

Storm Shelters for the Masses

By Joseph Parish

I have been detecting some ghastly weather facing many segments of our nation, especially in the mid-west states and their below freezing temperatures or the southern portion with its widespread development of hazardous tornadoes. To make matters even worse we witness these weather phenomena coming in multiples. Instead of one tornado we frequently see two and then three, sometimes even more. Instead of a single snow storm effecting one state we see an umbrella storm covering most of the nation. Researchers are discovering these conditions are now taking place in regions which had previously not supported tornado activity or major snow storms in the least. Years ago, when I resided in Midwestern states which were earmarked for their tornado activity, I would view them in the sky as well as on the ground while at that time we could accurately predict when they would arrive and departure. They often displayed specific patterns which were repeatedly duplicated each time so it was customary for us to know what direction they were coming from and where they were heading. This is not the case these days. Today you cannot make an educated guess as you never know where they will originate from or in which direction they are bound towards. Add to the destructive nature of the tornados themselves complimented by the high strength of the winds which accompanies them and a storm shelter is greatly advised.

Many people in these perilous locations reside in mobile homes with no basement of any sort and no means of escape in the event a swarm of tornados begin spawning at their location. This situation places them at the mercy of Mother Nature unless precautions are instituted ahead of time. Try accomplishing a search of the internet for commercial storm shelters and you will find that the cost is simply prohibitive. You can continue your search endlessly and never find one that is affordable, as all are likely to be out of the average person's price range.

Most people would love to have a conventional home but must live within their means so if their abode happens to be a mobile home, they have no choice but to make the best of what they have at hand. This does not indicate that they must endanger their family in the process, for there are many alternatives available to create a homebuilt shelter that can be both secure and inexpensive. You can initially approach his issue in two ways. One, you can build a shelter that is partially buried in the ground or as I personally would prefer one that is completely enclosed under the earth.

As a first thought and the least expensive you might wish to consider a van body or a truck box which you bury within a hillside if you have one available. You can use a septic tank or any other type of tank to create your shelter in as well. If you happen to be located on flat land with no hillsides in sight, you may wish to try digging a hole and having a cement pad installed in it. Next build the side walls up with cinderblocks. Although I am not familiar with the current costs associated with such a venture, I am sure it cannot be too costly. If you have access to the cement blocks which are frequently used for building

silos, I would recommend you use these to build an eight-foot-tall unit of whatever size diameter you are able to afford. Your roof should be created with rebar and Ferro-cement and upon completion place backfill around your construction. Proceed to place pond liner over and around your underground shelter in order to keep the water as far away from the shelter as possible. Finally finish the backfilling process and cover the complete project with a good layer of soil. You should plant turf on the top of it and get it growing well so the roots will hold the sod and soil in place.

Alternately if all you are seeking is an emergency survival shelter you could very well make do with a large, unused, septic tank. This unit when completed would be able to serve double duty as both a root cellar and a storm shelter. Simply cut a door into one end of the unit and bury all of it except the door end. These pipes are well constructed and specifically designed to be buried underground.

Storm shelters constructed from large culverts with wooden ends are some of the simplest you can create. I have read where one individual coated the edges with some burlap which has been soaked in roofing tar and next covered the entire unit with black basement waterproofing paint. He then wrapped some tarp around it and finally place it in the ground. He claimed that the unit remained very dry when prepped in this manner.

Search around as there are a number of ready-made items that could inexpensively be employed to serve as a storm shelter. I would like to leave you with these final tips regardless of the kind of shelter you select. When you construct your shelter make certain that your door opens inward in order to prevent being trapped by debris which may have become piled against the outside of the door. In addition, include essential tools such as chain saws, picks, etc. inside your shelter. They do you no good if they are located elsewhere,