



Rossilli's Restaurant: Saved by an Inch of Prevention

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Hancock County, Ohio

Findlay, OH - Two days after the rampaging Blanchard River overflowed its banks last August and submerged downtown Findlay under more than a foot of water, Meg Rossilli stood in front of the restaurant she owns with her brother and her husband.



Located less than two blocks away from the bridge on Main Street that crosses over the river, Rossilli's Restaurant, like many of the stores and offices in the neighborhood, could have sustained major, even bankrupting, damages from the 100-year flood.

"On either side of us," Meg says, "there were piles six feet high – computers, chairs, flooring, carpets – a pile of junk on this side, a pile of junk on that side. And there we were in the middle with a sign: 'Open for Business.'"

In this case, the difference between disaster and setback was a matter of a single inch.

"When we moved to our new location (in 2003), we wanted to raise up the dining room floor by a foot," says Meg's brother and co-owner, Gary. The contractor and the city suggested raising the floor 13 inches instead of 12, in addition to using a more expensive, pressurized water-resistant wood. Being concerned with the additional cost for both modifications, they hesitated. "We didn't want to spend the money," said Gary.

But ultimately they decided to play it safe and spend the money not only on the extra height, but also on the pressurized water-resistant wood, in both the dining room and the kitchen in the back. The ceilings in the building, built in 1875, were high enough to give them plenty of room to work with.

Four years later, a summer storm settled over northwest Ohio, dumping up to 9 inches of rain in a single day on the farms and small towns. Creeks, streams, drainage systems, rivers – they all overflowed in the predominantly flat region.

Among the towns worst hit was Findlay, where the Blanchard River rose to 3.5 feet above flood stage.

Down Main Street from the river, the Rossillis and Mike Eynon, Meg's husband and business partner, piled sandbags three feet high in the narrow alcove of their entrance. Flood waters came in anyway, and the bar area in the front got flooded. The wood floor in there has had more than 100 years to harden, so there wasn't much damage.

Flood water crept up the ramp to the dining room, but stopped less than an inch from the raised floor.

"The dining room and the kitchen were untouched." Meg says. "We pumped out the water in the bar, and were open for business the next day."

Are the owners of Rossilli's glad they spent that extra money on mitigation?

"Gosh yes," says Gary. "Are you kidding me? It saved the business."

Activity/Project Location

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

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Ohio**

County: **Hancock County**

City/Community: **Findlay**

Activity/Project Location

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Retrofitting, Non-structural**
Activity/Project Start Date: **08/2003**
Activity/Project End Date: **09/2003**
Funding Source: **Property Owner, Commercial**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**
Non FEMA Cost: **0**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **No**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**
Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1720 , 08/27/2007**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.floodsmart.com>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/mitmeasures/elevate.shtm>

Main Points

- When the Blanchard River overflowed in August 2006, the Rossilli's Restaurant was virtually untouched thanks to mitigation measures.
- At the suggestion of the cirt and their contractor, they elevated the dining room floor by 13 inches rather than a foot.
- Though they weren't thrilled about spending the money, they took the advice and elevated that extra inch.
- They also invested in more expensive pressurized water-resistant wood.
- When the Blanchard River over-flowed, Findlat was one of the hardest hit towns. While water crept up the ramp to the dining room, it stopped less than an inch from the raised floor.
- Elevation saved the business - they were open the very next day.



An employee of Rossilli's Restaurant strolls down a ramp from the dining room that stood one inch above recent floodwaters.