Updated Procedure Memorandum 42 Issued

On December 1, FEMA issued an update to Procedure Memorandum No. 42 (PM 42) that will better facilitate the quality review timelines required by PM 42, allowing mailing of final maps to communities soon after the issuance of a Letter of Final Determination (LFD). The changes will become effective on January 1, 2009.

FEMA issued PM 42 on June 20, 2007, to better align quality reviews of DFIRMs. Although PM 42 was largely successful, FEMA recognized that further alignment of quality review steps was needed to deliver quality flood hazard maps to communities for adoption in a timely manner. Quality Reviews 6 and 7 were the only quality review steps changed by the December 1 revision. For studies that will receive an LFD on March 1, 2009, or later, certain documents required for Quality Reviews 6 and 7 must now be submitted at the same time the study is submitted for Quality Review 5. The requirements for all other quality review steps remain the same.

“FEMA expects multiple benefits from this revision for communities and stakeholders,” said Kate Metznik, MOD team post-preliminary manager. First, moving up the submission date for Quality Review 7 will allow mapping partners to make corrections to Quality Reviews 5 and 7 simultaneously and avoid having to make corrections to panels weeks or sometimes months apart. Second, negatives will not be required until the FIRM panels pass both Quality Reviews 5 and 7. This will save time and money for FEMA and mapping partners. Third, a DVD will no longer be required as part of the submittal for Quality Review 7. The MOD team will create the DVD after all materials pass all Quality Review steps. This consolidation will help maintain version control and eliminate repetitive DVD submittals.

“FEMA envisions this change to the quality review process will allow for a more timely delivery of mapping products to communities and other stakeholders,” according to Metznik.

Source: Kate Metznik, (703) 960-8800 x 3112

LFD Distribution Change

As part of its Digital Vision initiative, FEMA set a goal of converting hard-copy flood hazard information to digital data. In keeping with this initiative, FEMA will discontinue mailing hard copies of the documents that are enclosed with Letters of Final Determination (LFDs) beginning January 1, 2009.

An LFD is a letter mailed to community officials to inform them that a new or updated FIRM will become effective in 6 months. Additionally, an LFD finalizes the Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) for the community. Upon receiving an LFD, a participating community must establish compliant floodplain management ordinances by the effective date of the new FIRM to remain in the NFIP.

Communities still will receive a hard copy of the LFD, but instead of receiving enclosures with the letter, FEMA will now make them available on FEMA's Web site at www.floodmaps.fema.gov/lfd. The five enclosures to the LFD that will no longer be included with the letter include:

- “Answers to Questions about the NFIP”;
- Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations;
- “Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Effect that Revised Flood Hazards Have on Existing Structures”;

See LFD, Page 4
FEMA, Contractors Discuss Present, Future in Philadelphia

Representatives from FEMA and the MOD team, as well as staff from seven contractors, met in Philadelphia from December 8-12 for the agency’s Risk Analysis Division (RAD) meeting titled “Risk MAP – Foundation, Transition, Integration.” At the meeting, participants celebrated the collective success of Map Mod and discussed the transition to Risk MAP (Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning).

FEMA staff assured participants that the program management experience and skills developed during Map Mod will be vital to the success of Risk MAP. FEMA’s vision is that Risk MAP will integrate new digital flood hazard data with risk assessment and mitigation planning programs to help communities reduce the risk to lives and property. By better integrating activities FEMA already performs (mapping, assessment, and planning), FEMA can maximize their effectiveness.

Workshops at the RAD meeting focused on tools for mitigation planners, program managers, and mapping staff. Numerous workshops and presentations augmented participants’ knowledge of Risk MAP and helped prepare FEMA Headquarters and Regional Office and contractor staff for the upcoming transition.

Doug Bellomo, RAD Director, and Roy Wright, RAD Deputy Director, presented the vision, structure, and five year goals for Risk MAP. Their presentation included FEMA’s expectations regarding how the project will evolve, as well as updates on the current Map Mod program.

