



## Miller South Chose Elevation

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### Lawrence County, Ohio



**Lawrence County, OH** - As coordinator of seven different mitigation projects after extensive flooding along the Ohio River in 1997, Doug Cade of Lawrence County Community Action, was primarily involved in acquiring and demolishing severely damaged properties. But in his meetings with residents and review of data from the Miller South flood area, Cade found that elevation of some flood-damaged properties was not only a viable alternative, but also the best one.

The unincorporated area of southeastern Lawrence County designated as Miller South in Cade's grant application is one of the most-often flooded areas in the entire state--with a total of 27 documented flood events since local record-keeping started in 1832. Eight of those floods have occurred since 1950. The small residential area seeking mitigation assistance there consisted of six large, upscale homes that had suffered repeated but not catastrophic damage in several recent high-water events.

"When I talked with the property owners and we looked at the data, there were a couple of good reasons to look at alternatives to acquisition," said Cade. "First, these were large, fairly new homes on big lots that had a high pre-disaster market value--which meant buyouts would be prohibitively expensive. Second, the first floors of most of the properties were only a couple of feet below the Base Flood Elevation; and third, the families really wanted to stay in the area and were committed to following through with the structural work if we would help get government funding."

Cade said the relatively straightforward structural changes that were needed to raise the Miller South homes to a disaster-resistant elevation were a major supporting factor. "After we talked with engineers and got estimates, it seemed pretty clear that--for these types of houses-- adding three feet of elevation was kind of a magic number," he said. "At three feet the expense and complexity of the work were clearly cost-effective. Once you got much over three feet of elevation, the jobs got more complicated and the costs went up fast."

The Miller South proposal submitted and ultimately approved by OEMA and FEMA included funding for six property elevations. By the time applications were reviewed and approved and funds became available, two property owners changed their minds but four stayed and went through with the elevation process.

As of early 2002, all four families were still living in their newly elevated homes, with significantly reduced danger of injury or property damage in extreme weather --and enhanced property values based on the improved disaster resistance of their houses.

Lawrence County kept four upscale properties on the active tax rolls, and greatly reduced the prospect of future public costs for emergency services, temporary housing, debris removal, etc. in one of its most-often flooded areas.

#### Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Ohio**

County: **Lawrence County**

## Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**  
Hazard Type: **Flooding**  
Activity/Project Type: **Elevation, Structural**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/1998**  
Activity/Project End Date: **01/2002**  
Funding Source: **Local Sources**  
Funding Recipient: **Property Owner - Residential**

## Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

## 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

- The unincorporated area of southeastern Lawrence County designated as Miller South in Cade's grant application is one of the most-often flooded areas in the entire state--with a total of 27 documented flood events since local record-keeping started in 1832.
- The Miller South proposal submitted and ultimately approved by OEMA and FEMA included funding for six property elevations. By the time applications were reviewed and approved and funds became available, two property owners changed their minds but four stayed and went through with the elevation process.
- As of early 2002, all four families were still living in their newly elevated homes, with significantly reduced danger of injury or property damage in extreme weather --and enhanced property values based on the improved disaster resistance of their houses.