

## Mapleton Elevation Projects Withstand Test

**Lane County, OR** - Nestled in a narrow valley of Oregon's Coastal Range, Mapleton has been subject to repeated flooding from the Siuslaw River. In January 2012, the Siuslaw again rose and covered much of Mapleton, but 22 area families didn't have to muck out their homes, tear down wallboard, or toss waterlogged treasures. That is because their homes had been elevated using funding from FEMA.

After the massive 1996 floods, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM) earmarked a portion of its FEMA hazard mitigation funds to elevate homes in hard-hit areas like Mapleton. The goal was to provide long-term solutions to repetitive floods.

The January 2012 flooding was the first major test of the elevation projects begun 16 years ago. They passed with flying colors.

"The stress is nothing like before," said Bryan Moore, a Mapleton resident. "There was no water in the house – that's awesome!"

Moore's wife Mashell remembers what it was like in 1996. Her husband is pastor of the church next door, which "always floods." As the water rose, Bryan and the other men in the neighborhood worked frantically to move everything in the church to higher levels. Mashell was left to deal with their 102-year-old home.

"I was by myself, trying to haul things upstairs," Mashell said. "Then the lights went out and I was working in the dark." She set out candles but the flames ended up setting a table on fire. "It wrecked everything."

When she learned about the FEMA funding, Mashell was the driving force behind elevating their home. The process took time and plenty of paperwork, but by November 1996 her home had been jacked up onto steel piers. It's a good thing, because Mapleton flooded again later that month.

Mapleton's building requirements also have changed since 1996. New construction now must be built above flood levels.

Mike McAllister engineered many of the Mapleton home elevations. A long-time resident himself, McAllister knows firsthand what his neighbors went through then and now. "We had fewer people out of their homes this time," said McAllister. "And by people I mean entire families including kids and pets." Fewer people out of their homes also meant less mess, less expense, and less disruption to the small town along the river.

Lane County Emergency Manager Linda Cook is well aware of the community's flood issues. She will be requesting additional hazard mitigation money to elevate at least one more Mapleton home and "will be on the lookout for other interested property owners to include in the application." If elevating the entire structure is not feasible or possible, "a lot of damage can be mitigated," said Cook. This could include elevating critical structures such as electrical panels, water heaters, and furnaces.

Cook also recommends people "learn the art and science of sandbagging so you can be ready to use them whenever the river reaches a certain trigger level."

The dictionary defines elevate as "to move or raise to a higher position." It also means to raise the spirits. Both definitions apply to the Mapleton home elevations.