



Athens Resident Pleased With Retrofitted Home

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Athens County, Ohio

Athens County, OH - Kara Edmonds is Community Development Coordinator for the Tri-County Community Action Agency serving Athens, Hocking and Perry counties in southeastern Ohio. Athens County suffered isolated flooding along several streams during the March 1997 disaster, in areas that had been damaged in two previous declared floods since 1990.



Edmonds was designated by county commissioners to work with FEMA and OEMA in pursuing mitigation assistance for repetitively damaged properties, including two homes bordering Sugar Creek within two miles of the Community Action offices on State Route 550. The owner of one of those residences is Ohio University journalism professor Cassandra Reese.

In the aftermath of previous flooding into the "walk-out" lower level of Reese's hillside home, she had invested more than \$22,000 to erect a three-foot-high floodwall around the rear and side of the house, replace damaged lower-level drywall, jack up the slab floor, elevate her water heater and washer/dryer and add a brick channel to carry runoff away from the house and down her driveway.

But when the March 1997 downpour created unprecedented runoff, Reese found that three feet of water had found its way around and under her precautions into her lower level, ruining a heat pump and electrical breaker box and causing structural damage to deck supports. Her next step was to seek help through Kara Edmonds and the Hazard Mitigation Grant program. Edmonds prepared and submitted a successful grant application and helped Reese get architectural advice through the Ohio Emergency Management Agency Mitigation Branch.

They determined that during extremely heavy rains, water near the floodwall accumulated so rapidly that it backed up, creating a pond under Reese's deck from which it seeped under a rear doorway and into the lower level.

In 1998, with the help of a \$16,000 mitigation grant, Reese was able to retrofit her home by having her deck partially rebuilt, a waterproof rear door installed that would not allow high water to enter the house; a one-way check valve installed in her flood wall that would allow water to flow only away from the house; her heat pump condenser elevated on a masonry platform to above the peak flood level; and the electrical circuit box and meter moved from the rear to the front wall of her lower level and elevated to six feet above the floor.

While flood waters haven't reached or exceeded the 1997 levels since then, Reese said she is confident her flooding problems are solved and was very pleased with the attitude and performance of Edmonds and the OEMA team. "After everything I had tried, they gave me good advice, and the additional work they paid for was done well. I'm in no hurry to have the water come up high enough to test it all again, but I'm comfortable that I won't be looking at major repair bills if we do have another flood." Edmonds reports that, while neighbors were out sweeping standing water from their driveways and patios after recent heavy rains, she has seen Reese standing on her deck smiling while the new check valve keeps her high and dry.

A few doors down Route 550 from Reese is the Baker residence, which had also suffered damage to low-lying mechanical systems in the '97 flood including an influx of flood water that caused their septic system to back up into the house. Even worse, the Bakers' 500-gallon fuel oil storage tank was pulled off its mooring and hurled hundreds of yards downstream. Firemen pumped the tank almost dry before it could spill its contents into the watershed, but the tank was then carried away creating a downstream impact hazard and blocking the creek bed till it could be removed after flooding receded. The Bakers were able to receive mitigation grant monies totaling \$5,750 to elevate several HVAC components, install a check valve to prevent backflow of flood water into the septic system and anchor their new fuel oil tank firmly to a concrete slab. They also had blocking posts anchored in concrete installed on both sides of the fuel oil tank to protect against impact damage from tree branches or man-made objects being carried along by fast-flowing flood water.

"These weren't huge projects," said Edmonds, "but they met some serious needs for people in the community, and we found both the Ohio Emergency Management team and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program very flexible and easy to work with."

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Ohio**

County: **Athens County**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Flooding**

Activity/Project Type: **Retrofitting, Structural**

Activity/Project Start Date: **03/1997**

Activity/Project End Date: **01/1998**

Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**

Funding Recipient: **Property Owner - Residential**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$16,000.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1164 , 03/04/1997**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: **<http://www.floodsmart.gov/>**

Reference URL 2: **<http://www.ema.ohio.gov/>**

Main Points

- Athens County suffered isolated flooding along several streams during the March 1997 disaster, in areas that had been damaged in two previous declared floods since 1990.
- But when the March 1997 downpour created unprecedented runoff, Reese found that three feet of water had found its way around and under her precautions into her lower level, ruining a heat pump and electrical breaker box and causing structural damage to deck supports.
- Her next step was to seek help through Kara Edmonds and the Hazard Mitigation Grant program. Edmonds prepared and submitted a successful grant application and helped Ms. Reese get architectural advice through the Ohio Emergency Management Agency Mitigation Branch.
- In 1998, with the help of a \$16,000 mitigation grant, Reese was able to retrofit her home



Stream caused homeowners to make adjustments



Elevation works to avoid flood damage