

Additional Views of Ranking Member Spencer Bachus

H.R. 2787, 'CJ's Home Protection Act,' is a bipartisan bill which amends the Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety Standards Act of 1974 by requiring the installation of National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios in all manufactured homes built or sold in the United States. These weather radios will provide immediate broadcasts of severe weather warnings and civil emergency messages, including tornado and flood warnings, AMBER alerts for child abductions, and chemical spill notifications.

The legislation is named in memory of CJ Martin, a two year old boy who was killed during a tornado in southwest Indiana in 2005. His mother, Kathryn, helped pass a state law requiring the manufactured housing industry to install NOAA weather radios in all newly built units and has been a strong advocate of federal legislation to accomplish the same objective.

Despite rapid advances in tornado warning technologies, residents of manufactured housing communities often do not have adequate access to proper shelter. That is why I introduced H.R. 23, the Tornado Shelters Act, which was signed into law in 2003. That bipartisan legislation authorized communities to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to construct or improve tornado-safe shelters located in manufactured housing parks. Unfortunately, this program is not used nearly often enough.

H.R. 2787 represents the final link in protecting families and residents in these communities. Weather radios will get warnings out to those who need to hear them, sometimes as much as a half hour or more before a severe storm arrives. We have the ability to build shelters. Now we are going to give residents an opportunity to hear these warnings earlier so they can take shelter from the storm. The cost of installing these radios is very small. This is going to save lives. It is going to save families.

Every year, approximately 800 tornadoes sweep across the United States, resulting in an average of 80 deaths, more than 1,500 injuries, and millions of dollars in property damage. One of nature's most powerful and violent storms, large tornadoes often record wind speeds in excess of 250 miles per hour. Natural catastrophes can often strike with little warning, forcing communities to confront a loss of infrastructure, and, unfortunately, a loss of life. In my home state of Alabama in early March, eight people were killed, including students, when a powerful tornado ripped through a high school.

Often in the face of a tornado threat it is said we can do two things--pray and prepare. Pray it won't happen again and prepare for the next line of twisters. While our citizens can pray, our government and this Committee through the passing of CJ's Home Protection Act can continue to help them prepare.

Spencer Bachus.

