

For More Information

City of Tillamook, Oregon
www.tillamoo.com/CityHall.html

Oregon Office of Homeland Security/
Oregon Emergency Management
www.oregon.gov/OOHS/OEM

Flood insurance information
www.floodsmart.gov

FEMA - Plan Ahead
www.fema.gov/plan

FEMA - Above the Flood: Elevating Your
Floodprone House
www.fema.gov/rebuild/recover/fema347

Before beginning any construction project, citizens should consult their local building department officials to obtain the requisite permits and ensure that the project complies with local ordinances.

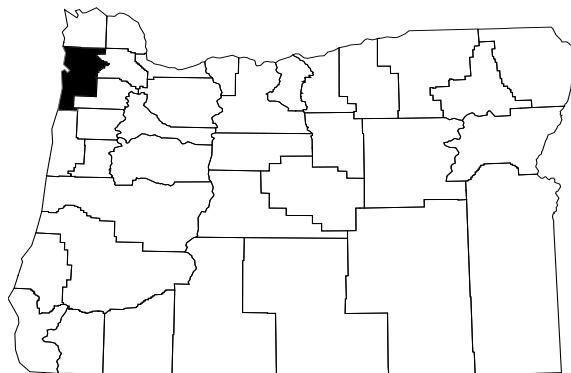


Best Practices

FEMA-1672-DR-OR

Nehalem Businesses Raise Their Town

Nehalem, OR



FEMA



Oregon Emergency
Management

Nehalem Businesses Raise Their Town

Nehalem, OR

In the summertime, the main street in the small town of Nehalem, Oregon is teeming with tourists browsing the many art galleries, gift shops and antique stores. Visitors can't help but pause to admire the lush flower baskets overflowing with crimson geraniums and cobalt blue alyssum hanging from main street storefronts. However, few notice that the town has a unique look from that of other coastal communities. Most buildings are elevated about four feet above the street level to protect them from flooding.

As a tourist mecca, Nehalem is ideally located. The Nehalem River meanders through town towards Nehalem Bay. Fishing and kayaking attract visitors year-round. While the area receives an average rainfall of 88 inches a year, the temperatures are moderate and most of the time the rain is considered nothing more than a minor inconvenience. As the locals say – the rain is what makes the forests and farmlands so alluring.

In 1996, the year of the great flood, days and days of relentless rain were far more than a minor disruption. The Nehalem River, just a block from town, swelled well above flood stage and the raging waters swirled through

the town. Emergency workers maneuvered boats along the main street, rescuing store owners who were working desperately to salvage their inventory.



Pete Thompson, co-owner of Pete's Antiques, lost no inventory after the November 2006 flood because his building was elevated two feet above the 100-year base flood elevation.

Pete Thompson, co-owner of Pete's Antiques, recalls that his store had four feet of flood water inside. When the rescue boat arrived, the water was up to Thompson's chest. Emergency workers grabbed him from the water and pulled him to safety. Despite his best efforts, Thompson lost thousands of dollars worth of irreplaceable antique furniture.

When the flood waters receded, Nehalem merchants knew they had to do something to prevent damage from future flooding. Tourism is the economic

engine that runs the city. The thriving arts community brings art connoisseurs from all over the world to buy original works. Another flood could well bankrupt them.

In search of a solution, local and state government formed a partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)



Pete Thompson points out the elevation of his building and how it protected his business from flooding.

to bring financial assistance to help the town protect itself from the wilds of the river. The Nehalem community raised most of their town.

At Pete's Antiques, contractors used hydraulic jacks to elevate the building four feet. The four foot elevation requirement was determined by FEMA flood maps and the local ordinance requiring the first floor be two feet above the 100-year base flood elevation. Large, wooden beams were installed to anchor the structure to a six inch thick slab of concrete.

Ten years later, a raging winter storm deluged the area with over 20 inches of rain in 48 hours. The Nehalem River spilled over its banks into the town, flooding the streets again. But this time, businesses suffered little or no damage. The flood waters never reached the first floor of most buildings. Within a few days, the artists and merchants were back in business. No one knows better than the Oregon town of Nehalem that flood mitigation is worth the investment.



Nehalem River

Photos by Art Alejandre, FEMA