



Mobile Convention Center

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Mobile County, Alabama



Mobile, AL - Over the years, Mobile has experienced a number of major hurricanes. For this reason, a major undertaking was employed to build a hurricane resistant structure when building the Mobile Convention Center. Located in the Upper Mobile Bay, the Convention Center, owned by the City of Mobile and operated by SMG, Inc., represents the centerpiece of the revitalization of the City's downtown area.

The Mobile Convention Center was constructed in 1993 and cost \$52 million. Elevated above the 100-year flood elevation, it was designed to withstand hurricane force winds and rising water. Prior to designing the Mobile Convention Center, architects met with over 30 facility planners across the country and solicited their input for functionality. This input was incorporated into plans for a structure that would be aesthetically pleasing without compromising its structural integrity.

The Mobile Convention Center received only minor damage in 1998 from Hurricane Georges. There was approximately 4 feet of water on the lower level of the building used primarily for parking. Total damage to this structure (including flood fighting and clean up costs) has been \$156,000 to date with approximately \$350,000 estimated for additional costs to complete repairs. The initial expenses included some miscellaneous electrical work on the lower level; fire control panel, electronic parking equipment and elevator repair, dry wall repair, and general removal of mud and water.

The Center was operational within three days after Hurricane Georges hit. Many of the remaining repairs are cosmetic with carpet and tile replacement being the most costly. Because damage was minor, the Center was able to remain in operation. In addition, the Center received additional bookings from other facilities that were damaged from Hurricane Georges. If the building had not been elevated, possible repairs could have included the main HVAC, located on the second floor, which would have cost several million dollars. Business interruption costs would have included the cancellation of the Southeast U.S./Japan Trade Commission Conference, costing more than \$1 million to the Center. Additional revenues generated from services associated with other facilities totaled approximately \$80,000.

The design and elevation of the Center represented a major economic success exceeding \$5 million in both damages avoided and lack of business interruption costs.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region IV**

State: **Alabama**

County: **Mobile County**

City/Community: **Mobile**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Land Use/Planning; Retrofitting, Structural; Floodplain Management**
Activity/Project Start Date: **04/1991**
Activity/Project End Date: **09/1993**
Funding Source: **Local Sources**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **Mobile Convention Center**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **No Federal Disaster specified**

Year First Tested: **1998**

Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

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

Reference URL 2: <http://ema.alabama.gov/>

Main Points

- The Mobile Convention Center was constructed in 1993 and cost \$52 million. Elevated above the 100-year flood elevation, it was designed to withstand hurricane force winds and rising water.
- The Center was operational within three days after Hurricane Georges (1998) hit. Many of the remaining repairs were cosmetic, with carpet and tile replacement being the most costly. Because damage was minor, the Center was able to remain in operation.
- The design and elevation of the Center represented a major economic success exceeding \$5 million in both damages avoided and lack of business interruption costs.