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News from Region X

Coastal Flood Risks: Achieving Resilience Together

Historically, cities, towns and villages are settled around ports along the Nation's coastlines, providing individuals and families' opportunities for trade, jobs, and transportation, recreation, and relaxation. These areas are extremely important to our Nation, with great economic, historic, and cultural significance.

Although the coastal areas of the United States comprise only one-fifth of the land area of the contiguous 48 states, they account for more than half of the nation's population and housing supply. In 1990, over 133 million Americans lived in the 673 counties along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Great Lakes. Since 1960, population in these areas increased by 41 percent.

The continued increase in coastal population leads to increased coastal development, which places more structures at risk for damage from coastal hazards. Coastal hazards like storm surge, hurricane force winds, and flooding place this population at risk; the risk is greater if they are not aware of the natural hazards that surround them and steps they can take to mitigate them.

Eight of the top ten most expensive natural disasters in our Nation were caused by coastal storms. Using the 2010 census population counts, it has been determined that 39 percent of the U.S. population live in counties subject to significant coastal flooding during the one-percent annual-chance flood event.

Because of the importance of understanding the Nation's coastal flood risk, FEMA has initiated coastal flood risk studies for 100 percent of the populated coastline as part of its Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) effort. Through the Risk MAP effort, FEMA is updating the Nation's coastal Flood Insurance Studies (FISs) and Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) where appropriate, and publishing new FIRMs in densely populated areas that were not previously mapped.

FEMA is working with local community officials to produce additional data and hazard mitigation tools to enable more strategic emergency preparedness and mitigation planning in coastal communities through the Risk MAP effort. If you live or work in a coastal area, it is important that you:

Review and understand your property's natural hazard risk; and

Take steps to understand individual actions you can take to minimize your personal and property risk to coastal hazards.

For more information, visit www.fema.gov/coastal-flood-risks-achieving-resilience-together.

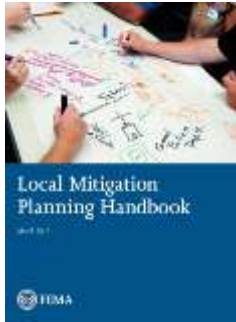
Ask the Help Desk

Have a question about floodplain management regulations, a mapping project or mitigation planning? Email us at RegionXHelpDesk@starr-team.com.



Local Mitigation Planning Handbook

FEMA has released the new *Local Mitigation Planning Handbook* as the official guide for local governments to develop, update and implement local mitigation plans. While the requirements under 44 CFR §201.6 - *Local Mitigation Plans* have not changed, the *Handbook* provides guidance to local governments on developing or updating hazard mitigation plans to meet the requirements. FEMA has completely revised the format and expanded the guidance to offer practical approaches, tools, worksheets, and local mitigation planning examples for how communities can engage in effective planning to reduce long-term risk from natural hazards and disasters. Among other benefits, completion of a local mitigation plan is a requirement for FEMA approval and eligibility for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs.



The *Handbook* complements and references the *Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide* (October 1, 2011), which is the official guidance for Federal and State officials responsible for reviewing local mitigation plans in a fair and consistent manner.

The *Guide* and the *Handbook* can be found on the FEMA Mitigation Planning web page at www.fema.gov/mitigation-planning-laws-regulations-guidance#3.

Full-Spectrum Risk Knowledgebase

The Full-Spectrum Risk Knowledgebase is an initiative of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC) designed to support federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local government officials and key partners in considering their risks and to enhance risk-informed decision making.

The Knowledgebase is a secure reference site that can be used to build all-hazards risk knowledge and provide decision support. It serves as a resource for stakeholders and empowers them to perform their own analyses by providing reference material, information, and guidance aimed at helping to further develop one's understanding of all-hazard risks. Among other information, the Knowledgebase includes descriptions of various threats and hazards, visual depictions of how hazards relate to one another (cause and consequence), information on mitigation strategies and countermeasures, examples of various incidents for added context, and information on the application of different structured analytic techniques to aid in analyses. All site content is kept very general and it is up to users to apply their knowledge and experience to tailor the information to their respective area(s) of responsibility as needed. Notably, the content on this dynamic site is continually expanding and represents a growing body of knowledge based on research and analysis and with input from users.

Although The Knowledgebase is an initiative based within the National Capital Region (NCR), developed in consideration of NCR stakeholder

needs and lessons learned from past NCR regional risk assessments, non-NCR users are granted access to the site as it has broad applicability. NCRC recognizes that hazard events do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries and the entire user community benefits from diversity among users.

Access to The Knowledgebase is granted to government employees throughout the United States and U.S. territories at all levels of government and to non-government stakeholders, considering the key role that all stakeholders play in addressing wide-ranging risks.

Participation in a demonstration provided by the Program Office and completion of The Knowledgebase User Agreement are required prior to gaining site access.

The Program Office holds regular mixed group sessions in which interested parties can participate in a web-based demonstration as their schedules allow. Demonstrations are provided via mixed group sessions three times monthly, and last approximately 45 minutes, depending on the number of questions from participants. To participate in a mixed group session, individuals must "RSVP" at least one day prior to the respective demonstration. In addition to providing demonstrations via pre-scheduled mixed group sessions, the Program Office is continuing to schedule demonstrations with specific groups and individuals upon request.

For more information about The Full-Spectrum Risk Knowledgebase, or to request a demonstration, please email the Program Office at FEMA-Risk-Knowledge@fema.dhs.gov.

