STARR Strategic Alliance for Risk Reduction

September 2021
Volume 11, Issue 9

Inside this Issue

Strategic Alliance for Risk Reduction
FEMA Region 10 Service Center
20700 44th Avenue West, Suite 130
Lynnwood, Washington 98036
(425) 245-0834

News from Region 10

September is National Preparedness Month

FEMA's National Preparedness Month is to raise awareness about the importance of preparing for disasters and emergencies. This year's theme is "Prepare to Protect. Preparing for disasters is protecting everyone you love." Let's #PrepareTogether and update disaster preparedness plans, supplies, skills, and knowledge.

Region 10 National Preparedness Weekly Themes:

Week 1, [Sept. 1-4]: *Make A Plan*

Week 2, [Sept. 5-11]: *Build A Kit*

Week 3, [Sept. 12-18]: *Low-Cost, No-Cost Preparedness*

Week 4, [Sept. 19-25]: *Engage Your Community on Preparedness*

In partnership with the state emergency management offices and community partners in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, FEMA Region 10 is hosting several virtual sessions throughout the month for the public to attend.

Virtual Sessions:

Twitter Spaces Preparedness Chat: [Sept. 13, 12 – 1 p.m. PT]

R10 Family Prep Night Webinar: [Sept. 14, 6:30 – 7:15 p.m. PT]

Livestock & Large Animals Preparedness Webinar: [Sept. 17, 10 – 11 a.m. PT]

Share your preparedness activities with the FEMA Region 10 Individual and Community Preparedness (ICP) team. They want to highlight your efforts. Connect with the ICP team here. Use the *#PrepareTogether* tag if you share activities on social media.

Visit the FEMA Region 10 Preparedness Dashboard for additional info on how to attend.

Ask the Help Desk

The Region 10 Service Center is here to help local community officials and stakeholders with technical, training, mitigation, and mapping questions.

Email RegionXHelpDesk@starr-team.com.

FEMA's National Risk Index for Natural Hazards

Full Application Launched with More Customization, Reporting, & Data Updates

FEMA announced the full application launch of the National Risk Index, an online resource that visually identifies traits of the communities most at risk from natural hazards.

This online mapping application provides a holistic view of community risk by providing baseline relative risk scores. It measures a community's risk for 18 natural hazards, in addition to resilience, social vulnerability and expected annual loss.

The Index helps users understand natural hazard risk and to support informed risk reduction decisions for mitigation planning and emergency management. By providing standardized risk data and an overview of multiple risk factors, this interactive mapping and analysis tool can help communities, especially those with limited flood mapping and risk assessment capabilities, prepare for natural hazards.

Climate change is a top priority for this administration and FEMA. The Index helps to advance the conversation on climate change and emergency response strategies by helping communities enhance disaster resiliency. The tool was originally released in November 2020 at a limited capacity. Now, fully available for use by state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, the Index includes the ability to generate more customized analyses and reports, including community risk profiles and risk comparison reports for any county or Census tract.

In addition, several data updates and access to more information about the development of the Index is also available.

The Index based ratings on data from the best available resources from 2014 through 2019. Routine updates are expected to keep ratings current.

The tool is free and easy to use, and data from the site can be downloaded. Visit FEMA's National Risk Index webpage to learn more about the data and the natural hazards that may affect your community.

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs, either by email or by phone at (202) 646-4500.

Higher Regulatory Standards for Floodways

By Mitch Paine, FEMA Region 10

Communities that adopt and enforce higher regulatory standards in floodplains see fewer flood losses and less damage caused by flooding. FEMA Region 8 found this in a study of community standards after the devastating 2013 floods in Colorado. You can see the results of the study here. In this article, I'll cover a couple beneficial higher standards that I would encourage communities to evaluate.

Because floodways are the most dangerous parts of the entire floodplain, the benefits of stricter regulations are bigger. The most commonly seen higher standard for floodways seen across the country is a prohibition on new residential buildings. Many states, including Washington, have made this a minimum standard for all of their communities to enforce. Prohibiting new residential buildings means fewer new neighborhoods popping up on the banks of rivers that will surely see devastating flooding in their future.

Communities should also look at limiting or prohibiting the use of fill in floodways, even when an H&H analysis shows compliance with the no-rise requirement, because fill can reduce the overall flood storage of a basin, which can mean increased flooding elsewhere in the floodplain. An alternative to outright prohibition is to require compensatory storage of material removed from the floodway or floodplain for any fill placed in the floodway. A compensatory storage requirement will help keep the flood storage at least as much as it is before the regulation goes into effect.

Re-mapping or re-modeling the floodway calculations is a way to change the underlying floodway boundaries to ensure more development has to meet the strict no-rise requirement. When floodways are mapped, the engineer models the floodway boundaries where there is a one-foot rise in the base flood after encroaching from the edges of the floodplain, called a "one foot surcharge". Some states and communities model a floodway boundary to only a 0.1-foot rise after encroaching from the edges, for example, which means that the floodway is much wider.

Figure 1: An example of a new house in a floodway.

Continued on next page

HS for Floodways (cont'd)

When more development is within that wider floodway, it means that each property owner is designing and ensuring that the work will not cause a rise anywhere in the community, and this translates to a safer floodplain.

One of the best things any community can do is incorporate a thoughtful planning process to limit potential developable areas in the floodway. Many communities include this concept in their long-range comprehensive plans and their hazard mitigation plans. Community conversations should happen around how dangerous floodways are and how the community ideally will grow and develop outside those hazardous areas. Houses in the floodway can be a big target for potential floodplain acquisition projects through a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant.

For any community in the Community Rating System (CRS) or those interested, most of the higher regulatory standards above are eligible for CRS activity points. CRS activities are largely driven at actions communities can take to reduce flood risk, including adopting and enforcing higher standards.

Be sure to check with your ISO CRS Specialist about any higher standard and whether it meets the CRS requirements.

And lastly, any community interested in adopting these higher regulatory standards is encouraged to reach out to their State NFIP Coordinator or FEMA Regional staff to help ensure that state law allows for it and for help drafting appropriate code language.

For more information on higher regulatory standards for floodways, contact your State NFIP Coordinator or FEMA Regional staff.

Newsletter Ideas?

Want to spread the word about an upcoming event or recent success story? Let us know what you want to see in future issues! Articles can be up to 500 words and may include pictures.

Email RXNewsletter@starr-team.com.

Training Opportunity: L-273

Twin Falls, Idaho | November 15th-18th

The Idaho Department of Water Resources is offering FEMA's L-273 training course: Managing Floodplain Development Through the NFIP.

This course is designed to provide an organized training opportunity for local officials responsible for administering their local floodplain management ordinances. The course will focus on the NFIP, the concepts of sound floodplain management, Flood Insurance Rate Maps and Flood Insurance Studies, ordinance administration, and the relationship between floodplain management and flood insurance.

This course will be offered in Twin Falls, Idaho from November 15th – 18th, followed by a CFM Exam testing opportunity on November 19th.

For more information, or to register for this training, please contact Idaho's State NFIP Coordinator.

Online Training

(All times Pacific)

CRS: Preparing an Annual Recertification
September 21, 10:00 am
Online – 1 CEC

CRS: CRS and Coastal Hazards
September 22, 10:00 am
Online – 1 CEC

CRS: Introduction to the CRS
October 12, 10:00 am
Online – 1 CEC

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