



Residential Mitigation: Safe Rooms

What is mitigation?

Mitigation is the reduction or elimination of potential risk to life and/or property. Mitigation is a cost-effective way to avoid future damage from disasters, such as flooding or high winds. Some mitigation projects are designed to protect life safety during a high wind event, such as safe rooms.

Is there grant funding for safe room projects?

There is one federal mitigation grant program that the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) administers under which residential safe room projects are eligible.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

This program is federally funded and becomes available after a major disaster declaration. It is a cost-reimbursement grant and has a cost-share requirement of 75 percent federal and 25 percent non-federal. This means that a property owner would be responsible for paying 100 percent of the costs up front and as approved project work is completed and proper documentation is submitted, the property owner would be reimbursed up to 75 percent of the total projects cost.

Learn more at <https://www.floridadisaster.org/dem/mitigation/hazard-mitigation-grant-program/>.

Things to remember:

For this program, project work cannot begin until the project has been reviewed, approved, and a contract has been executed. Should any work begin before an executed contract, FEMA will not proceed with approving the project and awarding funding.

Safe rooms can be built into an existing structure or as a separate unit. Any safe room funded with federal dollars for the purpose of life safety will need to be compliant with FEMA P-361 criteria (can be found at link below). It's important to note this because FEMA distinguishes clearly between shelters and safe rooms. Shelters are designed for housing displaced residents after an incident, while safe rooms are intended for immediate life safety during a high-wind event.

<https://www.fema.gov/safe-rooms>

<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/risk-management/safe-rooms/resources>

Next steps:

In Florida, each county has a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Working Group. These groups are made up of community stakeholders and are responsible for coordinating mitigation within the county, including maintaining the Local Mitigation Strategy plan and a prioritized project list. Under the HMGP, a resident cannot directly apply for funding and the local government would have to agree to apply their behalf and (if approved) manage the residential project.

If you are interested in pursuing mitigation grant funding for a residential safe room, the next step is to contact your county LMS Working Group to find the mitigation grant point of contact for your jurisdiction (based on the address of the relevant property) and explain what you are interested in doing. That person will be able to tell you if the local government is willing and able to apply for and manage the project. It is within the local government discretion whether or not to take on a residential mitigation project.

For your county's LMS Working Group contact, email your information to residentialmitigation@em.myflorida.com.