



FEMA

Mobile Convention Center Building a Hurricane Resistant Structure

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 four 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.

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



Mobile County,
Alabama



Quick Facts

Sector:

Public

Cost:

Amount Not Available

Primary Activity/Project:

Retrofitting, Structural

Primary Funding:

Local Sources