

# Should School Hallways As Storm Shelters Be the Next Weather Safety Recommendation to be Retired?

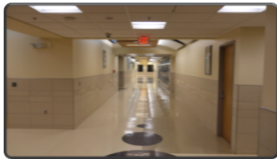
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## Weather Ready Schools



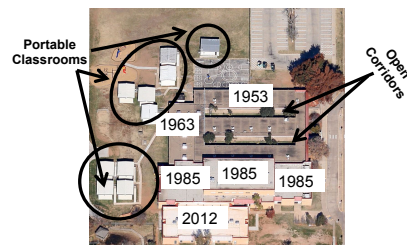
Hallways serve as the main shelter areas in most schools.



Typically, survey teams find open roofs and debris in school hallways post damage.



Schools are built in pieces over time.



No building codes exist to withstand tornado hazards for high occupancy buildings.



Lack of significant shelter options revealed.



The point of this poster is not to exclude all hallways but instead evaluate spaces of a school campus to determine the best shelter options. Interior hallways have been the standard shelter area for many schools. However, there are specific design components that make some hallways less safe.

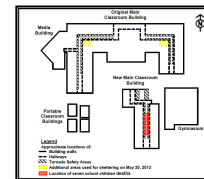
- a. For years schools have been built to be more inviting. The need for more natural light results in hallways with big windows or sky lights.
- b. Large open spaces like libraries or cafeterias have long-span roofs and rely more on pillars or columns to support the weight of the roof.
- c. With portable classrooms the weather risks go beyond tornadoes. High winds, lightning, and large hail all have the potential to cause injuries to occupants.
- d. Classrooms include clerestory windows along the top edge of the interior walls, reducing the connection strength from the ceiling through the wall to the foundation. Remodeling projects in open spaces resulted in the addition of sheetrock walls instead of reinforced concrete masonry units. These walls are added between the roof and foundation and are not structurally connected to either.

Fatalities have occurred in these recommended hallways.

**7 children found dead at Oklahoma school wrecked by tornado, officials say**

By Tracy Connor, Staff Writer, NBC News  
Mon May 20, 2013 7:02 PM EDT [NBCNEWS.com](http://NBCNEWS.com)

Plaza Towers Elementary had a tornado sheltering plan that was used on May 20, 2013.



Plaza Towers struck by EF5 tornado on May 20, 2013

The Plaza Towers Elementary campus (located in Moore, Oklahoma) consisted of multiple unconnected buildings. The main building was constructed in the 1970's. The campus included four portable buildings. All buildings were one-story. The school did not have a basement as is typical in Oklahoma schools.

Hallways are about the only interior spaces that existed at this campus. The school was not at full capacity during the event. Many students were picked up by parents earlier in the day.

After initially sheltering in the hallway, several teachers moved their students into the bathrooms as they saw the tornado approaching the exterior hallway door.



Aerial view of Plaza Towers Campus before the tornado.

Schools need expert help to identify safer shelter options.



Typical school sheltering plan created by school administrators.



Revised school sheltering plan with guidance from experts.



Get involved. Tour school premises. Review school plans. Voice your concerns.



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