



## Shelter from the Storm

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Talladega County, Alabama*

**Talladega County, AL** – Winterboro Fire Department’s community shelter was put to its first test during Hurricane Ivan on September 15, 2004. The shelter provided a safe haven for residents during the high winds and tornado warnings produced by Hurricane Ivan.



Prior to 2004, residents in the area would arrive at the Winterboro Fire Department looking for a safe place to stay during severe weather. Fire Chief Kevin Sturdivant said his team of 20 volunteers would take them in and line the people in the fire station’s hallway. However, this was not a safe situation, as the fire station is not built to withstand the high winds produced by tornados.

In 2003, Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) provided a \$17,200 grant to install a subterranean, stand-alone shelter in the embankment leading to the fire department. The grant provided 75 percent of the cost. Donated firefighters’ labor, cash contribution from Talladega County, and site preparation work by a local contractor provided the remaining 25 percent costs. The shelter holds fifty individuals and contains bench seating, and telephone, Internet access, television, and VHF radio capability. The shelter is designed to FEMA community shelter specifications. It is able to withstand a F5 tornado (winds over 250 mph) and the entrance can withstand the impact of 200 miles per hour windborne debris. The shelter was completed and ready for use in January 2004.

As Hurricane Ivan approached Alabama, members of the community began assembling at the Fire Department. Seventeen people took shelter from the severe weather for approximately 16 to 20 hours. Among the people was a wheelchair bound resident who lives near the shelter. The gentleman, who has his own key to the shelter, was able to arrive on his own to the wheelchair accessible shelter. Fire Chief Sturdivant says, “The shelter is a great benefit to the community that I hope will save lives in the future.”

Over the last three years, AEMA has provided grants for approximately eleven community shelters. Locating these shelters throughout the State provides a greater level of life safety protection from tornados. More community shelters are planned as funding becomes available.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Talladega County**

City/Community: **Winterboro**

## Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**  
Hazard Type: **Tornado; Hurricane/Tropical Storm**  
Activity/Project Type: **Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**  
Structure Type: **Safe Room/Community Shelter**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/2003**  
Activity/Project End Date: **01/2004**  
Funding Source: **State sources**  
Funding Recipient: **Critical Facility - Police/Fire**  
Funding Recipient Name: **Winterboro Fire Department**

## Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$17,200.00 (Actual)**

## Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **2004**

Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

## Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/saferoom/index.shtm>

Reference URL 2: <http://ema.alabama.gov>

## Main Points

- Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) provided a grant to install a sub terrain, stand-alone shelter in the embankment leading to the fire department.
- As Hurricane Ivan approached Alabama, members of the community began assembling at the Fire Department. Seventeen people took shelter from the severe weather for approximately 16 to 20 hours.
- Over the last three years, AEMA has provided grants for approximately eleven community shelters. More community shelters are planned as funding becomes available.