



FEMA

United Way of Santa Barbara Protecting Property and Operations

Santa Barbara, CA - On the morning of Jan. 10, 1995, the staff of the United Way arrived at their facility in downtown Santa Barbara to find 3 feet of water in their offices. Flooding destroyed computers, carpet, furniture, workstation partitions, electrical wiring, and irreplaceable documents. Elevators, the alarm system, cabinets and interior walls were also damaged.

Flooding in the city was the result of seven hours of heavy rainfall the night before that generated runoff from the nearby hills, plus an unusually high tide which overwhelmed the city's pumping systems and fill culverts.

Everything that was destroyed or damaged had to be replaced before United Way could return to normal. Included in the overall loss was the cost of business interruption, emotional impact on staff members, and the effects on United Way's customers during the several months it took to restore operations.

To protect its property from future disasters, United Way developed and implemented a plan to floodproof its building. Funds for this project came from a community-wide campaign that generated more than \$550,000 from private and public sources. Several contractors and other professionals donated time to mitigate the facility.

Mitigation included installation of three flood control panels (doors) that can be activated to prevent water from coming into the building and reaching the 3-foot level sustained in the 1995 flood. A 2-foot deep trench was dug around the building foundation and filled with sealant to waterproof the structure. Water-resistant walls, doors, cabinets, and carpeting that can be removed one square at a time, were installed. Critical infrastructure including electrical outlets, electrical panels and the alarm system were elevated.

The cost of repairs of damage from the 1995 flood was \$450,000. This included the cost of repairing or replacing electrical, elevator and alarm systems, computers, carpet, cabinets, doors, furniture and interior walls. The cost of mitigation including installation of flood doors, the trench and sealant, and elevation of critical lifelines was \$100,000. This 4.5 to 1 ratio shows how much United Way will save by spending money for mitigation measures before the next flood occurs.



**Santa Barbara County,
California**



Quick Facts

Sector:

Private

Cost:

\$100,000.00 (Estimated)

Primary Activity/Project:

Flood-proofing

Primary Funding:

Local Sources