



# City of Norman, OK

Municipal Building Council  
Chambers  
201 West Gray Street  
Norman, OK 73069

## Master

**File Number: R-1314-16**

**File ID:** R-1314-16

**Type:** Resolution

**Status:** Non-Consent Items

**Version:** 1

**Reference:** Item No. 24

**In Control:** City Council

**Department:** Jayme Rowe

**Cost:**

**File Created:** 07/10/2013

**File Name:** R-1314-16 closing public storm shelters

**Final Action:**

**Title:** RESOLUTION NO. R-1314-16: A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORMAN, OKLAHOMA, AFFIRMING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE CENTRAL REGION OF OKLAHOMA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION TO DEVELOP PERSONAL SAFETY PLANS, TO STAY INFORMED, AND TO SHELTER IN PLACE IN THE EVENT OF SEVERE WEATHER AND CLOSING PUBLIC STORMS SHELTERS IN CONFORMANCE WITH THIS RECOMMENDATION.

**Notes:** ACTION NEEDED: Motion to adopt or reject Resolution No. R-1314-16.

ACTION TAKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

**Agenda Date:** 10/08/2013

**Agenda Number:** 24

**Attachments:** R-1314-16, Pert Excerpts February 19 SS Minutes,  
August 7 Oversight Minutes

**Project Manager:** James Fullingim, Fire Chief

**Entered by:** jayme.rowe@normanok.gov

**Effective Date:**

### History of Legislative File

Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
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### Text of Legislative File R-1314-16

Body

**BACKGROUND:** The Central Region of the Oklahoma Emergency Management Association has developed a position paper regarding best practices for citizens in the event of severe weather. The Association is made up of emergency managers from cities and counties in Central Oklahoma and is supported by the Red Cross and the National Weather Service. The recommendations in the position paper include: encouraging citizens to develop personal safety plans; to stay informed; and to shelter in place where possible in the event of severe weather.

The Central Region of the Oklahoma Emergency Management Association made these recommendations for several reasons. First, individuals are encouraged to develop a personal safety plan in order to predetermine where family members should go within a structure or outside of a structure if the structure has no safe place within it, for, during, and after a severe weather event. An important piece of this safety plan should be to stay informed regarding the potential for severe weather, and individuals should strongly consider purchasing a weather radio for this purpose.

Second, standard residential construction (except mobile homes and manufactured housing) typically provides survivable protection for approximately ninety-eight percent of the tornadoes in Oklahoma if those potentially impacted see shelter early by moving to the lowest possible level in a small interior room or closet away from external openings such as doors and windows. Because of this, sheltering in place is a safer option than traveling to a public facility, operated as a storm shelter, immediately prior or during a severe weather event because it exposes individuals to the very hazards they are attempting to avoid and increases the risk that they will be injured or harmed in the process of seeking shelter.

The City of Norman has historically opened four facilities during severe weather for the purpose of providing shelter to residents. From interviews with long time and retired employees, it is understood that these facilities began to open to the community after two new middle schools were built in the early 1970's. Previous to that, there were no City operated severe weather shelters. Residents were allowed access to the University of Oklahoma Memorial Stadium, along the east side. The University ended the accessibility to the stadium during the expansion process and currently is unavailable as a severe weather shelter to the general public. The following is general information regarding the shelters:

1. Shelters are expected to open approximately one hour before anticipated severe weather.
2. There is effective means to advise citizens that the shelters are open.
3. If citizens choose to utilize a shelter, they leave where they are to go to a shelter. This places them in the storm to get to a shelter and places them in harm's way.
4. These shelters are opened and staffed by the Fire Department and there are no current means provided to screen citizens or to provide civil control upon entry into the shelters.
5. The expectation is the City of Norman will open and operate shelters during periods of severe weather. The intent being, these shelters will be available should residents have no other safe location to utilize.
6. Two of the shelters are located in schools, Cleveland Elementary and Little Axe High School. The other two are in the recreation centers on school property at Irving and Whittier Middle Schools.
7. The shelter locations may not be adequate to meet federal requirements regarding survivability (FEMA 361), NFPA Life Safety Code and the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006 (PETS Act).

During a City Council Study Session in February 2013, the City Council was briefed on the above information. For that reason, City Council directed staff to cease operation of the facilities as storm shelters effective July 1, 2013.

**DISCUSSION:** In conformance with that direction, City Staff has prepared the attached Resolution for Council consideration. The City of Midwest City has approved a similar Resolution. The Resolution incorporates many of the findings, as discussed above, of the Central Region of Oklahoma Emergency Management Association including: the risk of traveling to a public shelter; the often equivalent level of construction safety standards in a private house and public safety; the lack of readily available or functionally feasible public shelters in the City of Norman; and the fact that the City of Norman facilities do not meet the FEMA guidelines for storm shelters.

Instead, the Resolution encourages citizens to develop personal or family safety plans to be implemented in the case of severe weather. These plans should include staying informed regarding inclement weather and choosing a safe location to shelter during a storm. If the Resolution is approved by Council, the City will discontinue use of public facilities as storm shelters within the City of Norman.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends adoption of Resolution No. R-1314-16 supporting the practices of personal pre-planning and sheltering in place and discontinuing the practice of opening public and school facilities as severe weather shelters.