



Risk Management Series

Design Guidance for Shelters and Safe Rooms

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RISK MANAGEMENT SERIES

Design Guidance for Shelters and Safe Rooms

**PROVIDING PROTECTION TO PEOPLE AND BUILDINGS
AGAINST TERRORIST ATTACKS**



FEMA

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OVERVIEW

This manual is intended to provide guidance for engineers, architects, building officials, and property owners to design shelters and safe rooms in buildings. It presents information about the design and construction of shelters in the work place, home, or community building that will provide protection in response to manmade hazards. Because the security needs and types of construction vary greatly, users may select the methods and measures that best meet their individual situations. The use of experts to apply the methodologies contained in this document is encouraged.

The information contained herein will assist in the planning and design of shelters that may be constructed outside or within dwellings or public buildings. These safe rooms will protect occupants from a variety of hazards, including debris impact, accidental or intentional explosive detonation, and the accidental or intentional release of a toxic substance into the air. Safe rooms may also be designed to protect individuals from assaults and attempted kidnapping, which requires design features to resist forced entry and ballistic impact. This covers a range of protective options, from low-cost expedient protection (what is commonly referred to as sheltering-in-place) to safe rooms ventilated and pressurized with air purified by ultra-high-efficiency filters. These safe rooms protect against toxic gases, vapors, and aerosols (finely divided solid or liquid particles). The contents of this manual supplement the information provided in FEMA 361, *Design and Construction Guidance for Community Shelters* and FEMA 320, *Taking Shelter From the Storm: Building a Safe Room Inside Your House*. In conjunction with FEMA 361 and FEMA 320, this publication can be used for the protection of shelters against natural disasters. Although this publication specifically does not address nuclear explosions and shelters that protect against radiological fallout, that information may be found in FEMA TR-87, *Standards for Fallout Shelters*.

This guidance focuses on safe rooms as standby systems, ones that do not provide protection on a continuous basis. To employ a standby system requires warning based on knowledge that a hazardous condition exists or is imminent. Protection is initiated as a result of warnings from civil authorities about a release of hazardous materials, visible or audible indications of a release (e.g., explosion or fire), the odor of a chemical agent, or observed symptoms of exposure in people. Although there are automatic detectors for chemical agents, such detectors are expensive and limited in the number of agents that can be reliably detected. Furthermore, at this point in time, these detectors take too long to identify the agent to be useful in making decisions in response to an attack. Similarly, an explosive vehicle or suicide bomber attack rarely provides advance warning; therefore, the shelter is most likely to be used after the fact to protect occupants until it is safe to evacuate the building.

Two different types of shelters may be considered for emergency use, standalone shelters and internal shelters. A standalone shelter is a separate building (i.e., not within or attached to any other building) that is designed and constructed to withstand the range of natural and manmade hazards. An internal shelter is a specially designed and constructed room or area within or attached to a larger building that is structurally independent of the larger building and is able to withstand the range of natural and manmade hazards. Both standalone and internal shelters are intended to provide emergency refuge for occupants of commercial office buildings, school buildings, hospitals, apartment buildings, and private homes from the hazards resulting from a wide variety of extreme events.

The shelters may be used during natural disasters following the warning that an explosive device may be activated, the discovery of an explosive device, or until safe evacuation is established following the detonation of an explosive device or the release of a toxic substance via an intentional aerosol attack or an industrial accident. Standalone community shelters may be constructed in neighborhoods where existing homes lack shelters. Community

shelters may be intended for use by the occupants of buildings they are constructed within or near, or they may be intended for use by the residents of surrounding or nearby neighborhoods or designated areas.

BACKGROUND

The attack against the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Office Building in Oklahoma City and the anthrax attacks in October 2001 made it clear that chemical, biological, radiological, and explosive (CBRE) attacks are a credible threat

to our society. Such attacks can cause a large number of fatalities or injuries in high-occupancy buildings (e.g., school buildings, hospitals and other critical care facilities, nursing homes, day-care centers, sports venues, theaters, and commercial buildings) and residential neighborhoods.

For additional information on CBR and explosives, see FEMA 426 and other Risk Management Series publications.

