



# FEMA

## Rio Linda Residents Rise Above the Floodwaters

**Sacramento, CA** – The homeowners in a low-lying section of Rio Linda used to worry about flooding whenever the winter storm season arrived. When heavy rains hit the neighborhood, the normally benign Dry Creek overflowed its banks, threatening the row of ranch-style houses on U Street. Over the past few years, Rio Linda residents have participated in FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program, which have helped dozens of Sacramento County homeowners protect themselves against flooding.

Federal and county funds were used to elevate houses along U Street above the base flood elevation (BFE), which is the average floodwater depth for a flood event that has an estimated one percent chance of occurring during any given year. Buildings constructed to this standard are expected to sit above the floodwater and avoid damage during all but the most severe inundations. When a series of winter storms battered Northern California from late December through New Year’s 2005-2006, none of these elevated homes flooded.

Mr. Brunyansky, a Rio Linda resident, knew when he purchased his house in 1991 that its previous owners had experienced flooding in 1986, but nothing prepared him for the massive flooding that devastated his house during rainstorms in 1995. At the height of the storms, the water rose 39 inches in the single-story ranch house, destroying carpets, drywall, furnishings, cupboards, and personal belongings.

When the Sacramento County Department of Water Resources (DWR) offered Mr. Brunyansky and his neighbors a chance to participate in a home elevation program, he seized the opportunity without hesitation. The project was completed in 2000. While their house was being elevated over a three-month period, the couple lived in a motor home in their yard, where they could observe the progress. Despite the temporary inconvenience, Mr. Brunyansky has no regrets. “I would recommend elevation to anyone who has floodwater, and it’s repetitive,” he said.

The Brunyanskys’ house stands on top of an 81-inch-high cement-block foundation that keeps its living area two feet above the BFE. Specially-designed flood vents near the bottom of the foundation allow floodwaters to pass under the house without damaging it. The house, built in 1961, was among 44 houses in the Sacramento area that was elevated with the help of nearly \$2 million in Federal mitigation funds made available in 1997. The cost to elevate their home totaled \$66,000. They received \$50,000 in FEMA mitigation funds, another \$6,000 from the county, and paid for the remaining costs themselves. Now, all but one of the homes on their low-lying block have been elevated.

Mark Rains, the project coordinator and an associate engineer with the DWR, said the County’s goal is to either elevate or acquire and demolish older flood-prone homes. As of spring 2006, 72 homes have been elevated. “We have acquired and demolished 22 other houses and returned the property to open space,” Mr. Rains said.



Sacramento County, California



### Quick Facts

- Year: **1997**
- Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**
- Cost: **\$66,000.00 (Actual)**
- Primary Activity/Project: **Elevation, Structural**
- Primary Funding: **Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)**