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Lambertville Public School Building Retrofit

This project involved retrofitting the elementary school building in the City of Lambertville, NJ, following Hurricane Floyd in 1999. The school structures include a 1-story brick classroom building and an attached "multi-purpose" building used as a gymnasium, cafeteria, and assembly area.

In 1999, with Hurricane Floyd in the weather forecast, staff and students followed the drill with sand bags and elevation, but the school was overwhelmed by the heavy rain delivered by the storm. Water depths within the school reached 24 inches as floodwaters poured into the school building through doors, windows, and heating vents. Teaching materials, books, equipment, cafeteria appliances, furniture, and photographs were destroyed.

The results of the event, in terms of both dollar cost and emotional impact, was dramatic. The insurance settlement alone was \$1,000,000 (1999 dollars). Teachers and children were in tears and children were out of school for 5 days.

The first real test of the mitigation measures came in August of 2011 when Hurricane Irene slammed into New Jersey, bringing soaking rains and high winds across an already over-saturated ground. With recently installed drainage systems in place for nearby Ely Creek, plus waterproof and reinforced doors and windows, and raised heating units, coupled with overwhelming volunteer support, Lambertville's preparation overcame previous fears.

Recently installed drainage systems for Ely Creek, plus waterproof and reinforced doors and windows, and raised heating units, coupled with overwhelming volunteer support, helped prevent damage to the school. Irene's flash-flooding brought over 18 inches of street level flooding, but the floodwaters were unable to penetrate Lambertville's Public School. The only water that managed to penetrate the building was a few small wet spots in one corner that were easily cleaned up by a custodian using a mop. Financial and emotional costs as a result of the storm and flooding were totally avoided.

Lambertville's experience in mitigating a real threat to a facility critical to their identity, and working together as a community, sets an example for many other communities around the country that find themselves in similar circumstances. The community has demonstrated that recognizing the hazard, formulating a plan and persistently pursuing the assistance offered by FEMA can bring about

