"Our shelters are easier to get into than below-ground options, especially if you're aging or have kids and pets," says Vince Mims, FamilySAFE national manager.

Above-Ground Tornado Shelter

FamilySAFE produces EF5-tested, above-ground tornado shelters and safe rooms designed for safety in severe weather. These shelters are extensively field-tested and have proven themselves against 13 of the worst tornados in recent history - all without suffering a single dent.

Established in 1998 in Tulsa, Okla., FamilySAFE is a pioneer in above-ground steel shelters. The brand partnered with Texas Tech University and the HILTI Anchorage company to ensure every shelter built could withstand the world's worst tornados, including F5s.

This shelter is meant to be set up directly inside your house or garage for a convenient escape when extreme weather is on the horizon.

"Our shelters are easier to get into than below-ground options, especially if you're aging or have kids and pets," says Vince Mims, FamilySAFE national manager. "According to FEMA.gov, 76 percent of all tornado fatalities and injuries occur due to people going outside to seek shelter. With FamilySAFE, there is no need to run out into the weather you are trying to get away from to seek shelter."

Each structure is built with bracing every 2 ft. or less. Units come standard with one Grade 1 deadbolt lock, two large sliding pins, and three hinges to secure the door. They include an internal safety cage on the walls, roof, and around the top of the roof for extra reinforcement. The door contains two impenetrable skins secured with internal square tubing. As an additional safety feature for young families, the shelter's patent-pending, no-pinch door design makes it easy to get in and almost impossible to get trapped inside.

Today, every FamilySAFE storm shelter is tested and certified for safety. They can only be installed by HILTI-trained and certified installers. The shelters are so trustworthy that FamilySAFE is the only tornado shelter company in the United States that has allowed a person inside one while under testing.

"Make sure you do your homework," says Mims. "There are a lot of options out there now and a lot of people that think they know best rather than knowing the facts. When we designed the world's first all-steel above-ground shelter with Texas Tech, there was nothing comparable available, so we had to do a lot of research. There is a reason why we do everything and reasons why we don't do some things."

FamilySAFE currently has dealers in all states in tornado alley and will travel approximately 300 miles from its dealers for installation. Pricing ranges from $5,500 to $12,000, with sizes starting as small as 4 ft. by 4 ft. and going up to 8 ft. by 12 ft. You can contact the company directly for a custom quote.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, FamilySAFE, P.O. Box 2188, Owasso, Okla. 74055 (ph 918-205-2839; www.familysafeshelters.com).

Feed Grinders For Small Quantities

For smaller farmers who would rather grind their own feed than buy it bagged or pre-mixed, here are some machines to consider:

The Ercolino 110V Electric Feed Grinder has a powerful 2-hp. motor that grinds with a true hammer mill design through 2.5, 4, 6 or 8-mm screens.

The Bravo Feed Grinder available from Amazon for $589 is a 110V electric hammer mill with 4, 6 and 8-mm screens. Additional screens are available for $11.50 each. This grinder produces feed for animals and can also produce coarsely ground flour for baking. The 1.2-hp motor draws 900 watts. The hopper is 17 in. by 19 in. and the base of the bin sits 16 in. off the ground.

The AMA USA Electric Grain Grinder is perfect for grinding corn, wheat and oats for all kinds of animal feed. Four different screens have 1.5, 3, 5 and 7-mm openings. The 13.2-gal. hopper is detachable for easy cleanup. It'll grind 80 lbs. in about 20 min. and 100 lbs. in 30 min. The grinder intake is 1 1/2 in. wide to easily accept different grains. Tractor Supply sells the unit for $299.

The Techtongda pellet feed milling machine uses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or 8-mm discs. The machine has large inlets and outlets for good capacity. Wheels allow easy transport. The compression roller and grinding discs are made of high-quality steel for long life. Priced at $1,059 from Amazon.

Made-It-Myself Small Crop Rice Huller

Hand crank and center shaft with hulling discs.

Paul Hutcheson may have the answer for small-plot rice growers who need a way to hull their harvest. Commercial machines are hard to justify when you have only a few pounds to hull, as Hutcheson did. His solution was to modify a $65 corn grinder. When it didn't work as hoped, he went even simpler.

"I planted a short grain variety of dryland rice on a 3 by 15-ft. plot in 2021," says Hutcheson. "It yielded about 3 1/2 lbs. of rice. I needed a way to hull it.

"So, I bought a corn masa food mill," says Hutcheson. "It has an auger feed and two plates that can be tensioned. The faceplates have aggressive grooves for grinding the corn. It had an adjustable gap between the face plates."

He knew the faceplates left as is would grind the rice rather than simply hull it. He superglued gum rubber pads to the face plates. He also added washers to the adjustable gap to increase the space.

"I ran half a cup through and then passed it through two more times," says Hutcheson. "It removed at least 95 percent of the hulls."

The problem was the face plates were still too aggressive. By the time he had put several cups of rice through the device, holes had been ripped in the rubber pads.

Hutcheson then adapted the revolving disk concept to an even simpler design. He screwed together two short lengths of 2 by 6-in. lumber and mounted them to a piece of 2 by 10. This became the base for his huller.

Hutcheson cut two 6-in. diameter discs from plywood and superglued gum rubber pads to them for hulling plates. He drilled 1/4-in. holes through the two plates and the base to mount a shaft. A second hole was drilled about an inch in from the edge of one of the outside plates. He lined up the center hole in the inside plate to the hole in the base and screwed it in place.

"I decided to use a gravity flow instead of the auger on the corn grinder," says Hutcheson. "I drilled a hole at an angle through the end of the base to a point about an inch from the center of the fixed hulling plate."

He mounted a bolt to the off-center hole of the remaining plate to serve as a hand crank. He inserted a 1/4-in. threaded rod through the base, the fixed plate and then through the plate with the crank.

A nut and washer at one end of the shaft held the outside plate in place. Hutcheson slipped a washer and a spring over the other end of the shaft, securing them in place with another washer and a wing nut.

"I can adjust the tension on the plates with the wing nut," says Hutcheson. "I fed about half a cup of rice through it and identified a few kinks to work out."

One problem was the gravity feed through the angled hole in the base. The rice grains caught on the wood. He tried a plastic tube, but the rice didn't flow well through that either.

"I added a plastic funnel for the rice to flow between the hulling plates," says Hutcheson. "I also added a paper shield to funnel hulled rice into a collection chamber. With these changes, I've had good results."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Paul Hutcheson, 1901 Broad St., Culpeper, Va. 22701 (ph 540-407-0902 evenings only; windmillheightsgardencenter@gmail.com).