Transitioning from Map Mod presents both challenges and opportunities. “We can promise that there will be no interruption in service, but we don’t promise there will be no disruptions,” Wright said.

FEMA also brought in a guest speaker, Joseph Tankersley of Unique Visions, Inc., who presented on “Culture Shift: Making Mitigation Mainstream.” The session explored the steps used to create powerful stories for social good and to map out a strategy for creating a culture shift in mitigation awareness and action. Mr. Tankersley is a writer, media producer, and communication expert. He was the chief story architect for the StormStruck: A Tale of Two Homes interactive experience at Epcot at the Walt Disney World Resort. StormStruck (www.stormstruck.com) is sponsored by the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (www.flash.org).

“My compliments to the planners, organizers, and leaders for a highly successful FEMA RAD meeting,” said Dwight Beranek, MOD team program executive. “I was gratified to observe first hand the great progress FEMA and its team have achieved in Map Mod. The RAD meeting also sets the stage for a successful Risk MAP program, which will help our Nation’s citizens reduce their flood risks in the future.”

Source: Jeanette Hanfling (703) 317-6203

FEMA – NFDA – NSP Coordination Meeting

Representatives from FEMA, the National Flood Determination Association (NFDA), the Map Service Center (MSC), and the MOD team met for the biannual FEMA-NFDA-MOD team coordination meeting held at MOD team headquarters in Alexandria, VA, on December 4.

These meetings are held to help strengthen existing relationships, promote communication, provide updates on both Map Mod and NFDA initiatives, and discuss issues and concerns related to the flood determination industry. The December meeting’s format was changed slightly to help facilitate more open discussion and focus on broader topics.

After opening remarks from Lora Eskandary of FEMA, Jeff Sparrow of the MOD team, and Leila Taha, NFDA President, FEMA’s Roy Wright provided an update on Risk MAP (Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning), highlighting the importance of identifying, assessing, and effectively communicating risk.

Leila Taha provided an “NFDA overview and perspective,” which included a brief recap of the progress gained by these meetings. She also summarized the recent survey polling NFDA member companies about FEMA’s digital products and paperless policy. According to survey results, the flood determination companies expressed strong support and interested in working with FEMA to ensure accessibility to digital products.
FEMA Issues Coastal Mapping Guidance

To better communicate risk and guide safer development in coastal areas, FEMA released Procedure Memorandum No. 50 (PM 50)—Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Mapping Areas Subject to Wave Heights Greater than 1.5 feet as an Informational Layer on FIRMs—on December 3.

Based on evidence from post-storm investigations, FEMA recommends that construction in coastal AE zones with heights 1.5 feet and above follow the same construction requirements as VE zones. FEMA has recommended this approach in every coastal construction publication it has published since releasing the “Coastal Construction Manual” (FEMA 55, 3rd Ed.) in June 2000. By showing this new line on FIRMs, FEMA is providing the information communities need to follow this recommendation.

PM 50 changes the mapping requirements for coastal studies. As stated in PM 50, “For all new detailed coastal study starts in Fiscal Year 2009, the landward limit of waves 1.5 feet in height will be delineated on the FIRMs and included in the DFIRM database as an informational layer with no NFIP floodplain management requirements or special insurance ratings. Communities are encouraged, but not required, to adopt higher standards than the minimum NFIP requirements in these areas. The limit will be included on the preliminary FIRM; however, if a community does not want to delineate the limit on its final FIRMs, the community may provide a written request to their Regional Project Officer (RPO) with justification for such a request. All community requests to have the limit removed from the FIRM must be received prior to the issuance of the Letter of Final Determination. A community’s NFIP eligibility and rates will not be affected if it opts not to include the limit on its final FIRMs. The limit will be included in the DFIRM database regardless of whether it is shown on the printed FIRM.”

