

4-H A-TEAM

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH

Our adventures begin with Miss Patti's after-school hazard mitigation class. Students arrive and are told of the fun a group of 4-H'ers in Vermilion Parish had learning how to protect their 4-H office...

Oh my, what can we protect?

Their new leachers from the LSU AgCenter asked them to build a marshmallow and spaghetti building and protect it from wind.

Wow!

Some structures leaned left, some right, some fell down, and one stood tall.

The next class was full of images of hurricanes, floods, hail, thunderstorms and even tsunamis. After seeing the vivid images, the newly formed St. John the Baptist Adaptation Team, from now on referred to as the...

The students were curious to learn why some of the buildings fell, Miss Pat, Miss Shandy and Miss Debbie said they would explain over time.

The A-Team thought about where they live and what could possibly happen to harm their schools, homes and local businesses.

Remember Hurricane Isaac?

Oh, yes. My house flooded then. We didn't have electricity for a week.

I wonder where the fire re-sponders stayed when called to this was occurring.

Hmm... more on this later.

The interstate was closed because it was covered with water. What a mess it made of our community!

Enter Mr. Jeff from NOAA...

Hi guys, I have a flood plain model to help illustrate how rainwater flows. When rain falls in the wetlands, it soaks into the ground. From there it falls into other parking lots and areas that have no place to go but into drains.

Mr. Jeff had the class build a levee and showed them how it could divert water away from homes and businesses.

In the meantime... Miss Patti, Miss Pat, Miss Shandy, and Miss Debbie arranged for the State Hazard Mitigation Officer known by friends as...

THE SHMO

... (also known as Mr. Jeffrey G.) from the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, or GOHSEP, to visit the class and explain to the A-Team what a safe room is all about.

I'm here to talk to you about a safe room. I have photos of a building in a nearby town that illustrates a safe room. A safe room is built to meet FEMA standards and to offer nearly absolute protection. That's what we need!

A-TEAM

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You mean... adaptation?

Yes, adapting a building to stand up to natural disasters.

...was even more determined to learn more about mitigation.

We need to know more about protecting our homes and communities from flooding.

The students learned how to access the online flood portal from computers and from smartphones. Each student entered his or her parish and home address and "pooft" a map showing their home location appeared with all of the answers. By the time class was over, they all knew how to access the flood portal and show their parents or friends how to find information on their houses.

Wow! A trip to the EOC! What do they do?

I sure wish we could help them. Wait, that's it, our parish needs our first responders can be safe, have up-to-the-minute communications and rest when needed.

What is that? I'm not sure, but I guess we will have to find out.

Miss Shandy then instructs the A-Team on what an engineered versus a pre-engineered building is, plus lots more.

Guess where we are going today? The St. John the Baptist Parish Emergency Operations Center!

Yes, they need a "safe room"!

How can we pay for it? Maybe the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program?

A safe room must cost a lot of money?

Yes, over a million dollars.

Let's ask Miss Patti, Miss Pat, Miss Shandy, and Miss Debbie.



Before we can complete an application, we must have a plan. Let's talk to the engineers working on our school that was damaged by floodwater during Hurricane Isaac.

I agree, nothing like relaxing with the team.

To carry on the A-Team tradition, the team got a lesson in measuring distance from the coast, not just in miles, but also in feet above sea level. They planted a benchmark right outside the school so its height can be measured years from now to see if the ground is moving up or down.



Hey, other kids who will come to school here can see this and learn from what we've done!



We rejoin the team hard at work researching safe room design and construction while other members are crunching the numbers.

Still others begin the task of filling out forms.

Jeepers, there sure are a lot of blanks to fill out and letters to write.



Good grief, completing a hazard mitigation application was a lot of work. It sure is great to have it finished.



Just two days later, the A-Team delivers their safe room proposal and interior concept while meeting in the parish EOC situation room. Everyone was very impressed. Now the first responders will be safe during a storm and have comfortable shelter during early recovery.

TO BE CONTINUED...

