



Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Boston, MA - The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum was inundated by flood waters and sewage in October of 1996 causing damage to their basement areas; in particular, the ventilation/air-handling system. In addition to heating and cooling the building, the system keeps the museum and its permanent collection of art works at constant humidity levels. This system preserves the collection worth hundreds of million (if not billions) of dollars. The building itself is on the National Registry of Historic Places and is considered a National treasure.



As repairs were made to the building the museum staff worked with FEMA Region I, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, members of the US Senate, engineers, archeologist, and historic architects to develop a flood mitigation project. The museum installed four sumps and pumps in strategic areas in the basement of the building. During a flooding event the sumps fill and the pumps eject floodwaters into the city's storm drains or directly on the street in the event the storm drains have surcharged. The system is equipped with an emergency generator in the event of a power failure.

In June 1998 the area flooded again. The museum was dry. This project has saved at least \$200,000 in avoided damages from the June 1998 flood alone. In addition, the project has demonstrated to the museum's neighbors the benefits of mitigation. One neighbor, The Museum of Fine Arts, which was flooded in the October 1996 and June 1998 events, has now taken on an aggressive mitigation strategy to prevent future damage.

Standard Homeowner's insurance policies do not cover flood damage. The National Flood Insurance Program makes Federally backed flood insurance available to homeowners, renters, and business owners in participating communities.

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region I**

State: **Massachusetts**

County: **Suffolk County**

City/Community: **Boston**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Flood-proofing**
Structure Type: **Masonry, Reinforced**
Activity/Project Start Date: **03/1997**
Activity/Project End Date: **06/1997**
Funding Source: **Other FEMA funds/ US Department of Homeland Security**
Funding Recipient: **Cultural Facility**
Funding Recipient Name: **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$135,898.00 (Actual)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Yes**

Federal Disaster #: **1142 , 10/25/1996**

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.fema.gov/business/nfip/>

Reference URL 2: <http://www.mass.gov/>

Main Points

- The museum installed four sumps and pumps in strategic areas in the basement of the building.
- The system is equipped with an emergency generator in the event of a power failure.
- This project has saved at least \$200,000 in avoided damages from the June 1998 flood alone. In addition, the project has demonstrated to the museum's neighbors the benefits of mitigation. One neighbor, The Museum of Fine Arts, which was flooded in the October 1996 and June 1998 events, has now taken on an aggressive mitigation strategy to prevent future damage.

