



MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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Tornado Shelters in the 28th Senatorial District Gain National Attention

For many of us who live in Missouri, we are well aware of the spring season and the severe weather that goes along with it. The spring season and the turbulent weather it brings seem to go hand-in-hand for much of the Midwest area of the United States. According to the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center (SPC), May and June are the peak months for tornado and other types of severe weather in Missouri. However, Missourians might not think of fall as a time for severe weather. In fact, late autumn can also bring a surge of severe weather to our state.

In October 2007, five lives were lost due to tornadic events in the Midwest — two of those were in Paris, Missouri. As a couple ran for cover to a mobile home, their bodies were thrown 400 feet and large pieces of the trailer where they were running to seek shelter were thrown a third of a mile and landed in a nearby field.

And in response to a March 2006 tornado that tragically killed two people, Pettis County is now moving forward with a plan that will help protect the citizens of the 28th Senatorial District. Pettis County is home to more than 40,000 people. In order to provide safety to these citizens during inclement weather, the county plans to build eight storm shelters that would hold about 1,000 individuals. The shelters would be strategically placed within a five-minute walk or drive of most residents in Pettis County who might utilize them. Each structure will have 10-inch reinforced concrete walls, restroom facilities, and ventilation systems.

The plan to build the storm shelters received national attention in a *USA Today* news article published on Oct. 8. The article stated that the shelters built in Pettis County could become a national model for other counties and states to use in order to prepare individuals for severe weather.

The plan to build the storm shelters in Pettis County, one of the nine counties in the 28th Senatorial District, was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The agency agreed to pay for 75 percent of the \$2.9 million cost. According to the FEMA director of risk reduction, the agency has funded safe rooms in existing buildings for a number of years, and the agency has spent more than \$200 million for about 500 community safe rooms since 2000.

The forces of nature that accompany these severe storm conditions during any time of year should not be tested by Missourians. I hope that these storm shelters being built in Pettis County serve as a model for every county in Missouri, as well as those states that are affected by these severe weather conditions in our nation. Every life is precious and individuals need to be able to protect themselves and their loved ones from harm that might come their way.

For more information on severe weather conditions and tornadoes, including safety tips and other educational weather sites, please visit the National Weather Service's Service Weather Awareness site (www.weather.gov/om/severeweather). And if you have questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.gov.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.