Also included with PM 50 is an attachment that provides Mapping Partners with guidance for determining the limit of eLOMA Continues to Grow in Popularity

FEMA and the MOD team reported a considerable increase in the number eLOMAs submitted and issued over the last year as well as a steady stream of new Licensed Professionals (LPs) applying for access to eLOMA. LPs include licensed land surveyors and registered professional engineers.

eLOMA, a web-based application on the Mapping Information Platform (MIP), provides LPs with a system to submit simple Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) requests to FEMA. “The tool, which reduces the determination time for basic LOMAs from up to 60 days to just minutes in many instances, has been well received,” according to David Mummert, MOD team eLOMA coordinator.

“I’d attribute most of the recent growth to the usability changes made in the application last May,” said Mummert. “The tool is now more user-friendly and the Audit selection process has been improved, making it easier for LPs to issue determinations more efficiently. Our data shows that since May, the number of eLOMA determinations issued per month without an audit has quadrupled.”

FEMA and the MOD team continue to explore creative partnerships that would further increase eLOMA’s growth and visibility. eLOMA is also highlighted at events and stakeholder conferences.

To register for an eLOMA account or to learn more about the application, please visit the MIP at https://hazards.fema.gov > Tools For Professionals > Learn about eLOMA.
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**LFD** (continued from page 1)

- “Use of Flood Insurance Study (FIS) Data as Available Data”; and
- The Elevation Certificates necessary to ensure compliance with community floodplain ordinances.

FEMA mails LFDs to more than 2,000 communities per year at an average cost of $30 per letter. Switching to digital enclosures will create a significant annual savings for FEMA. Moving to digital enclosures is a low-cost solution that is consistent with the goals of Digital Vision and accommodates the needs of individual communities.

Communities will still be able to request hard copies of enclosures through the FEMA Map Assistance Center at 1-877-FEMA MAP (1-877-336-2627). Additionally, a fact sheet describing the transition to digital LFD enclosures is available at www.floodmaps.fema.gov/lfd.

**MEETING** (continued from page 2)

In his update on FEMA’s digital policy, Paul Rooney, FEMA’s Digital Vision lead, said that starting of October 1, 2009, FEMA will discontinue the public distribution of paper FIRMs, Flood Insurance Study reports, and related flood hazard map products.

In addition, the MOD team updated the group on recent activities related to the National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL), MIP Ad-Hoc Reporting System (MARS), and upcoming high impact map changes. MSC staff gave an overview of DFRM distribution activities, including efforts to improve timing and reliability of DFRM distribution. This was followed by a discussion of the electronic delivery of Letters of Map Change.

These meetings provide an opportunity for open dialogue between FEMA and the NFDA. The continued collaboration is an essential element to the success of FEMA and NFDA goals.

The NFDA, an organization comprised of flood determination companies that make and distribute flood zone determinations, is the largest user of flood maps in the Nation. For more information on NFDA, visit www.nfdaflood.com.

For more information on the NFHL and other flood hazard map products and services available, please visit FEMA’s MSC Web site at http://msc.fema.gov.

**PM 50** (continued from page 3)

the area exposed to wave heights greater than 1.5 feet during the 1-percent-annual-chance flood during the development of updated flood hazard information. The guidance can be applied to open coast and sheltered water shorelines subject to wave propagation. The attachment provides graphic specifications for identifying the landward limit of this area on the FIRM. Also included is explanatory information to be included in the Notes To Users on the FIRM and in the Flood Insurance Study report.

PM 50 takes effect immediately. You may view PM 50 and its correlated attachment on the FEMA Library at www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3481. You also may view all PMs on FEMA’s Web site at www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/gs_memos.

Information on FEMA 55 is available on FEMA’s Web site at www.fema.gov/rebuild/mat/fema55.shtm. To order copies of FEMA 55, contact the FEMA Publications Warehouse at 1-800-480-2520 (M-F: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST).

Source: Krista Collier (703) 959-5371