

cont. from front page

Storm shelter space available to residents

"The sirens are concentrated where the majority of our population is located, but keep in mind that these are outdoor warning sirens. The sound is to remind people to go inside when they hear it."

The safe room itself features abundant plugs, while the total building is fitted with more than seventy-five outlets always at the ready to provide charging capability. If electricity is lost due to a storm, back-up generators can power



Photo by Doris Bynum

The safe room at the Pinehaven fire station is built to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) standards and can accommodate as many as seventy-five individuals, with five to seven square feet per person. The steel frame doors can be secured at the top and the bottom to withstand wind. When it's not being used as a shelter, the room functions as a dayroom/living area for firefighters on duty. Comfortable recliners can be quickly moved, allowing people to shelter in place for a short-term period.

Blackledge notes that one of the greatest benefits of the safe room is the large number of electrical outlets that it offers for people needing to re-charge cellphones and power essential medical equipment like portable oxygen tanks and individual insulin pumps.

the entire building.

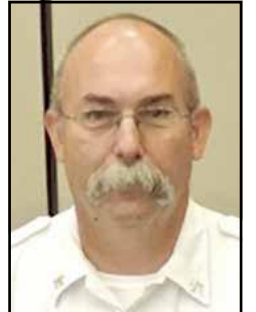
The addition of concrete reinforcements and steel-framed doors to make the room weather-safe added approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000 to the total cost of \$1.6 million for the 6,500-square foot building, but Blackledge believes it was money well spent.

"It's available to all our citizens, particularly those who might have a critical need for their medical equipment to be powered at all times."

The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) conducts a yearly weather awareness campaign via TV, radio and internet. In 2018, the reminder for people to be weather conscious was in mid-February, with emphasis on severe thunderstorms, flash flooding, tornadoes, lightning, and various methods for receiving

Chief Blackledge recommends the following items for a basic emergency supply kit:

- ☐ One gallon of water, per person per day, for at least three days
- ☐ A three-day supply of non-perishable food
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-crank radio AND a NOAA weather radio – with extra batteries for both
- ☐ Flashlight(s) and extra batteries
- ☐ First-aid kit
- ☐ Whistle to signal for help
- ☐ Dust mask, plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in-place
- ☐ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- ☐ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- ☐ Can opener for canned food
- ☐ Local maps
- ☐ A reasonable amount of cash, in case ATMs are not functioning



Additional items that might be added include:

- ☐ Eyeglasses
- ☐ Prescription medicines or, at the very least, a list of the prescriptions, should they need to be replaced or replenished
- ☐ Infant formula and diapers, if needed
- ☐ Pet food and extra water for a pet
- ☐ Important family documents, such as insurance policies, identification and bank records in a waterproof, portable container
- ☐ Sleeping bags or warm blankets for each person
- ☐ Complete change of clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes plus a sweater, jacket or coat

Additional information can be obtained from FEMA's website, www.ready.gov.

weather warnings.

But weather events can occur at any time, according to Chief Blackledge, with November often seeing tornadoes spun off from hurricanes and April often as the peak of tornadic activity.

Blackledge recommends having an

emergency kit prepared and always handy in case of threatening weather that might require leaving one's home.

"Whether it's coming to our storm shelter or seeking shelter elsewhere, everybody needs to have certain items ready to take with them."



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