Protection against the effects of accidental or intentional explosive detonations and accidental or intentional releases of toxic substances into the air or water represent a class of manmade hazards that need to be addressed along with the protection that may already be provided against the effects of natural hazards such as hurricanes and tornadoes. Although there are a wide range of scenarios that may create these manmade hazards, to date they are extremely rare events. However, although scarce, these events warrant consideration for passive protective measures. These passive protective measures may be in the form of a safe room in which occupants of a building may be sheltered until it is safe to evacuate. The effectiveness of the safe room for protecting occupants from manmade threats is dependent on the amount of warning prior to the event and its construction. For example, in Israel, a building occupant may expect a 3-minute warning prior to a Scud missile attack; therefore, the shelter must be accessible to all building occupants within this time period. Note that such advance warning rarely accompanies the explosive vehicle or suicide bomber event; in this case, the function of the safe room is to

protect occupants until law enforcement agencies determine it is safe to evacuate.

Protection against explosive threats depends to a great extent on the size of the explosive, the distance of the detonation relative to the shelter, and the type of construction housing the shelter. Although there may be opportunities to design a new facility to protect against a specified attack scenario, this may be of limited feasibility for the retrofit of an existing building. The appropriate combination of charge weight and standoff distance as well as the intervening structure between the origin of threat and the protected space is very site-specific; therefore, it is impractical to define a design level threat in these terms. Rather than identify a shelter to resist a specified explosive threat, this document will provide guidance that will address different types of building construction and the reasonable measures that may be taken to provide a secure shelter and a debris mitigating enclosure for a shelter. This approach does not attempt to address a specific threat because there are too many possible scenarios to generalize a threat-specific approach; however, it does allow the user to determine the feasible options that may be evaluated on a case by case basis to determine a response to any postulated threat. For protection against assault and attempted kidnapping, a level of forced entry and ballistic resistance may be specified. Several different organizations (e.g., the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), H.P. White, Underwriters Laboratories (UL), the Department of Justice (DOJ), etc.) define performance levels associated with forced entry and ballistic resistance that relate to the different sequence of tests that are required to demonstrate effectiveness of a given construction product. This document will not distinguish between the different types of testing regimes.

Protection against airborne hazardous materials may require active measures. Buildings are designed to exchange air with the outdoors in normal operation; therefore, airborne hazardous materials can infiltrate buildings readily when released outdoors, driven by pressures generated by wind, buoyancy, and fans. Buildings also tend to retain contaminants; that is, it takes longer for the toxic materials to be purged from a building than to enter it.

The safe room may also shelter occupants from tornadoes and hurricanes, which are the most destructive forces of nature. Since 1995, over 1,200 tornadoes have been reported nationwide each year. Approximately five hurricanes strike the United States mainland every 3 years and two of these storms will cause extensive damage. Protection from the effects of these natural occurrences may be provided by well designed and amply supplied safe rooms. The well designed safe room protects occupants from the extremely rare, but potentially catastrophic effects of a manmade threat as well as the statistically more common, but potentially less severe effects of a natural disaster.

SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE MANUAL

This document will discuss the design of shelters to protect against CBRE attacks. Fallout shelters that are designed to protect against the effects of a nuclear weapon attack are not addressed in this publication. The risks of death or injury from CBRE attacks are not evenly distributed throughout the United States. This manual will guide the reader through the process of designing a shelter to protect against CBRE attacks. The intent of this manual is not to mandate the construction of shelters for CBRE events, but rather to provide design guidance for persons who wish to design and build such shelters.

The design and planning necessary for extremely high-capacity shelters that may be required for large, public use venues such as stadiums or amphitheaters are beyond the scope of this design manual. An owner or operator of such a venue may be guided by concepts presented in this document, but detailed guidance concerning extremely high-capacity shelters is not provided. The design of such shelters requires attention to issues such as egress and life safety for a number of people that are orders of magnitude greater than those proposed for a shelter designed in accordance with the guidance provided herein.

