



FEMA

Disaster News

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FEMA REPORT SHOWS MITIGATION SAVES MONEY

Lacey, Wash. – Mitigation work in the Centralia area after the 1996 floods saved a estimated \$1.9 million in residential home damage in the December 2007 floods, a new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) report concluded.

The report, entitled “Evaluating Losses Avoided through Hazard Mitigation: City of Centralia, Washington,” evaluated 35 structures that were elevated after the floods of 1996 and 1997 at an average cost of \$29,069 per structure, for a total cost of \$1 million.

Investigators from FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation branch examined the December 2007 high water marks on each raised home, which were among the most damaged in the 1996 and 19967 floods. This 2007 peak flood stage was then compared to pre-mitigation first floor elevations to derive how much water depth was “avoided” in each home.

The investigation found that had the structures not been elevated, the December 2007 flood would have significantly damaged all 35 homes in the study: .

- 15 of the structures would have experienced less than 2 feet of water;
- 18 would have been flooded between 2 and 5 feet;
- 2 would have had over 5 feet of water above pre-mitigation first floor elevations;
 - One of these would have had 9 feet of inundation.

As it was, only 2 of the elevated homes had water slightly above the first floor elevations and eight others had water within 1 foot of the first floor and thus sustained minor flood damage.

Had these 35 homes not been elevated, the December 2007 flood would have caused between \$6,574 and \$186,122 in flood losses for each home. For just these 35 elevated homes, the total losses avoided from the December 2007 flood are estimated to be \$1,905,760. Thus, the money saved by elevating the structures was nearly twice the initial costs of elevation.

The study results affirmed the findings of a 2007 FEMA survey in the city of Snoqualmie where mitigation measures had avoided losses of more than \$1.6 million to 28 homes in the November 2006 flood disaster.

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These findings emphasize the importance of taking steps to protect a home before a flood happens. For free mitigation suggestions on line, go to www.fema.gov and click on “Recover and Rebuild,” then click on “Rebuild – smarter and stronger.” From this page, you can access the FEMA How-To Series which provides instructions for property owners and contractors. These are short, easy-to-understand pamphlets that explain construction techniques to protect a property, home or business from a number of disasters.

Mitigation measures such as home elevations cost money up front. Nevertheless, in the long run, they can protect the property and save a great deal of money if the flooding happens again – generally much more than the cost of the initial mitigation. In addition, they will continue to protect the property through all the floods to come, and save homeowners from the grief and hard work caused by flooding over and over again.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

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Editors: for more information on the Washington disaster recovery, visit www.fema.gov or www.wadisasternews.com.