RiskMAP
Increasing Resilience Together

Floodplain Administrator's Corner

Using the FIS to Determine Base Flood Elevation

One of the responsibilities of a local Floodplain Administrator (FPA) under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is to determine the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) for any proposed development located in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) that are based on detailed hydrologic and hydraulic modeling. The detailed SFHAs include Zones AE, A1 – A30, VE and V1-V30.

To obtain the regulatory BFE in Zones AE/A1-30, the FPA should be using the data tables and flood profiles located in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS). When using the FIS, it is important to locate subject properties relative to the lettered cross-sections on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). The BFE values on the FIRM are approximate or rounded to the nearest whole foot and may not be appropriate for regulation or determining flood insurance premiums.

Many communities and surveyors are using the BFE listed on the FIRM for regulating development and completing Elevation Certificates. The approximate nature of the BFE lines and the rounding of whole-foot BFEs listed on the FIRM can produce significant errors and lead to compliance issues. For example, if a structure is built in an AE Zone and its lowest floor elevated to the approximate BFE printed on the FIRM (e.g. 30 feet), but the BFE from the profile in the FIS is actually 30.4 feet for that location, the structure has actually been built 0.4 feet below the BFE and is now in violation of the local flood hazard ordinance (and could be subject to much higher flood

insurance premiums). This would not meet the minimum standards of the NFIP, and would need to be remedied by the local community or they may face probation or suspension from the program.

Coastal SFHAs that include Zones VE/V1– V30 and AE also round BFEs to the nearest whole foot on the FIRM, so community officials must locate subject properties relative to the numbered transects and consult the FIS to determine whether more detailed information is available.

For more information on how and when to use the FIS, visit www.fema.gov/online-tutorials and select the “FIS Tutorial”, or register for the STARR online training sessions on Elevation Certificates and Determining Base Flood Elevation.

Featured Training

Elevation Certificates

May 9, 10:00 am (Pacific)

This two and half hour webinar will review the proper way to complete FEMA Form 81-31 and best practices for using the Elevation Certificate in the floodplain development review process.

Topics will include the basics of the Elevation Certificate form, the 10 building diagrams, the difference between “bottom floor” and “lowest floor”, the “Top 10 Mistakes” made by surveyors and local officials, and more.

Two (2) CECs for CFMs

Newsletter Ideas?

If you have news, events, or suggestions for a future edition of the Region X Newsletter, email us at regionxnewsletter@starr-team.com

Upcoming Events & Training

(All times Pacific)

Elevation Certificates

May 9, 10am
June 6, 10am
Online* – 2 CECs

Using DFIRMS and Other Digital Flood Data

May 15, 11am
Online* – 1 CEC

Biggert Waters NFIP Reform Act of 2012

May 22, 11am
Online* – 1 CEC

Determining a Base Flood Elevation

May 23, 10am
Online* – 1 CEC

Washington State Earthquake Scenario Catalog

May 29, 10am
Online* – 1 CEC

Elevation Certificates for A Zones

June 19, 10am
Online* – 2 CECs

*To register for online courses, visit STARR's training site online at j.mp/starrwebtraining, or email RXTraining@starr-team.com.

Determining Base Flood Elevation

May 23, 10:00 am (Pacific)

This one-hour webinar will review the methods for determining base flood elevations in AE and A Zones using the FIRM/FIS and other resources.

Topics will include determining a BFE, methods for A Zones, how to get FEMA to do it for you and more.

One CEC for CFMs

To register for online courses, visit STARR's training site online at j.mp/starrwebtraining, or email RXTraining@starr-team.com.

RiskMAP
Increasing Resilience Together

Branch Bio: Mitigation Planning Team

The FEMA Region X Mitigation Planning Team is Kristen Meyers, Mitigation Planning Program Manager, and Brett Holt, Mitigation Planner. They work closely with their State and Tribal counterparts to ensure consistent, high quality service for communities throughout the Region. Many of you many know them as that "FEMA person who reviews my mitigation plan". Yes, they do review all the local, Tribal, and State natural hazard mitigation plans in Region X, but they offer technical assistance to jurisdictions long before the plan makes it to their desks, as well as after the plan is approved.

Brett and Kristen are available to help make your plan and planning process efficient and effective, leading to projects or policies that reduce risk in your community. They can attend meetings in-person or virtually to discuss the importance of hazard mitigation planning and/or the FEMA planning requirements; assist with hazard specific or infrastructure data sources; offer best practices and examples from other mitigation plans; provide ideas on implementing the plan through project development or integration into local comprehensive plans; and provide training in all aspects of hazard mitigation planning.

Brett and Kristen also bring their expertise to the Risk MAP projects throughout Region X and coordinate with other Risk Analysis Branch and STARR staff, to ensure Risk MAP produces products and information valuable to mitigation planning and risk reduction activities.

Kristen joined FEMA in 2006 to support the Map Modernization Program and transitioned to lead the Mitigation Planning Program in Region X in 2007. In addition to her mitigation planning work, she serves as a Situation Unit Lead in the Regional Response Coordination Center, and is the Mitigation Division lead for the Region's Threat/Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA). She has degrees in Geology and Urban Planning from Pennsylvania State University and University of Washington, respectively.

Brett has called the Seattle area home since 2009 when he joined FEMA's Risk Analysis Branch. In addition to his mitigation planning duties, he also serves as a Situation Unit Lead in the Regional Response Coordination Center, and Chairs the Regional SharePoint Committee. His prior work experience includes working as a wildland firefighter for the National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service, working as a parks planner for a private firm in Portland, and serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Armenia. He has a Masters of Community and Regional Planning from the University of Oregon.

Contact Kristen Meyers at kristen.meyers@fema.dhs.gov and Brett Holt at brett.holt@fema.dhs.gov. 