

OKLAHOMA SCHOOL SAFE ROOM FUNDING

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Tornado safe rooms may be funded with FEMA supplied mitigation grants: the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM). Both grant programs are limited with an open application process, therefore funding is not guaranteed. HMGP is funded only in the event of a federally declared disaster; funding is available statewide. PDM is an offered annually through a nation-wide competition for funding. The maximum federal share available under PDM is \$3 million.

In general, mitigation funds may be used to pay up to 75 percent of the eligible activity costs. Mitigation grant funding is only available to jurisdictions that have a FEMA approved Hazard Mitigation Plan.

FEDERAL GRANT REQUIREMENTS

- Only structures that meet or exceed the design criteria in FEMA Publication 361, *Design and Construction Guidance for Community Safe Rooms* are fundable.
- The resulting structure may be multi-purpose, such as a gymnasium.
- Preliminary design and safe room specifications with a design professional's seal must be submitted and approved by FEMA as part of the application process.
- The design professional selected by the grant applicant must certify the proposed safe room will meet or exceed the criteria of FEMA 361.
- Final design and specifications must be peer reviewed by an engineer prior to beginning construction.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Interested parties should submit Notice of Intent to the State Hazard Mitigation Officer at the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (OEM). HMGP Applications submitted to OEM will be reviewed for eligibility and completeness. Technical assistance will be provided until the project is considered ready for funding. The application will be placed in queue until funding is available. When funding becomes available, OEM will notify the jurisdiction and review the application to make sure no final revisions are needed prior to submitting the application for FEMA funding. For PDM, OEM will submit the application to FEMA during the annual application period. FEMA will notify OEM if the application is approved for PDM funding. No work may begin on the project prior to FEMA approval.

FUNDING TIMELINE

The most common question asked by those requesting Hazard Mitigation Assistance for school safe rooms is "When can we expect funding?" There is not a set answer to this question due to the limited availability of funds. Some school districts have applied for an HMGP grant and received funds within two years while others have waited four to five years for funding to become available.

Due to the limited availability of funding and the length of time it may take for funds to become available, Hazard Mitigation Assistance funds should only be sought as a last option for school districts. The most efficient way to fund a safe room is through local resources, if a school district has the capability to fund the project without FEMA funds.

If you have additional questions, please contact the State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Matthew Rollins (405) 521-2481 or matthew.rollins@oem.ok.gov.