



Leadership Breeds Success

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

Tribal, FEMA Region VI

Miami, OK - Ten Native American tribes call land in Oklahoma’s Ottawa County home. In 1997, two of those tribes – the Modoc and Miami – created an historic partnership to build The Stables Casino in the City of Miami. Prudent construction plans raised the casino 12 feet above ground level – a height recommended by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps. The casino was put to the test on July 3, 2007, when torrential rains severely flooded Ottawa County and, specifically, the City of Miami. The flood resulted in water reaching the threshold of the casino doors, but no higher.



Modoc employee John Ballard said, “United States law restricts casinos to land owned by Tribes. In Oklahoma that means Land Trusts or Tribal Lands. When we partnered with the Miami Tribe to build the casino, the only lots big enough for development were in a floodplain.”

The Modoc Tribe came to understand the history of flooding on that land after floodwaters had completely covered it in 1988 and 1995. With that history, the Tribes asked both local floodplain managers and FEMA for guidance. While neither authority encouraged building in a floodplain, Federal regulations provided limits on where and how the Tribes could build. After reviewing the Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) that specified a first-floor elevation of at least 12 feet above ground level, the Tribe used landfill and a raised foundation to meet that elevation height.

Following a wet May and June 2007 that logged 181 percent more rain than normal (and becoming the second wettest months on record since 1895), the July 2007 rains tested the casino elevation. With 12 feet of water collecting over three days, aerial photographs documented that The Stables Casino had become an island surrounded by blocks of water. Luckily, no water entered the building. Within three days, the waters receded and people could walk from their cars to the building. The casino then reopened, and the casino’s 50 employees lost no wages due to time lost.

In addition to acknowledging the benefits of elevation, Ballard also commended Modoc Chief Bill Follis’s leadership before and during the flood. Months before the flood, Chief Follis had put an Emergency Operations Plan into place that was strictly followed by the Modoc Tribe. The plan included actions taken to move casino records and water-sensitive equipment to the second floor. To assist visitors to the casino, the casino workers, and residents of the area, the plan included initiating a boat brigade to conduct rescues, bring critical supplies, and transport Tribal staff to or from the casino. Another part of the plan activated during the flood was a scheduled reporting of flood depths to Tribal leadership to adequately plan securing the casino and its contents.

After the flood, the Modoc Tribe chose additional actions to reduce future flood losses. The most significant change will include relocating the Tribal headquarters to land outside the floodplain. Currently, the headquarters are attached to the casino. During the July flood, it ended up with nearly four feet of water inside. As the waters receded and dried away, mold developed throughout the building’s interior.

Ballard said, “If the casino had flooded, it probably would have taken months to open with the delays in design, permitting and construction. We estimate we avoided losses over three million dollars because we built the casino so high.”

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Tribal**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**
Hazard Type: **Flooding**
Activity/Project Type: **Elevation, Structural**
Structure Type: **Masonry, Un-reinforced/Plain**
Activity/Project Start Date: **03/1997**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Private funds**
Funding Recipient: **Tribal Organizations/Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **MODOC TRIBE AND MIAMI NATION**

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 #: **No Federal Disaster specified**
Year First Tested: **2000**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Yes**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.the-stables.com/>

Main Points

- Two tribes who live on land in Ottawa County, the Modoc and Miami, created a historic partnership to build The Stables Casino in the City of Miami in 1997.
- Construction plans raised the casino twelve feet above ground level – a height recommended by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps.
- On July 3, 2007, torrential rains severely flooded Ottawa County, specifically Miami, Oklahoma.
- Surpassing the flood of 2000, waters reached the threshold of the casino doors, but no higher.
- Elevation saved the casino from an estimated 3 million dollars of damages.



The Stables Casino after the flood.



Stables Casino elevation grade from parking lot.



Side view of Elevation



Stables Casino front Steps of elevation.