

Guidelines for flood restoration work in Baltimore County

Many emergency permits were issued to help people get through the paperwork and get on with the job of fixing their homes after Hurricane Isabel. Since then we have been inspecting and assessing homes in the area and are now better able to advise people of how to avoid problems and delays.

Repairs/restorations: If you are repairing or restoring your damaged home to its previous condition, the law requires that the house conform to all the basic flood protection requirements for new homes if the cost of the repairs exceeds 50% of the value of the house prior to the damage. (The term for this is substantial damage.) This means the lowest floor must be elevated to the flood protection level, flood vents must be installed in the foundation walls, all utilities must be elevated, a non-conversion agreement must be signed, and an elevation certificate from a surveyor must be submitted verifying the finished elevation. Generally, you can repair or replace all or part of the following items on one floor without the work being considered substantial damage:

- Sheet rock and paneling
- Insulation,
- Wiring,
- Flooring
- Heating, air-conditioning and hot water equipment

Work that goes beyond these items, especially structural restorations, will usually constitute substantial damage, and make elevation of the house necessary. You may be asked to provide a signed construction contract or other information to make the determination in borderline cases.

If the work does not constitute substantial improvement, you may restore the house to its original elevation, but you may want to consider elevating it anyway. After all, most properly elevated houses escaped the flood with very little damage, and who wants to go through this again?

Foundations: Our inspections in the area have revealed that many foundations have been damaged and may be in need of repair or even replacement. Some foundations of older homes were inadequate to begin with and will not support additional load. For this reason, if you plan to rebuild your house on its existing foundation, or if you plan to elevate the house by extending your existing foundation, you will need to have your existing foundation inspected and certified by a Registered Professional Engineer to ensure its adequacy. If you plan to build a new foundation, you will need to submit a foundation drawing to the Building Plans Review office in room 120 of the County Office Building.

Demolition: If you are razing your house, you need to have a plumber cap off the sewer and have BG&E disconnect the electric supply at the pole. The plumber will obtain the necessary cap off permit and the demolition contractor should contact BG&E.

Plans Review (410)887-3987; Building Inspections (410) 887-3953