

## Building a Safe Room

Building a safe room in your home is a practical way to protect your family from natural disasters, home invasions and other emergency situations.

A safe room, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is a hardened structure that can withstand high winds, tornadoes and other hazards, in particular severe weather events.

### DO YOU NEED ONE?

Where you live will be a major factor in whether you need to build a safe room in your house. The highest need for one is in areas that are susceptible to hurricanes or tornadoes. You'll also want to evaluate whether there are already places that will fulfill that need without incurring the expense and space use of building a safe room.

For example, if you have a good basement, that is likely sufficient to protect you from tornadoes. If you live near a community shelter for hurricanes, it may be best to plan to use that facility.



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### REAL ESTATE 101

#### Watch vs. Warning

The National Weather Service provides warnings about severe weather events. Certain events are seasonal — most tornadoes take place between April and June. Know the difference between a watch and a warning. A watch is the first indication that a severe weather event risk exists. It means that weather conditions are favorable. A warning means there has been a confirmed report or sighting of the risk, such as a tornado. You should seek shelter immediately when a warning is issued.

#### LOCATION AND SIZE

The location and size of your safe room is important. FEMA recommends that it be anchored to the building's foundation and have reinforced masonry walls. It should be easily accessible and have no windows or external doors. Basements and interior rooms on the first floor are good locations.

When the weather is good,

you can use the room as a walk-in closet or a basement bathroom.

Some businesses sell pre-fabricated panic rooms or storm shelters that can attach to your home on a concrete slab. You and your family can lock yourself in until the danger of a storm or home invasion has passed.

The safe room should be

large enough to comfortably fit all members of your household as well as any necessary supplies such as emergency kits, first aid supplies, food and water. The size will also depend on the type of emergency you need protection from. You'll need a larger room for hurricanes because you will be in the room longer. Tornadoes pass quickly.

#### SAFE ROOM ATTRIBUTES

Build the walls and ceiling with reinforced concrete or other materials that can withstand high winds and impact from debris. Reinforce the door with steel or other strong materials.

Make sure the room has ventilation so fresh air can circulate in the event of a long-term emergency. One option is to install a ventilation fan that can be activated manually or automatically.

It's important to be able to communicate with the outside world. Consider installing a landline phone or a two-way radio in your safe room.

Stock your safe room with essential supplies such as a first aid kit, food and water, blankets, flashlights and a battery-powered radio. If possible, have a backup power source such as a generator or solar panels.

#### TRAINING

Make sure everyone in your house knows how to use the safe room and what to do in case of an emergency. Conduct regular drills and practice evacuating to the safe room quickly and efficiently.

Remember to also check with your local building codes and regulations to ensure that your safe room meets all necessary requirements.





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### HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

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**Settlement statement:** The form showing all fees, charges and monetary transfers involving the buyer, seller and all parties involved in the transaction. **SOURCE:** MLS.com

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