



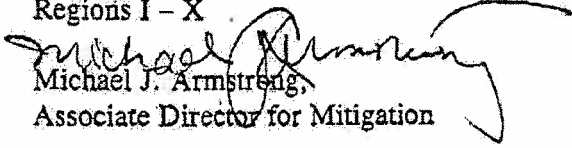
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

JAN 10 2001

MEMORANDUM FOR: FEMA Regional Directors
Regions I - X

ATTENTION: FEMA Mitigation Division Directors
Regions I - X

FROM: 
Michael J. Armstrong,
Associate Director for Mitigation

SUBJECT: Funding Criteria for the Construction or Retrofit of
Community Shelters and Safe Rooms

Recently, questions have been raised concerning the criteria required for FEMA funding for improvements to community shelters and safe rooms. This memorandum is intended to provide you with guidance on two important issues: First, whether FEMA mitigation funds may be used for improvements that will enhance protection against high wind and tornado events in an existing community shelter or safe room, but will not achieve near absolute protection. Second, if facility improvements must meet cost effectiveness requirements.

Project applications requesting FEMA funding for high wind and tornado mitigation measures involving the construction or enhancement of community shelters and safe rooms must meet all applicable requirements in FEMA's technical manuals. These currently include: "National Performance Criteria for Tornado Shelters", FEMA 320 Second Edition "Taking Shelter From the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House", and FEMA 361 "Design and Construction Guidance for Community Shelters." Any questions about these requirements can be addressed to Paul Tertell at (202) 646-3935. These standards were carefully designed by FEMA, in partnership with leading wind engineers and a steering committee of American Red Cross and building officials, to provide for "near absolute protection." If a retrofit or installation of a refuge area is attempted for a lesser wind event or for a lower threshold of protection, lives are being exposed to a greater degree of risk than is acceptable. I have determined that eligible hazard mitigation projects for community shelters and safe rooms must meet the requirements of FEMA technical manuals.

In addition, improvements to shelter areas funded under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program must be determined to be cost effective. The Stafford Act and its implementing regulations require that HMGP projects be cost-effective (44CFR

206.434(b)). The benefit-cost software provided with FEMA 361 will assist you in making this determination.

I would ask that you please share this information with each State. I hope that this information will allow you to better assist applicants in developing the most effective mitigation measures for the safety of their communities. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert F. Shea, Director, Program Support Division, at (202) 646-3619.