



# FEMA

# Factsheet

FEMA DR-1734-WA

## RAISING YOUR WASHINGTON HOME ABOVE THE FLOOD

One strategy for avoiding flood damage is to raise your house to an elevation likely to be safe from future flood events. This is a big job, requiring the services of specialty contractors who can safely lift the structure and add a new support system or foundation. Here are several questions to answer before launching into such a project:

### How high should I raise the house?

It is essential the first-floor elevation meets or exceeds the regulatory requirements for your location. Consult with local building officials to determine the required elevation. You will need to hire a licensed surveyor to establish a "benchmark" at your building site. Building higher than the minimum requirement may also be a good idea, since estimates of high water levels during future floods cannot be guaranteed.

### How will the house be supported?

There are several ways to build an elevated foundation for your home. In some areas it is typical to use sturdy posts, or wood, steel, or concrete piling. When installed deep into the earth, they provide a very stable system to support the house. Another solution is to build a tall foundation using steel-reinforced concrete or reinforced and filled concrete block. This type of support system must be designed to allow flood water to pass under the building.

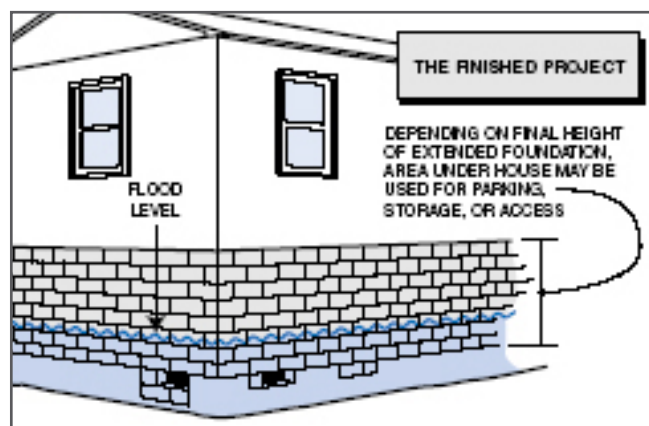
Your local building official can help with design requirements.

### Who can design a raised foundation system for my home?

Hire an architect or structural engineer with previous foundation design experience. You may also need to employ the services of a soil engineer to ensure a stable structure. The new foundation will need to do more than simply hold the house high above the ground. It must also be able to resist powerful horizontal forces from wind, water, large floating objects, and earthquake forces. Strong connections between the foundation and the house must be part of the design. Be aware, also, an elevated house is more exposed to wind pressures. To survive, all of the building components must be strong and extremely well connected to each other. Any weak link may allow a house to come apart during a storm.

### How can I find a good contractor to do the lifting and foundation construction?

It is very important your foundation contractor be able to work well with the house lifting specialty contractor. Ask about past experi-



ence with this sort of collaboration. The best way to find good contractors is to ask neighbors who have already been through this process. If they had a good experience, they may be able to provide a reference. It still makes sense to check further into the background and qualifications of anyone you interview about the job. Ask for more references to make sure the contractor has more than one satisfied customer, and check with the State of Washington to confirm the contractor has a valid license and insurance. Building material suppliers are often familiar with contractors who have good reputations. Professional associations can also be a good source of information about qualified local contractors.

More Information:  
 Hiring a Contractor  
<http://www.lni.wa.gov/TradesLicensing/Contractors>  
 International Association of Structural Movers  
[www.iasm.org](http://www.iasm.org)  
 Pile Driving Contractors Association  
[www.piledrivers.org](http://www.piledrivers.org)