



Clinic's Guests High, Dry During Katrina

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Jackson County, Mississippi



Ocean Springs, MS – When Ocean Springs veterinarian Dr. Mabry Allison decided to expand his clinic, he wanted the facility to be a safe haven for pets during extreme weather.

When Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the expanded facility got a torture test. The clinic's steel building and its guests came through with no fur flying.

The 6,600 square foot heavy steel building is constructed to withstand 133 mph winds. It also is located outside the special flood hazard area in a C-zone in Jackson County. A C-zone is an area considered to be at a low or moderate risk of flooding from overflowing rivers or hard rain

Inside the clinic and boarding facility which housed 112 dogs and 12 cats during Katrina, 55 dog runs are built from steel grates with cinder block walls. The bottoms of the runs are covered with rubber matting and elevated eight inches off the floor of the building. Cats are housed in a separate facility inside the clinic.

In the aftermath of the storm, many pet owners were without shelter themselves. The Allisons admit this was one problem they did not anticipate. "One thing you don't plan for is people not being able to come back and get their animals because they had no homes and nowhere to stay themselves," said co-owner Stephanie Allison.

As Hurricane Katrina approached, desperate pet owners trying to shelter their pets overwhelmed the Allisons. For the 2006 hurricane season, however, the clinic notified the community that space for their pets should be reserved in advance so pets would not be turned away in the face of an approaching storm.

"We give out what we call 'hurricane boarding passes' to pet owners who call in advance," explained Allison. "We set this up on the spring of 2006. Pet owners purchase a pass and are guaranteed a spot. Pets have to be here at least 24 hours before a hurricane is expected to make landfall so we will have everything we need to take care of them."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Mississippi**

County: **Jackson County**

City/Community: **Ocean Springs**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**
Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Safe Rooms/Community Shelters**
Structure Type: **Steel Frame**
Activity/Project Start Date: **12/2003**
Activity/Project End Date: **05/2005**
Funding Source: **Private funds**
Funding Recipient: **Critical Facility - Police/Fire**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2005**
Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.msema.org/>
Reference URL 2: http://www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane/hu_hazard.shtm

Main Points

- Dr. Mabry Allison expanded his veterinary practice to be used as a shelter for pets during extreme weather.
- The building is constructed from steel and can withstand 133mph winds.
- To avoid the overwhelming number of pet owners needing to shelter their pets, Dr. Allison will sell a limited number of "hurricane boarding passes" so owners may guarantee their pets a spot in the event of an emergency.



Picture of management staff



Dogs occupying runs at the Pet Connection.