The intent of this manual is not to override or replace current codes and standards, but rather to provide important guidance

of best practices (based on current technologies and scientific research) where none has been available. No known building, fire, life safety code, or engineering standard has previously attempted to provide detailed information, guidance, and recommendations concerning the design of CBRE shelters for protection of the general public. Therefore, the information provided herein is the best available at the time this manual was published. Designing and constructing a shelter according to the criteria in this manual does not mean that the shelter will be capable of withstanding every possible event. The design professional who ultimately designs a shelter should state the limiting assumptions and shelter design parameters on the project documents.

This manual includes the following chapters and appendices:

- Chapter 1 presents design considerations, potential threats, the levels of protection, shelter types, siting, occupancy duration, and human factors criteria for shelters (e.g., square footage per shelter occupant, proper ventilation, distance/travel time and accessibility, special needs, lighting, emergency power, route marking and wayfinding, signage, evacuation considerations, and key operations zones).
- Chapter 2 discusses the structural design criteria for blast and impact resistance, as well as shelters and model building types. Structural systems and building envelope elements for shelters are analyzed and protective design measures for the defined building types are provided.
- Chapter 3 describes how to add chemical, biological, and radiological (CBR) protection capability to a shelter or a safe room. It also discusses air filtration, safe room criteria, design requirements, operations and maintenance, commissioning, and training required to operate a shelter.
- Chapter 4 discusses emergency management considerations, Federal CBRE response teams, emergency response and

mass care, community shelter operations plans, descriptions of the responsibilities of the shelter team members, shelter equipment and supplies, maintenance plans, and commercial building shelter operation plans. Key equipment considerations and training are also discussed.

- Appendix A presents the references used in the preparation of this document.
- Appendix B contains a list of acronyms and abbreviations that appear in this document.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Overview	i
Background.....	iii
Scope and Organization of the Manual.....	v
Acknowledgments.....	vii

CHAPTER 1– DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 Overview	1-1
1.2 Potential Threats.....	1-4
1.2.1 Explosive Threats	1-5
1.2.2 CBR Attacks	1-11
1.2.2.1 Chemical Agents.....	1-11
1.2.2.2 Biological Warfare Agents	1-12
1.2.2.3 Radiological Attacks	1-13
1.3 Levels of Protection	1-15
1.3.1 Blast Levels of Protection	1-15
1.3.2 CBR Levels of Protection.....	1-17
1.4 Shelter Types	1-19
1.4.1 Standalone Shelters	1-19
1.4.2 Internal Shelters.....	1-19
1.4.3 Shelter Categories	1-20
1.5 Siting	1-23
1.6 Occupancy Duration, Toxic-free Area (TFA) Floor Space, and Ventilation Requirements	1-31
1.7 Human Factors Criteria.....	1-33
1.7.1 Square Footage/Occupancy Requirements	1-33

1.7.1.1	Tornado or Short-term Shelter Square Footage Recommendations	1-34
1.7.1.2	Hurricane or Long-term Shelter Square Footage Recommendations	1-35
1.7.2	Distance/Travel Time and Accessibility	1-35
1.7.3	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	1-37
1.7.4	Special Needs.....	1-38
1.8	Other Design Considerations.....	1-39
1.8.1	Lighting.....	1-39
1.8.2	Emergency Power.....	1-39
1.8.3	Route Marking and Wayfinding	1-40
1.8.4	Signage.....	1-42
1.8.4.1	Community and Parking Signage.	1-42
1.8.4.2	Signage at Schools and Places of Work.....	1-42
1.9	Evacuation Considerations.....	1-44
1.10	Key Operations Zones.....	1-51
1.10.1	Containment Zones	1-51
1.10.2	Staging Areas and Designated Entry and Exit Access Control Points.....	1-55
 CHAPTER 2 – STRUCTURAL DESIGN CRITERIA		
2.1	Overview	2-1
2.2	Explosive Threat Parameters	2-1
2.2.1	Blast Effects in Low-rise Buildings	2-5
2.2.2	Blast Effects in High-rise Buildings: The Urban Situation	2-8
2.3	Hardened Construction	2-9

