



FEMA

Leadership Breeds Success

Miami, OK - Ten Native American tribes call land in Oklahoma's Ottawa County home. In 1997, two of those tribes – the Modoc and Miami – created an historic partnership to build The Stables Casino in the City of Miami. Prudent construction plans raised the casino 12 feet above ground level – a height recommended by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps. The casino was put to the test on July 3, 2007, when torrential rains severely flooded Ottawa County and, specifically, the City of Miami. The flood resulted in water reaching the threshold of the casino doors, but no higher.

Modoc employee John Ballard said, "United States law restricts casinos to land owned by Tribes. In Oklahoma that means Land Trusts or Tribal Lands. When we partnered with the Miami Tribe to build the casino, the only lots big enough for development were in a floodplain."

The Modoc Tribe came to understand the history of flooding on that land after floodwaters had completely covered it in 1988 and 1995. With that history, the Tribes asked both local floodplain managers and FEMA for guidance. While neither authority encouraged building in a floodplain, Federal regulations provided limits on where and how the Tribes could build. After reviewing the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that specified a first-floor elevation of at least 12 feet above ground level, the Tribe used landfill and a raised foundation to meet that elevation height.

Following a wet May and June 2007 that logged 181 percent more rain than normal (and becoming the second wettest months on record since 1895), the July 2007 rains tested the casino elevation. With 12 feet of water collecting over three days, aerial photographs documented that The Stables Casino had become an island surrounded by blocks of water. Luckily, no water entered the building. Within three days, the waters receded and people could walk from their cars to the building. The casino then reopened, and the casino's 50 employees lost no wages due to time lost.

In addition to acknowledging the benefits of elevation, Ballard also commended Modoc Chief Bill Follis's leadership before and during the flood. Months before the flood, Chief Follis had put an Emergency Operations Plan into place that was strictly followed by the Modoc Tribe. The plan included actions taken to move casino records and water-sensitive equipment to the second floor. To assist visitors to the casino, the casino workers, and residents of the area, the plan included initiating a boat brigade to conduct rescues, bring critical supplies, and transport Tribal staff to or from the casino. Another part of the plan activated during the flood was a scheduled reporting of flood depths to Tribal leadership to adequately plan securing the casino and its contents.



Tribal,
FEMA Region VI



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Elevation, Structural

Primary Funding:

Private funds