

Why does FEMA sometimes map the flood risk on different sides of a flooding source at different times?

Although FEMA is considering mapping flood hazards by watershed for future mapping efforts, FEMA has historically produced flood maps at the community or county level. Therefore, if the river or stream affects multiple communities within the county, then all communities will benefit from the flood study. However, flooding sources often act as a boundary between political jurisdictions, including between states and between countries; in other cases, flooding sources cross political boundaries.

Because of the aggressive goals of Map Modernization (Map Mod), a national strategy and plan was necessary. This plan, called the Multi-Year Flood Hazard Identification Plan (MHIP) details FEMA's strategy for providing flood hazard data and maps for areas with the **greatest flood risk** (production sequencing and projected funding allocations). We have allocated anticipated funds to each of the FEMA Regional Offices based primarily on flood risk, **using factors identified with stakeholder input, through local, state, and regional collaboration** at each Region's level. In collaboration with our stakeholders and partners (particularly the states) the FEMA Regional Offices use the business planning process to determine the sequencing and planned funding levels for counties within their Regions. However, the MHIP and overall nationwide plan balance national risk management requirements with local community needs.

It is important to note that when FEMA performs a flood study, it does **assess and maps flood hazards and risks on both sides of flooding sources**. However, there could be many different reasons why communities in one county receive their new flood map panels on a particular date and the communities in another county do not receive their new flood maps until a later date. Variables that have caused this to occur recently include collecting data and documentation regarding levees, ongoing flood studies, and problems encountered in assessing hazards and risks for flooding sources in one county that do not exist in an adjacent county. Although new flood maps may not be released at the same time, **FEMA assures the data presented are consistent**.

Does FEMA choose arbitrary dates for issuance of flood hazard maps?

The Administrator of FEMA is **required by statute** (National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, Flood Disaster Protection Act of 1973, and National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994) to **accurately identify and map the Nation's flood-prone areas** and to establish flood-risk zones in such areas. Therefore, it is **our mission to provide flood hazard maps that provide up-to-date, accurate flood risk info to the public as soon as practicable**. Delaying the release of the flood maps would do a disservice to communities, residents, and business owners because the effective flood map would not accurately reflect the existing risk. Furthermore, mapping flood hazards creates broad-based awareness of the flood risks and provides the data needed for floodplain management programs.

It is important to note that FEMA **does have specific mapping procedures and regulatory processes** in place that provide the opportunity for stakeholder input and technical review of the revised data being incorporated within in their new maps. Once all of the standard regulatory processes have completed, **we make it a priority** to provide the final maps to the communities as soon as possible to make certain they are aware of the potentially new flood risks within their community. Flood maps are a **critical risk communication tool** and it is our goal to provide data so individuals and communities can:

- Make informed risk management decisions;
- Promote and enhance public safety; and
- Enable the public to make informed decisions regarding building and insurance purchase

Does FEMA conduct outreach to notify the public of mapping changes?

Conducting outreach activities when a FIRM is updated is a partnership between FEMA and the community. FEMA holds public meetings with community officials and other interested parties in an effort to obtain all relevant information to help ensure accurate study results. After providing copies of Preliminary FIRMs to community officials, FEMA holds additional public meetings to give community residents an opportunity to view the map and meet with subject matter experts before the maps become effective. By statute, FEMA must publish two notices in a local newspaper when changes to Base (1-percent-annual-chance) Flood Elevations (BFEs) are proposed for a community. For scheduling purposes, and to give interested parties ample time to review the information, the notices are published on different dates, usually within 1 week of each other. The notice is also published in the *Federal Register*. Because community officials are more familiar with their residents than

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FEMA, we encourage community officials to also conduct outreach activities to notify residents of the new flood maps and the effects.

Why has FEMA now only begun to require communities to have their levees recertified?

As administrator of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), FEMA has long been active and concerned with the protection of life and property behind levee systems. Recognizing the importance of risk assessment behind the thousands of miles of levees across the country, FEMA established detailed requirements—in Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations Section 65.10—to guide the evaluation of levees and the mapping of levee-affected areas on flood hazard maps in 1986. FEMA issued Procedure Memorandum 34 (PM 34) —*Interim Guidance for Studies Including Levees*—on August 22, 2005. PM 34 re-emphasized FEMA's 20-year old levee policy and regulations and provided additional guidance to help communities with levees meet Federal standards, before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. Additionally, FEMA has created the Provisionally Accredited Levee (PAL) designation to facilitate the certification process for communities whose levees are *reasonably expected to continue to provide* protection from the 1-percent-annual-chance flood. The clarified procedures for PALs are documented in FEMA's Procedure Memorandum No. 43 (PM 43)—*Guidelines for Identifying Provisionally Accredited Levees*—dated March 16, 2007.