



Panhandle Regional Residential Safe Room/Storm Shelter Rebate Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1.1 Q. What is the Panhandle Regional Residential Safe Room/Storm Shelter Rebate Program?

A. A program to provide a rebate for purchase and installation of storm shelters for homeowners within the 26 county area of the Texas Panhandle.

1.2 Q. What does the program offer?

A. The program offers a rebate of 50% of installation costs and fees up to \$3,000 to homeowners who construct a storm shelter in or around their home that meets current FEMA standards.

1.3 Q. How is the rebate program funded?

A. The rebate program is funded through a grant provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) through the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM).

Storm Shelters

2.1 Q. What is a storm shelter?

A. A storm shelter is a designed and engineered location which provides "near-absolute protection" from extreme wind events such as tornados.

2.2 Q. Am I 100% safe from a tornado while in a storm shelter?

A. To date, a wind event exceeding the maximum design criteria in the FEMA guidance has not been observed; however, such an event may have occurred in the past or may potentially occur in the future. For this reason, the protection provided by storm shelters is called "near-absolute" rather than "absolute". Source: FEMA-361, "Design and Construction Guidance for Community Safe Rooms"; p. 1-2.

2.3 Q. What is the difference between a storm shelter, a safe room, and a place of refuge?

A. For purposes of this program the terms "storm shelter" and "safe room" are interchangeable and refer to an engineered structure that meets FEMA criteria and provides near absolute protection from wind events. A place of refuge, however, is a location that is a place of last resort and provides only limited protection from the effects of an extreme wind event.

2.4 Q. Which is better, an above or below ground storm shelter?

A. That depends on your particular preference and circumstance. Both were found to perform well in testing of wind related events.

2.5 Q. What kind of a storm shelter can I build? Above ground? Below ground? In my garage?

A. Any type of storm shelter may be constructed, so long as it is built to the FEMA P-320, Fourth Edition (Taking Shelter from the Storm), FEMA P-361, Third Edition (Safe Rooms for Tornadoes and Hurricanes), and ICC 500-2014 design standards.

Program Eligibility, Registration and Selection

3.1 Q. Who is eligible for the program?

A. Homeowners, builders or developers with a residential home that meets these requirements:

- Home is in 26 county region of the Texas Panhandle
- Home is not in a FEMA mapped floodplain
- Home older than 45 years approved by Texas Historical Commission prior to installation
- Own the home at the time of rebate award
- Dwellings are limited to occupants on the ground floor of multi-family units

3.2 Q. Who or what properties are NOT eligible for the program?

- A.
- Renters
 - Apartment complexes and other multi-family residences above the ground level
 - Businesses and commercial properties
 - Any residence outside of the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle.

3.6 Q. How do I apply for the program?

A. Applications will be accepted via the electronic application page, at www.theprpc.org or by calling (806) 372-3381 for an application.

3.8 Q. Can I mail, email or fax in a registration form instead of submitting it online?

A. Yes

3.9 Q. What are the registration dates?

A. The fifth phase of the program will begin accepting applications on August 23, 2021.

3.10 Q. Why am I registering on Panhandle Regional Planning Commission's website for a home outside of Amarillo?

A. The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is the Council of Government for the 26 county region of the Texas Panhandle. PRPC is the applicant on the grant and has been approved to provide rebate awards to eligible recipients throughout the 26-county Panhandle region.

3.12 Q. Does applying on this website mean that I will receive a rebate?

A. No. The application ensures you will be considered for the program, but does not guarantee that you will receive a rebate. Rebates are not guaranteed.

3.13 Q. When will selection of program recipients be made?

A. A date for selection of recipients has not been set; however, selection will likely be made soon after we are notified of available funds for the region.

3.14 Q. How will recipients be selected?

A. Eligible applicants will be placed on a waiting list on a first come first serve basis. Rebates will be awarded in that order.

3.15 Q. Does anyone receive priority in the program?

A. No priority is given outside of the eligibility requirements of the program

3.17 Q. I didn't get selected. Now what?

A. Those registrants not selected will remain on the waitlist in case additional funding is secured.

Using My Storm Shelter

4.1 Q. Do I need to register my storm shelter with the City?

A. Participation in the rebate program requires applicants to approve to have their storm shelter's GPS coordinates released to first responders (Ex: County Emergency Management Coordinator, Fire Department, Law Enforcement or other first responders)

4.2 Q. Is the storm shelter registry shared with the public?

A. No, we do not publish the storm shelter registry. (However, it is public information that may be requested via the Texas Public Information Act request.)

4.3 Q. Am I required to open my storm shelter to the public?

A. No. This is your shelter, you determine who you allow into it.

4.4 Q. What maintenance do I need to do to my storm shelter?

A. In general, keep it clean and inspect it once in a while for proper operation of the door and vents, moisture, rust, etc. Your vendor may have additional information for your specific model and installation.

4.5 Q. What should I do or take into the storm shelter with me when weather is threatening?

A. A short list might include:

- a flashlight
- a weather radio and perhaps a commercial broadcast (AM/FM) radio (and understand that reception may be poor due to the location and/or materials in the storm shelter)
- wear boots or other thick-soled shoes - remember, there may be debris left when you leave the storm shelter
- water and snacks
- essential medicines
- jackets, blankets or other warm gear
- a jack, come-along and chain, or other items that might assist in opening a damaged door.

It is recommended to keep much of this and other items in an "emergency bag" or "go kit". Information and a full checklist of items may be found at www.ready.gov.