



BROST ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS LTD

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April Tidbit

April is
Keep America Beautiful month!

Keep America Beautiful, Inc., is the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. This national nonprofit forms public-private partnerships and programs that engage individuals to take greater responsibility for improving their community environments. For additional information, visit www.kab.org.

Last month, Cedar Rapids announced that it is the recipient of a grant from Keep America Beautiful, to remove litter from downtown Cedar Rapids streets and sidewalks.

Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup, is the nation's largest annual community improvement program and brings 3.8 million volunteers. In 2011, volunteers donated more than 5.2 million hours to clean and improve communities. Activities included beautifying parks, cleaning waterways, recycling collections, picking up litter, and planting trees and flowers.

Riding Out The Storm: Tornado Shelters

The Midwest is a pretty great place to live. We have a temperate climate that allows us to enjoy all of the seasons, in relative comfort. One of the drawbacks to the Midwest is the risk of tornadoes. The peak of Iowa's tornado season is April-June. As we are in the beginning of tornado season, it is important to review your plan for tornado events.

First, for existing buildings, it is important to assess your occupant load and find the safest space that can accommodate all of your occupants. Every situation is different, and an area you might think of as ideal because of its location, could be hazardous because of its structure or size. Usually, these spaces are best placed in basements or on the lowest floor. It is also better to place occupants in central rooms away from windows. As with fire exiting, it is helpful to post diagrams throughout the building denoting the location of the tornado refuge area and to label the spaces.



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River Ridge Kids Cedar Rapids, Iowa



Located on the Northeast side of Cedar Rapids off of Edgewood Road, this childcare facility is part of the Transamerica (AEGON) campus development. The building was designed with large overhangs and a low sloping roof, mimicking the Prairie Style, and has bricks that are longer than normal bricks, that emphasize horizontal lines. The building includes classroom spaces, kitchens, a laundry room, and an indoor play area, which doubles as a tornado shelter for the children.

A project that Brost Architects & Planners designed, using storm protection techniques, is the River Ridge Kids Childcare Center. The facility houses preschool, daycare, and afterschool classrooms, as well as kitchens, laundry rooms, playrooms, etc. This facility is nestled in the woods of the Transamerica (AEGON) campus development. The presence of large trees made the need for a secure storm area for the children even greater.

The large indoor playroom is the room that actually doubles as the storm shelter. This room, measuring approximately 40'0"x40'0", has 8" thick concrete block walls and a cored concrete slab ceiling. The room is located on the ground floor and has no windows, further protecting its occupants. The General Contractor for the project was Rinderknecht Associates.

While there are no guarantees when it comes to protection from natural disasters, recent codes and standards have been developed by FEMA for the design of highly protective, newly constructed safe rooms and tornado shelters. The concept of a FEMA 361 shelter is to provide near-absolute protection from winds and debris from extreme wind events. These tornado shelters tend to be found in rural areas with little protection and a lot of people, such as fairgrounds and camping facilities, and can be very costly to construct. The FEMA 361 design wind speed for our area is 250 mph, which is well above the 90 mph design standard.

If we were to construct all buildings to survive every possible natural disaster, the cost would be prohibitive. The goal is to protect the lives of occupants, not to ensure that every building survives every natural disaster. While FEMA 361 shelters take safety to an extreme, it is important for us all to consider our storm preparedness. With tornado season upon us, we encourage you to review your emergency plan and make sure that all of your building users are aware of what to do in the event of a tornado.



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About Us

Since its formation in 1968, Brost Architects & Planners LTD has demonstrated its commitment to architectural problem solving on a full range of projects throughout Iowa and surrounding states. We take great pride in our record of developing distinctive solutions to complex problems within the budget established and in our reputation for improving the environment of the communities where we are privileged to work.

We promote environmentally friendly design and have LEED accredited professionals. We are a family owned and operated firm that has strong ties to the Iowa community. We're talented enough to handle almost any project, but personal enough to value your business. We have strong relationships with our consultants as well as our clients.

Contact Us

For more information: visit www.brostarchitects.com, call us at 319-366-8531, or send us an email at brostarch@brostarchitect.com. To receive our monthly newsletter, visit the "Contact Us" page on our website and sign up for our email newsletter.

"Summerize" Your Home

We've all heard of the term "winterize," but now it's time to start thinking about how to "summerize" your home. Here is the Brost Architects and Planners list of tips to help make your summer more comfortable! While some of these are opposite of the routine you completed to winterize your house, some of them are actually the same principles used in the fall. For example, adding insulation and sealing air leaks will save you money during both warm and cold months.

With the recent freeze warnings, I have started finding myself mentally preparing for winter. I've brought my sweaters and coats out of storage and stocked up on hot chocolate. The next stage of the "winterizing" process is getting the house ready. Here is the Brost Architects list of nine easy things that you can do to help save money and make your home more comfortable and safe this winter.

1. Block the sun : This one is an easy and inexpensive one... Pull your drapes or blinds! On hot sunny days, pull the drapes and blinds down on the South and West sides of your house. These two directions are where the majority of solar heat comes from.
2. Sealing your fireplaces : If you don't plan to use the fireplace this summer, seal it up so you don't lose cool air through your chimney.
3. Keep your air conditioner clean : Change your filter every 30 to 90 days. It is important to clean the outside of your AC unit, which is typically something most people neglect. It doesn't take much dirt to get jammed in air conditioning units and block the airflow. This, just like a dirty filter, makes the unit work harder to pull air in to cool. This could be a monthly routine if your air conditioner sits on or near dirt and grass. Another essential for an efficient air conditioner is ensuring that all fluid levels are correct.
4. Seal the joints : Caulk the windows of your house if they are not already caulked. Some homes built today don't have caulked windows, which helps keep heat out. Also, seal the joints on any vents in your attic or crawl space. You can lose a lot of conditioned air if these joints aren't sealed well, and you don't want to allow extra cooled air into spaces you rarely occupy.



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5. Air movement : Use fans more often and make sure they are rotating counterclockwise. If there's a slight breeze, cracking the windows on the windward side of the house a little and opening the windows on the opposite house wider should create a strong draft through the house. If air conditioning is a must, try some different combinations of strategies. It's possible to be completely comfortable inside your home on a hot day with the thermostat set at 85 degrees if you have fans helping to circulate the air. The AC will still kick on to remove the humidity, which is a major source of discomfort. If you have a room that won't cool as well as other rooms in your home, the best option is to run the air conditioner fan at "on" instead of "automatic." The AC will continue to cycle, but the air will constantly be moving, which instantly makes the room more comfortable.
6. Time your Appliances : Instead of using an oven, try the microwave or outdoor grill. Or if you must use the oven, use it in the late evening or early morning hours, when the outdoor temperature is lower. The same principle works for washing and drying clothes.