

Water Pumps Mitigate Simonton's Flood Problem

FORT BEND COUNTY, TX – As floodwaters ravaged the state of Texas during Memorial Day weekend 2015, the water pumps in Simonton were hard at work protecting the city.

The city of Simonton in Fort Bend County, Texas, had been plagued by flooding in the past, but escaped the flood waters of the Brazos River during this recent event largely because of its drainage pumps.

Simonton is a community of just over 800 people located some 25 miles west of Houston, Texas, and one mile east of the Brazos River. It is a relatively new city established in 1957 and incorporated in 1979. However, since its origin, the city has been plagued by repeated flooding due to its location in the 100 year floodplain of the Brazos River.

According to Allen Spears, the county's deputy emergency management coordinator, devastating floods occurred along the Brazos River in October 1991 and December 1994 that caused serious damage in the Simonton area, particularly in the Valley Lodge subdivision. The riverfront subdivision consists of 200 homes on large lots and a golf course.

Approximately 100 homes were flooded in 1991 and 125 in 1994. The latter flood caused about \$2.5 million dollars in damages. Flood insurance claims for the subdivision since 1978 total approximately \$4.5 million dollars.

The residents faced a serious problem and there was no simple solution. Clearly, there was an immediate need to address drainage and flood prevention. City officials determined that new water pumps would be the best solution to control the water level and subsequently prevent the flooding at the Valley Lodge subdivision.

The city of Simonton purchased two pumps for \$95,000, partly paid for by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). The city contributed 25 percent of the cost.

Those pumps, in conjunction with four pumps purchased by the county, and two additional rented pumps, were put in place to combat the floodwaters during the Memorial Day weekend disaster. Crews from Fort Bend County controlled the system that pumped thousands of gallons of treacherous floodwaters, effectively preventing them from reaching homes in the Valley Lodge subdivision.

"The system pumped an astronomical amount of water each day during the recent flood. Gallons and gallons of floodwaters were diverted from the river before they could reach the Valley Lodge Subdivision," said Spears.

Now the residents have a different story to tell. Only one of the 200 homes flooded. All other homes were dry.

While citizens in other communities evacuated, the occupants at Valley Lodge remained in their homes. They felt confident that they were safe due to the mitigation effort that was in place.

The water pumps proved to be invaluable and did what they were designed to do.



Pumps operated heavily during the Memorial Day Flood in 2015. (Photo Courtesy of Allen Spiers)



For additional information visit:

- <http://www.fbcoem.org/go/doc/1528/2521214/>
- <http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program>