

DRY FLOODPROOFING: RAISED WINDOW WELLS

Properties that do not have adequate protection of their low opening can effectively raise the low opening height with a window well. Window wells can prevent water from entering the basement and prevent rotting of window sills, which may reduce the ability of the windows to hold back flood water.

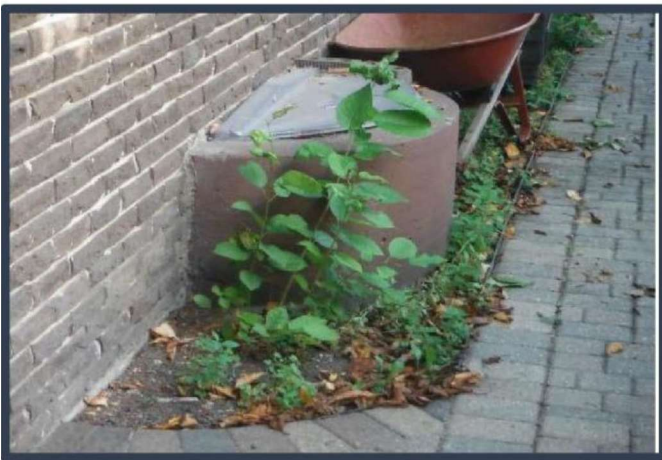
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Window wells should be installed around all windows that are close to or below the ground surface. The ultimate height of the window well depends on the level of flood protection desired, appearance, cost and height of the window. The outer edges of the window well should be sealed to the side of the structure and the bottom of the well should be a least six inches below the underside of the window.

CONSTRUCTION AND COSTS

The height of the raised window well and the soils should be considered when constructing a window well. Raised window wells can be overtopped by higher-than-expected floods regardless of the height of the barrier. The key factors to consider when constructing a raised window well include improvement of the drainage inside the window well, utilizing a mixture of coarse material at the bottom of the well and proper lot grading that directs overland water away from window wells. A window well cover should be

installed if the volume of roof water that can spill directly into the window well or rain that can fall into the well are significant. The cost of constructing a raised window well varies depending upon the material used, size of the window, and height the window well is raised.



ADVANTAGES

- Reduces the flood risk to the structure and contents (if the design flood level is not exceeded),
- Reduces the physical, financial, and emotional strains that accompany flood events,
- Typically, less expensive than structure elevation or relocation, and
- Structural flood protection is provided without significant changes to the structure.

DISADVANTAGES

- Will not reduce flood insurance premiums,
- Overtopping or failure eliminates any protection provided,
- May restrict egress access to the structure.

MAINTENANCE

Raised window wells require periodic inspections and maintenance to address any necessary repairs. The window and the seal around the window should be checked annually for cracks and potential leaks. Also, there should be positive drainage away from the window well.

FLOOD REDUCTION

Raising a window well can reduce the structural flooding that results from this low opening. The level of flood protection is limited to the height of the window well, which should not exceed two or three feet.