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FEMA Grant of \$3.2 Million Funds Construction of Special-Needs Safe Room in Baldwin County, Ala.

Wind retrofitting will protect training center from 200 mph winds

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ATLANTA, Ga. -- A grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will fund the construction of a safe room in Baldwin County that is specifically designed with special-needs citizens in mind. The Association for Retarded Citizens of Baldwin County (ARC-BC) is the recipient of the grant.

The \$4.3 million project, administered through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), will provide near-absolute, life-protecting safety for over 430 people during a hurricane or severe storm. The \$3.2 million represents 75 percent of the total project cost of \$4.2 million. The remainder will come from non-federal sources. The safe room will be built to FEMA Publication 361 standards, meaning, among other things, that it will be able to withstand winds of 200 miles per hour.

In addition to the safe room, the grant also provides funding for a wind retrofit for the existing Laundry and Life Skills Training Center, a 13,000-square-foot facility managed by ARC-BC. When complete, the retrofit will increase the level of protection from the current wind load of 120 miles per hour to 200 miles per hour.

"To have this project funded is not only great for Baldwin County, but for the state of Alabama," said Alabama Emergency Management Agency Director Brock Long. "It's critical that our special-needs people have a safe place to go in their community and only travel a short distance."

Safe rooms come in many shapes and sizes; rooms may be as small as a few square feet to over 14,000 square feet in size, but each one must comply with specific building standards. Ultimately, the goal of the project is to provide a strong safe room from storms and protect the lives of those who need it most. The ARC-BC will be able to keep their clientele safe following the construction of this safe room.

"Previous to the funding of this project, the ARC-BC had to evacuate its clients a long way from Baldwin County at a great expense and liability," said FEMA Region IV Administrator Phil May. "But with this safe room in place, the staff will be able to concentrate on providing care for people. We're proud to be part of making that happen."

FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) provides grants to states, local governments, and Indian tribes for long-term hazard mitigation projects following a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the program is to reduce the loss of life and property in future disasters by funding mitigation measures during the recovery phase of a natural disaster.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

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