2.3.1	Structural System.....	2-9
2.3.2	Loads and Connections	2-12
2.3.3	Building Envelope.....	2-16
2.3.4	Forced Entry and Ballistic Resistance	2-17
2.4	New Construction	2-19
2.4.1	Structure	2-20
2.4.2	Façade and Internal Partitions.....	2-26
2.5	Existing Construction: Retrofitting Considerations	2-29
2.5.1	Structure	2-30
2.5.2	Façade and Internal Partitions.....	2-31
	2.5.2.1 Anti-shatter Façade.....	2-32
	2.5.2.2 Façade Debris Catch Systems.....	2-35
	2.5.2.3 Internal Partitions	2-39
	2.5.2.4 Structural Upgrades	2-44
2.5.3	Checklist for Retrofitting Issues	2-45
2.6	Shelters and Model Building Types	2-46
2.6.1	W1, W1a, and W2 Wood Light Frames and Wood Commercial Buildings.....	2-46
2.6.2	S1, S2, and S3 Steel Moment Frames, Steel Braced Frames, and Steel Light Frames.....	2-50
2.6.3	S4 and S5 Steel Frames with Concrete Shearwalls and Infill Masonry Walls	2-54
2.6.4	C1, C2, and C3 Concrete Moment Frames, Concrete and Infill Masonry Shearwalls – Type 1 Bearing Walls and Type 2 Gravity Frames.....	2-57
2.6.5	PC1 and PC2 Tilt-up Concrete Shearwalls and Precast Concrete Frames and Shearwalls	2-62

2.6.6	RM1 and RM2 Reinforced Masonry Walls with Flexible Diaphragms or Stiff Diaphragms and Unreinforced Masonry (URM) Load-bearing Walls.....	2-65
2.6.7	Conclusions	2-69
2.7	Case Study: Blast-Resistant Safe Room	2-69

CHAPTER 3 – CBR THREAT PROTECTION

3.1	Overview	3-1
3.2	How Air Filtration Affects Protection	3-5
3.3	Safe Room Criteria	3-7
3.4	Design and Installation of a Toxic-agent Safe Room	3-9
3.4.1	Class 3 Safe Room	3-10
3.4.1.1	Tightening the Room.....	3-10
3.4.1.2	Preparing for Rapidly Sealing the Room	3-11
3.4.1.3	Preparing for Deactivation of Fans	3-14
3.4.1.4	Accommodating Air Conditioning and Heating	3-14
3.4.1.5	Safety Equipment	3-16
3.4.2	Class 2 Safe Room	3-16
3.4.2.1	Filter Unit Requirements for the Unventilated Class 2 Safe Room.....	3-16
3.4.2.2	Installation and Operation	3-17
3.4.3	Class 1 Safe Room	3-18
3.4.3.1	Selecting a Filter Unit for a Class 1 Safe Room.....	3-18
3.4.3.2	Sizing the Filter Unit for Pressurization.....	3-20

3.4.3.3	Other Considerations for Design of a Class 1 Safe Room.....	3-21
3.5	Operations and Maintenance	3-23
3.5.1	Operating a Safe Room in a Home	3-24
3.5.2	Operating a Safe Room in an Office Building.....	3-25
3.5.3	Operating Procedures for a Class 1 Safe Room.....	3-26
3.6	Maintaining the CBR Shelter	3-27
3.6.1	Maintenance for a Class 3 Safe Room	3-27
3.6.2	Maintenance for a Class 2 Safe Room	3-27
3.6.3	Maintenance for a Class 1 Safe Room	3-28
3.7	Commissioning a Class 1 CBR Safe Room	3-31
3.7.1	Measurements	3-32
3.7.2	Configuration	3-32
3.7.3	Functionality	3-33
3.8	Upgrading a CBR Safe Room	3-34
3.9	Training on the Use of a Safe Room	3-34
3.10	Case Study: Class 1 Safe Room	3-35

CHAPTER 4 – EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1	Overview	4-1
4.2	National Emergency Response Framework	4-1
4.3	Federal CBRE Response Teams	4-9
4.4	Emergency Response	4-11
4.4.1	General Considerations	4-11
4.4.2	Evacuation Considerations.....	4-12
4.4.3	Mass Care	4-16

