House Raising vs. Shoring: Choosing the Right Solution for Structures in Flood-Prone Areas

SLIDELL, LA, UNITED STATES, April 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As flood risks increase across Southeast Louisiana and coastal regions, property owners in flood-prone areas are faced with the challenge of protecting homes and buildings from water intrusion and long-term structural damage. Among the most commonly considered solutions are house raising and shoring—two very different approaches designed to address elevation and foundation stability in areas subject to frequent flooding and shifting soil conditions.

Elwin Ordoyne, Vice President of E.C.O. Builders Inc. in Slidell, Louisiana, provides insight into the critical differences between these two techniques and when each should be considered.

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> *Elwin Ordoyne*

“Each method serves a unique purpose,” said Ordoyne. “Understanding site-specific conditions—such as flood zone classification, soil stability, and existing foundation type—is key to determining which approach delivers the best long-term protection.”

House Raising: Elevation for Flood Mitigation
House raising is a structural lifting process in which the entire building is elevated above its existing foundation. This technique is commonly used in areas with high flood risk, particularly in FEMA-designated flood zones where elevation requirements are enforced through municipal building codes or grant-funded mitigation programs.

The house is typically lifted several feet above base flood elevation (BFE) using hydraulic jacks

and temporary supports. A new, permanent foundation—often concrete piers, pilings, or block columns—is then constructed beneath the structure. This creates vertical clearance that allows water to pass beneath the home during flooding events, reducing the chance of water damage and lowering future insurance premiums.

House raising is typically recommended when:

The structure has sustained previous flood damage

Elevation requirements are necessary for compliance with local or FEMA floodplain regulations

The existing foundation is stable enough to support a lifting operation

The objective is to create significant clearance from future floodwaters

Shoring: Structural Stabilization and Leveling
Shoring, unlike house raising, is focused on foundation repair and stabilization rather than elevation. It is often used in response to uneven settling, foundation movement, or compromised footings due to poor soil conditions, erosion, or water intrusion.

In a shoring project, the house is temporarily supported while foundation elements are repaired, replaced, or leveled. Hydraulic jacks and cribbing are used to lift sagging sections of the home back to level, while new piers, pilings, or support beams are installed to reinforce the structure's integrity.

Shoring is generally appropriate when:

The home shows signs of foundation settlement, cracks, or sloping floors

Flooding has caused soil displacement, but elevation is not required

The primary concern is structural stability rather than flood mitigation

Local building codes or elevation requirements do not mandate raising

Choosing the Right Solution Based on Risk and Condition
Determining whether house raising or shoring is the appropriate solution requires a full structural assessment, geotechnical review, and evaluation of flood zone status. In many cases, older homes built below base flood elevation in zones such as AE or VE will require elevation to comply with federal or municipal floodplain management requirements.

However, homes located in non-regulated flood zones may only require shoring to address damage caused by saturated soils or long-term erosion. Shoring offers a lower-cost alternative to elevation, especially when the home's elevation is already compliant and flood mitigation is not a primary concern.

In cases where both elevation and structural settlement are present, a combination of shoring and house raising may be implemented. This ensures that the structure is level, stable, and compliant with applicable regulations.

Flood Insurance and Compliance Considerations
Elevating a home above base flood elevation can result in substantial savings on flood insurance premiums under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). In contrast, homes that remain below BFE—even with structural improvements—may continue to face high premiums due to increased flood risk.

Property owners considering substantial renovations or post-storm repairs should evaluate whether lifting the home aligns with long-term cost savings and FEMA compliance standards. In many cases, elevation is not just recommended—it becomes required for substantial damage or improvement projects within high-risk zones.

Engineering, Permits, and Timing
Both house raising and shoring require engineering analysis, city or parish permits, and adherence to local building codes. House raising projects often involve coordination with surveyors, elevation certificate providers, and utility companies to disconnect and reconnect services.

Timing is also a factor, particularly during hurricane season or post-storm recovery periods when demand for mitigation and repair services increases. Proper planning, site evaluation, and contractor experience all play a role in ensuring the success of either approach.

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