JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

Manual of Policies and Procedures

POLICY NO.: IV.19 **DATE: October 2026**

REVIEW/REVISION DATES: TBD

SUBJECT: Tornado Safe Rooms

APPROVED: Dr. Don C. Killingsworth, Jr., President

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for the operation, maintenance, and use of FEMA-certified tornado safe rooms on campus to provide for the safety of students, faculty, staff, and visitors during the possibility of severe weather events.

POLICY

This policy applies to all designated FEMA certified tornado safe rooms located on university property, including those integrated into administrative facilities, residence halls, academic buildings, and athletic venues.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions

- **FEMA-certified tornado safe room**: A structure or room that meets FEMA P-361 standards for protection during extreme wind events.
- **National Weather Service (NWS):** provides weather, hydrologic, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories.
- **Tornado Watch**: Designation issued by the National Weather Services that conditions are favorable for tornadoes.
- **Tornado Warning**: Designation issued by the National Weather Services that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by radar.

PROCEDURES

A. Activation

1. The activation of FEMA certified safe rooms occurs upon issuance of a tornado watch or tornado warning issued by the NWS.
2. Jax State Public Safety may issue a safe room activation order based on other adverse conditions that have the potential to impact the campus community.

B. Notification

1. Notifications of activations will be issued by Jax State Public Safety through the JSU Alert mass notification system.
2. Modes of communication that receive JSU Alerts may include text messages, phone calls, university emails, Jax State social media, Jax State website, and certain electronic signs.
3. Advance notice regarding the potential for severe weather events may be provided to tornado safe room building managers, and the broader campus community, when reliable forecast predictions are available.

C. Occupancy

1. All FEMA certified tornado safe rooms contain signage indicating the maximum occupant load.
2. Normal daily usage of the saferoom space shall not interfere with timely safe room operations.
3. Saferooms must remain free of furniture, fixtures, or other obstacles that could prevent timely accommodation of the maximum occupant load**.**

D. Operation

When the NWS issues a tornado watch or tornado warning, JSU's designated FEMA certified saferooms will be opened. A JSU Alert will be sent to the JSU community notifying them of the opening of JSU's two community saferooms. A designated person will be at each location to guide people inside the saferooms. These two saferooms will stay open until the threat has been canceled.

E. Readiness

1. Building managers of facilities that contain tornado safe rooms are responsible for maintaining and ensuring the safe room's physical readiness for immediate occupancy when activation occurs.
2. Building managers are responsible for approving/disapproving facility events requests that may conflict with the primary use of the tornado safe room as an area of refuge.
3. Facility specific plans will be developed and maintained by the building manager, in consultation with Jax State Public Safety, for the continuity of safe-room operations.
4. Plans for tornado safe rooms should demonstrate that readiness will be maintained through measures designed to prevent safe rooms from being misused or neglected for activation and operation.

5. Plans should include a schedule for checking that normal daily usage fo teh same room space will not interfere with timely safe room operations.

F. Tornado Saferooms

The following Jax State facilities are FEMA P361 certified tornado saferooms:

1. Merrill Hall Storm Shelter
    - Building Manager: Dean of College of Business and Industry
    - Open to Campus Community
    - Pets are not allowed
2. Multi-Use Storm Shelter at Bennett Field
    - Building Manager: Associate Vice President of Health and Public Safety
    - Open to Campus Community
    - Pet friendly
3. North Village Storm Shelter
    - Building Manager: Director of Residence Life
    - Housing Residents Only
    - Pet friendly
6. West Village Storm Shelter
    - Building Manager: Director of Residence Life
    - Housing Residents Only
    - Pet friendly

RESPONSIBILITY

The Associate Vice President of Health and Public Safety is responsible for this policy.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed at least every five (5) years by the Associate Vice President of Health and Public Safety.