

Mitigation best practices



FEMA

Flood insurance helps Texas couple recover after apartment is destroyed

National Flood Insurance Program available to renters

Seabrook, Texas – Nestled on the edge of Clear Lake is a waterfront apartment complex that Ed and Linda Hart had called home for more than three years. When Hurricane Ike made landfall on Sept. 13, 2008, accompanied by a 12-foot storm surge, its floodwaters damaged the complex extensively and destroyed all the couple's possessions. Fortunately, the Harts were able to recoup some of their losses because their apartment's contents were insured through a policy with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).



Over 3 feet of water flooded the Hart's home.

Fearing the wrath of the hurricane, the Harts evacuated farther inland. Upon their return to Seabrook, they found the hurricane had destroyed the apartment complex that was once their home.

"We were living right on the water. For us, it was a total loss. We lost everything," Linda said. "We had over 3 feet of water in

our apartment. The entire first floor suffered massive damage. The whole building was condemned."

Linda was familiar with flood insurance from years of working in the mortgage industry, but hadn't seen an immediate need to purchase it because the couple had never suffered a flood loss. The Harts purchased their policy less than a year before Hurricane Ike destroyed their home. The couple had been encouraged to get the policy by Linda's sister, who works for an insurance company.

"Our furniture was less than a year old. Water just picked it up and moved it down the hall," Linda said. "The pictures hanging on the wall and items on the counter tops were all that we could salvage. The rest we just had to walk away from all of it."

Following the move to another apartment complex, the Harts were able to use the funds provided by their flood insurance claim to begin furnishing their new apartment.

"It was the best \$159 we ever spent. Within a week, we had \$2,500 in our hands, just to get us started," Linda said. "Within another two to three weeks, we had the balance of the claim. We received 100 percent of the face value of our policy."

Many misconceptions surround flood insurance. These include the beliefs that policies are available only to homeowners,

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that coverage is unnecessary for those who have homeowners' insurance and that it is unaffordable.

Federally backed policies are widely available in communities that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. Renters can buy policies for coverage of their personal property in their home. Flood policies supplement homeowners' insurance for flood losses, which are not covered in most homeowners' policies. The Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) offers lower-cost protection for homes and apartments in areas of low-to-moderate flood risk. Depending on the location of a structure, the annual premium for contents coverage can be as low as \$39 for \$8,000 in coverage.

"We know that we could have purchased a premium with higher coverage. However, at the time we were on a strict budget," Linda said. "We would highly recommend securing residential content coverage. It's quick, it's easy but above all, it's worth it."