



FEMA

## Elevated Home Serves as Neighborhood Shelter during Katrina

**Moss Point, MS** - The Stork family's home is the only elevated building in their community. Although the house was built to mitigate flooding, the family decided to evacuate to avoid being in the path of Hurricane Katrina's reported 90- mile-per-hour winds as it approached the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005.

In the family's absence, the Storks' house became a refuge for 37 neighbors and their pets trapped by a 15-foot storm surge. Concerned about the powerful winds associated with the storm, Joseph Stork, and his family chose to wait out the storm in the family's church, which sits on a slab-on-grade foundation.

The Storks' small middle-class community borders a canal that flows into a bayou. Before they evacuated, the couple offered their elevated home to a few neighbors as a shelter in case of flooding. Built in 1998, the 1,100-square-foot house is elevated 13.1 feet above sea level and sits on eight-foot-tall wood pilings that are 12-inches by 12-inches square. The 26 pilings are six feet apart and embedded six feet into the ground. The home's double 2-by-10-inch floor joists are securely anchored to the piles.

As Katrina's surge sent waist-deep waters rushing into the church, the family knew they needed to get to higher ground immediately. They decided to return to their elevated home. A family friend who owned a boat transported the family back to their house. When the Storks returned, they found their modest house crammed with residents of the community. Sadly aware that nearly all of the homes in their community were under water, the Storks were relieved that everyone in the area survived Katrina, and were pleased that their elevated home played a major role in that survival. "There were 37 people, three Great Danes, a pit bull, a bull mastiff, two Chihuahuas, a dachshund, two cats and two tropical birds here," Joseph Stork said.

When the Storks began rebuilding their home in 1997 after a fire destroyed the original house, they discovered they had to elevate the house in accordance with the City's recent adoption of building codes compliant with the National Flood Insurance Program. "The house is elevated four feet above the required nine-foot Base Flood Elevation. Having done so certainly paid off for them," noted the City's floodplain administrator, Thomas Franklin.

Katrina's rushing waters soaked the insulation beneath the house and caused some damage to the building and staircase. However, the Storks feel the overall damage incurred is minor compared to what their neighbors suffered. "The house held up good," Joseph noted.

The Storks are considering other mitigation strategies that they can apply to their home to help strengthen it against future storms. Elevating the air conditioning unit is important because Katrina's waters ruined the one that was located on the lowest floor. "We have applied for a Small Business Administration loan to help pay for repairs; maybe we'll have enough money to purchase storm shutters," Jane Stork said.



Jackson County, Mississippi



### Quick Facts

- Sector: **Private**
- Cost: **Amount Not Available**
- Primary Activity/Project: **Elevation, Structural**
- Primary Funding: **Homeowner**