



## New Alexandria Home High and Dry During Hurricane Isabel

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Fairfax County, Virginia*

**Alexandria, VA** - Christine and Ron Redon had a close encounter with flooding when the Hurricane Isabel storm surge invaded their New Alexandria neighborhood. They heeded the call to evacuate and were not at home to watch as the water rose in their neighborhood during the dead of night.



As daylight returned, all of their neighbors were shocked and dismayed to find two-feet of brackish water in their homes. The Redon home was undamaged.

The difference between the Redon home and their neighbors came about due to a floodplain study done by Fairfax County, Virginia, and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 45 years ago.

The builder of Christine and Ron’s home followed what was then a new set of regulations in 1960 and built the home on a raised foundation.

While other homes in the area were built in the 1940s with their first floor at a lower elevation level, the Redon’s first floor level is at least two feet higher. After Isabel, their foundation and crawlspace got wet, but no harm was done to their living space. Dozens of surrounding homes however, suffered severe damage. When the floodwaters receded, Christine and Ron were the only people on their block who didn’t need help. They were helping others.

Their first priority was to check on several neighbors who had stayed in their homes during the hurricane.

Ron was amazed at the extent of the flooding. “I paddled my kayak over the tops of the cars,” he said.

The job of hauling water-soaked carpeting, beds, furniture, and other possessions out of homes was exhausting. Volunteers throughout the area showed up and, according to Redon, did heroic work. Christine and Ron were part of that army of caring people.

Several other homes in New Alexandria were also spared from the floodwaters resulting from Hurricane Isabel. They were all built after the adoption in 1978, of strict floodplain regulations that are part of the Fairfax County Zoning Ordinance. The observance of this ordinance by the builder and county officials was critical in preventing damage to these homes along with the Redon’s home.

The recent flooding from Hurricane Isabel shows the importance of complying with floodplain regulations. Fairfax County’s agreement to adopt and enforce floodplain management ordinances is an important element in reducing the loss of property and life when floods occur.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County (County-wide)**

FEMA Region: **Region III**

State: **Virginia**

County: **Fairfax County**

## Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public/Private Partnership**  
Hazard Type: **Flooding**  
Activity/Project Type: **Building Codes; Elevation, Structural; Floodplain Management**  
Activity/Project Start Date: **06/1960**  
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**  
Funding Source: **Homeowner; Local Sources; Property Owner, Residential**

## Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**  
Non FEMA Cost:

## 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: **1996**  
Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

## Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.gov/>  
Reference URL 2: <http://www.vdem.state.va.us/>

## Main Points

- The difference between the Redon home and their neighbors came about due to a floodplain study done by Fairfax County, Virginia, and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 45 years ago.
- While other homes in the area were built in the 1940s with their first floor at a lower elevation level, the Redon's first floor level is at least two feet higher.
- The recent flooding from Hurricane Isabel shows the importance of complying with floodplain regulations.



The Redon elevated home - high and dry