rico's recovery from Hurricane María, visit fema.gov/disaster/4339 and recovery.pr. Follow us on social media at Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico, Facebook.com/COR3pr and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter.com/COR3pr).



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