



“Certification” Misuse

By Ernst W. Kiesling, P.E., Ph.D.

Neither the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Texas Tech University (TTU), nor the National Storm Shelter Association (NSSA), certify or approve storm shelters. Thus statements such as “FEMA Approved,” “FEMA Certified,” or the use of the words approved or certified in conjunction with any of these agencies is misleading to the public and should not be used. Producers of shelters that successfully passed debris impact tests at Texas Tech may use the National Wind Institute and the name of Texas Tech University in advertising only after securing written permission from Texas Tech University.

It is appropriate for a shelter producer to claim that a shelter meets FEMA guidelines or the NSSA Standard only if the producer is indeed sure that it does. The NSSA third-party verification of compliance is designed to give credibility to such claims. A producer who has received verification of compliance with the NSSA Standard by a NSSA-approved third-party engineering company and is an NSSA member can affix a seal to the shelter attesting compliance, thus distinguishing that shelter from others whose design quality has not been verified. The seal provided by NSSA states that the shelter producer certifies compliance with the NSSA Standard. It does not state that NSSA certifies the shelter.

FEMA has published prescriptive designs in FEMA P-320, *Taking Shelter from the Storm* for site built Safe Rooms and has published guidelines for all safe rooms in FEMA P-361, *Safe Rooms for Tornadoes and Hurricanes Guidance for Community and Residential Safe Rooms*. Some NSSA members served on the committee to develop the ICC/NSSA standard ICC-500/2008 and its update for standards compliance verification available on the web at www.NSSA.cc. The producer should be familiar with the applicable guide to quality and take responsibility to comply with it.

Requests for permission to use the name of either Texas Tech University or The National Storm Shelter Association (other than member grade) may be directed to:

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They may approve your request or forward it to the Office of Technology Transfer and Intellectual Property at Texas Tech.