4.5	Community Shelter Operations Plan	4-19
4.5.1	Site Coordinator	4-21
4.5.2	Assistant Site Coordinator	4-22
4.5.3	Equipment Manager	4-22
4.5.4	Signage Manager	4-23
4.5.5	Notification Manager	4-24
4.5.6	Field Manager	4-24
4.5.7	Assistant Managers	4-25
4.5.8	Emergency Provisions, Equipment, and Supplies	4-25
	4.5.8.1 Food and Water	4-25
	4.5.8.2 Sanitation Management.....	4-25
	4.5.8.3 Emergency Supplies	4-28
	4.5.8.4 Communications Equipment	4-28
	4.5.8.5 Masks and Escape Hoods.....	4-29
	4.5.8.6 Portable HVAC Units	4-29
	4.5.8.7 Emergency Equipment Credenza and Wall Units Storage.....	4-30
4.6	Shelter Maintenance Plan	4-30
4.7	Commercial Building Shelter Operations Plan.....	4-30
4.7.1	Emergency Assignments	4-31
4.7.2	Emergency Call List	4-33
4.7.3	Event Safety Procedures.....	4-34
4.8	General Considerations.....	4-34
4.9	Training and Information	4-36

APPENDICES

Appendix A References

Appendix B Abbreviations and Acronyms

TABLES

Chapter 1

Table 1-1	Safe Evacuation Distances from Explosive Threats.....	1-7
Table 1-2	Safe Evacuation Distances from LPG Threats.....	1-8
Table 1-3	Correlation of ISC Levels of Protection and Incident Pressure to Damage and Injury	1-16
Table 1-4	ISC CBR Levels of Protection.....	1-18
Table 1-5	Commercial Shelter Categories	1-21
Table 1-6	Evacuation Versus Shelter-in-place Options Matrix	1-45

Chapter 2

Table 2-1	UL 752 Ratings of Bullet-resisting Materials	2-18
-----------	--	------

Chapter 3

Table 3-1	Comparison of the Three General Classes of Toxic-agent Safe Rooms.....	3-3
Table 3-2	Leakage per Square Foot for 0.1 iwg (estimated makeup airflow rate per square foot (floor area) to achieve an overpressure of 0.1 iwg)	3-21

Chapter 4

Table 4-1	Shelter Equipment and Supplies	4-26
-----------	--------------------------------------	------

FIGURES

Chapter 1

Figure 1-1	Terrorism by event 1980 through 2001	1-10
Figure 1-2	Sample anthrax letter	1-13
Figure 1-3	Radioactive materials smuggling.....	1-14
Figure 1-4	Example of shelter marking on building, floor plan, and exterior exits to rally points	1-25
Figure 1-5	Examples of internal shelter locations in a residential slab on grade foundation.....	1-28
Figure 1-6	Examples of internal shelter locations in a residential basement.....	1-28
Figure 1-7	Examples of internal shelter locations in a commercial building	1-29
Figure 1-8	Examples of internal shelter locations in a retail/commercial multi-story building using parking garage, conference rooms, data centers, stairwells, and elevator core areas	1-29
Figure 1-9	Examples of internal shelter locations in a school/church facility	1-30
Figure 1-10	National Weather Service forecast and warnings.....	1-36
Figure 1-11	Photoluminescent signs, stair treads, and route marking	1-41
Figure 1-12	Shelter signage	1-43
Figure 1-13	Operations Zones, Casualty Collection Point (CCP), and Safe Refuge Area (SRA)	1-52
Figure 1-14	NRP-CIS Ladder Pipe Decontamination System (LDS)	1-53

Figure 1-15	NRP-CIS Emergency Decontamination Corridor System (EDCS)	1-54
Figure 1-16	Patient staging area and remains recovery.....	1-55
Figure 1-17	Example of Pentagon staging and recovery operations.....	1-56
Figure 1-18	Contamination Control Area (CCA)	1-57
Figure 1-19	Site and evidence collection on the site	1-58
Figure 1-20	Rescue team coordination prior to entering a site	1-59

