



FEMA

Elevated House Attracts Local Attention

Biloxi, MS – Passers-by often ask Harry and Clarice Shoemake about their elevated house. The couple noticed the new interest in their property after Hurricane Katrina struck on August 29, 2005, destroying large portions of many Gulf Coast communities. The couple’s elevated home remained standing during the storm.

When the Shoemakes bought their home in a former fishing camp community, they knew it had been empty for a year and had been plagued more than once by six feet of floodwater. It was the only house built on a slab-on-grade foundation in the neighborhood. All other homes in the community were elevated. “Nobody would buy [the house] because it was on the ground,” Harry Shoemake explained.

The Shoemakes’ backyard is adjacent to the Tchoutacabouffa River. The river flows into Biloxi Bay, a large inlet of the Gulf of Mexico less than five miles away. The couple decided to elevate and retrofit their home to reduce the risk of damages from flooding and high winds. The elevation, completed in 2004, was funded with a \$98,000 grant from FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), administered by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. The Shoemakes supplemented the grant with personal funds and made additional enhancements, such as a wider staircase.

The couple’s 2,100 square-foot home is elevated 11 feet 11 inches above the original slab-on-grade foundation and sits on an open concrete column system with embedded anchor plates for added structural support. The open space beneath the house is utilized for parking. Harry Shoemake noted that the elevation includes an additional three feet (freeboard) that is higher than Harrison County’s minimum code requirement. “I wanted to be on the safe side, elevate higher, and never have to worry about it again,” Harry Shoemake explained.

Another mitigation measure implemented by the Shoemakes was to replace the original shingle roof with a metal roof. They also installed windows with wind-resistant glass rated to withstand gusts of up to 175 mile per hour.

Katrina’s 17-foot storm surge brought water into the house after forcing open the French doors in the rear of the structure. Although there was no substantial standing water within the house and no structural damage, salt water from the surge did cause some damage to the drywall and floors. Although the house escaped serious flooding, the powerful winds, in excess of 112 miles per hour, caused some minor damage to the metal roof. “The wind and the storm surge caused the flooding, not the rain,” explained Harry Shoemake.

Even though their community did not have power for eight days, the Shoemakes proceeded with the clean-up and repair process. They returned to living in their home in less than four weeks after the storm. “Compared to many people in the city, we came out good after the storm,” noted Harry Shoemake.



Harrison County,
Mississippi



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

\$98,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Elevation, Structural

Primary Funding:

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)