The issue in Norman...

Norman officially closes public storm shelters
Norman officially closed its public storm shelters at area schools on recommendation from Fire Chief Jim Fullingim. Overcrowding had been a consistent problem at the sites, and fire officials said the killer storms in May proved schools were no safer than homes.

Public Shelter Challenges from a University Perspective

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Safety Issues

The risks of getting to the schools formerly designated as shelters outweigh the benefits, and the shelters do not meet the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s “tornado safe” standards.

The deadly outbreak of tornadoes in May demonstrated that schools are not as safe as people believed and that being in a vehicle and trying to get to a shelter when time is running out is more dangerous than “sheltering in place.”

Security Issues

Norman has experienced problems at the shelters in the past because of overcrowding and people wanting to bring their pets.

“We have had people standing outside storm shelters when the storm hit because the shelters were full.”

Which became an issue at OU...

In discussions with staff, they estimate that during the May 2011 tornadoes in Moore and OKC, they were full in the lower two levels and had a significant amount of population from the public. They estimate they had 2 to 3 thousand people including pets. They have given thought to separating an area for pets towards the back of LL1. They indicated that LL2 was extremely hot due to the people heat and loss of power. Also indicated there were lights that were lacking in areas of LL2.
Which leads to angry people...

“Where are we supposed to go?”

“I live on the second floor of an apartment building with a vinyl bathtub.”

“Just because you can’t protect everybody, you are not going to protect anybody?”

Risk and Vulnerability Issues

“If my wife and I are destroyed while sheltering in our house, that’s two people who are killed. I’d rather that happen than 200 people be destroyed who thought they were safe.”

FUTURE PLANS

Construction of shelters at campus apartments...

Residential Colleges with shelters...

TRADITIONS WEST/EAST SHELTERS
Thoughts for Discussion...
DISCLAIMER: KEVIN’S THOUGHTS ONLY!

1. Emphasize hands-on education on personal safety plans/sheltering. (schools)
2. I wish people would be this aggressive about their own safety on the other 363 days a year.
3. We need to think of creative ways to get folks to think sheltering first. (when building house, choosing apartment, etc.)
4. Policy? Building codes?
5. It surprises me that such a “red state” has such a “blue mindset” when it comes to shelters.