

Do you know how high your house should be elevated to minimize your risk of flooding?

The federal government tries to help homeowners answer that question by issuing base flood elevation maps – but recent storms have revealed in catastrophic fashion that, in many areas of New Jersey, past recommendations were simply too low.

In December, FEMA updated its base flood elevation maps with [new advisory recommendations for many towns](#) in Central New Jersey.

Building higher means higher costs, but federal resources may be available to help with the additional expense. National Flood Insurance Program policyholders in high-risk areas, also known as special flood hazard areas, may be eligible for up to \$30,000 to help pay the costs of meeting the requirements of their community's floodplain ordinance.

The money can be used to raise your home to the flood elevation level adopted by your local government or to move your home out of harm's way. The Increased Cost of Compliance coverage can also be used to tear down and remove flood-damaged buildings.

For more information on ICC coverage, call your insurance company or agent, or call the NFIP toll-free at 800-427-4661. Information may also be [found online](#) .

### **A Good Day Too Long in Coming**

Hurricane Sandy wasn't the only devastating storm to strike our area in recent years. In 2011, Hurricane Irene caused deadly floods that damaged many homes and public facilities throughout Central New Jersey, including the Milltown Post Office. The post office was forced to close, and the postal service was forced to move its most basic services into a trailer in the parking lot.

The trailer was better than nothing; it provided a place to pick up and drop off mail. Yet as Milltown residents have learned all too well in the past year or so, a post office is much more than just that. A full-functioning post office also sells stamps and packaging and money orders. But far beyond these quotidian services, it provides a focal point of a town – a place where everyone intersects; a place where people say hi, catch up, and build a sense of community.

We worked for more than a year, through many bureaucratic delays and false starts, with USPS and Milltown officials to ensure that full postal service be restored to the community. I was honored to join many of those same officials on Monday for a ribbon-cutting for the repaired and reopened postal facility. It was a very good day that had been far too long in coming.

### **A Mark of a Civilized Society**

The humane treatment of animals is a mark of a civilized society. Pets, wildlife, livestock, and endangered species enhance our lives and deserve humane treatment.

The Humane Society of the United States of America has released its annual Humane Scorecard of 2012, and it recognizes my attention to these issues with a 100+ percent vote rating on animal rights issues. I was the only member of the New Jersey House delegation to be recognized with their highest possible rating this year.

The full scorecard is [available online](#) .

Sincerely,

Rush Holt  
Member of Congress