



Storm refuge (not engineered safe room) filled with water in Moore, Oklahoma after May 20, 2013 Tornado. ( Photographer: Tim Lovell)

### **January / February Key Message 1: Get a building permit when installing safe rooms in flood-prone areas**

To ensure safe construction and proper installation, safe rooms built or installed within the City of Tulsa are required to have a building permit before construction. This is particularly true when building or installing safe rooms in flood-prone areas. Flood hazards are an important consideration when placing an above or below ground safe room in a new or existing home. Below-ground safe rooms must be designed to avoid accumulating water during the heavy rains that often accompany severe windstorms. Homeowners should contact the City of Tulsa Permit Center at (918) 596-9456 to obtain a safe room building permit. City staff can help you ascertain what additional requirements or restrictions there may be for your safe room if your property is located in a floodplain.

If you already have a safe room at your home or office, you should consider participating in the City of Tulsa's Storm Shelter Registry. This registry provides information to emergency responders to help them locate citizens after a natural disaster such as a tornado. Having a registered safe room will provide emergency personnel with time-saving information should your safe room be blocked by debris. You can register your safe room online with your City utility account number. After registering, you can call the City of Tulsa Customer Care Center at (918) 596-2100 to request that Tulsa Fire Department personnel visit your home or business and obtain the exact GPS coordinates of your safe room. To participate in the registry, go to <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/public-safety/storm-shelter-registration.aspx> .

For more information from FEMA on Safe Rooms, please visit <https://www.fema.gov/safe-rooms>

### **January / February Key Message 2: Avoid flood-prone areas when taking shelter during tornado events**

*As reported on several media outlets, seven members of a Guatemalan family in northwest Oklahoma City left their home and sought shelter in a storm drain during a tornado warning on May 31, 2013. All seven died in rushing flood waters.*

Tornadoes are dangerous, but the severe storms and flash flooding that often accompanies them can be just as dangerous. During a tornado warning, it is always best to use a safe room or shelter in place in a sturdy building with as many walls between you and the tornado as possible and at the lowest level of the house. If you are in a mobile home, find a sturdy building or preferably a safe room you can go to when the storm threatens and allow plenty of time to get to it. You should always avoid basements with a history of flooding.

If you are outside taking shelter during a tornado and cannot reach a sturdy building, avoid taking shelter in a storm drain, creek, culvert, drainage ditch or other flood-prone area, as these areas can flood quickly during storms and you may be at risk of drowning.

Ready.gov reports that if you are outside with no shelter, "...there is no single research-based recommendation for what last-resort action to take because many factors can affect your decision. Possible actions include:

- Immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter. If your vehicle is hit by flying debris while you are driving, pull over and park.
- Take cover in a stationary vehicle. Put the seat belt on and cover your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or other cushion if possible.
- Lie in an area noticeably lower than the level of the roadway and cover your head with your arms and a blanket, coat or other cushion if possible.



March 25, 2015 Tornado in Sand Springs, Oklahoma.  
(Photographer: Seth Levy. Source: NOAA )

"In all situations:

- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Never try to outrun a tornado in urban or congested areas in a car or truck. Instead, leave the vehicle immediately for safe shelter.
- Watch out for flying debris. Flying debris from tornadoes causes most fatalities and injuries."

For more information on Tulsa's flood history and the location of floodplains and flood-prone areas, go to <https://www.cityoftulsa.org/city-services/flood-control.aspx>

For information on tornado safety, go to <http://www.ready.gov/tornadoes> or <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/tornado>