Chapter 2

Figure 2-1	Airblast pressure time history.....	2-3
Figure 2-2	Range to effects chart	2-4
Figure 2-3	Blast damage.....	2-5
Figure 2-4	Alfred P. Murrah Federal Office Building.....	2-6
Figure 2-5	Khobar Towers.....	2-7
Figure 2-6	Ductile detailing of reinforced concrete structures	2-11
Figure 2-7	Effects of uplift and load reversals	2-13
Figure 2-8	Flat slab failure mechanisms	2-14
Figure 2-9	Blast damaged façade.....	2-16
Figure 2-10	Layers of defense.....	2-19
Figure 2-11	Multi-span slab splice locations	2-21
Figure 2-12	Typical frame detail at interior column.....	2-23
Figure 2-13	Protective façade design	2-27
Figure 2-14	Mechanically attached anti-shatter film.....	2-34
Figure 2-15	Blast curtain system.....	2-37

Figure 2-16	Spray-on elastomer coating	2-40
Figure 2-17	Geotextile debris catch system	2-40
Figure 2-18	Stiffened wall panels	2-42
Figure 2-19	Metal stud blast wall	2-43
Figure 2-20	Steel jacket retrofit detail.....	2-44
Figure 2-21	W1 wood light frame < 3,000 square feet	2-47
Figure 2-22	W1a wood light frame > 3,000 square feet	2-48
Figure 2-23	W2 wood commercial buildings.....	2-49
Figure 2-24	S1 steel moment frames.....	2-51
Figure 2-25	S2 steel braced frames.....	2-52
Figure 2-26	S3 steel light frames	2-53
Figure 2-27	S4 steel frames with concrete shearwalls	2-55
Figure 2-28	S5 steel frames with infill masonry walls.....	2-56
Figure 2-29	C1 concrete moment frames.....	2-58
Figure 2-30	C2 concrete shearwalls – type 1 bearing walls.....	2-59
Figure 2 -31	C2 concrete shearwalls – type 2 gravity frames	2-60
Figure 2-32	C3 concrete frames with infill masonry shearwalls.....	2-61
Figure 2-33	PC1 tilt-up concrete shearwalls	2-63
Figure 2-34	PC2 precast concrete frames and shearwalls.....	2-64
Figure 2-35	RM1 reinforced masonry walls with flexible diaphragms.....	2-66
Figure 2-36	RM2 reinforced masonry walls with stiff diaphragms.....	2-67
Figure 2-37	URM load-bearing walls.....	2-68
Figure 2-38	Schematic of tie forces in a frame structure.....	2-72

Chapter 3

Figure 3-1	Hinged covers facilitate the rapid sealing of supply, return, or exhaust ducts in a safe room.	3-13
Figure 3-2	Automatic dampers are used to isolate the safe room from the ducts or vents used in normal HVAC system operation.	3-22
Figure 3-3	A tabletop recirculation filter unit with a substantial adsorber is a simple means of providing higher levels of CBR protection to unventilated safe rooms.	3-28
Figure 3-4	A canister-type filter unit is often used for Class 1 Safe Rooms to maximize storage life of the filters.	3-31
Figure 3-5	A blower door test on the selected safe room aids in estimating the size of air-filtration unit required and in identifying air leakage paths.....	3-37
Figure 3-6	Blower-door test results on the stairwell selected for a safe room.....	3-38
Figure 3-7	A military radial-flow CBR filter set was selected for safe room filtration.....	3-40
Figure 3-8	A 4,000-cfm filter unit using radial flow filters was selected for the stairwell safe room.	3-40
Figure 3-9	The Class 1 Safe Room control panel has a system start/stop switch, status indicators for dampers, and a pressure gauge.....	3-41

Chapter 4

Figure 4-1	Preparedness versus scale of event.....	4-3
Figure 4-2	Flowchart of initial National-level incident management actions.....	4-6
Figure 4-3	NRP-CIS Mass Casualty Incident Response	4-7
Figure 4-4	Emergency Management Group and Emergency Operations Group	4-9
Figure 4-5	High-rise buildings and emergency response	4-16