

Flood Risk Fact Sheet

Colorado Risk MAP Projects

COMMON QUESTIONS REGARDING FLOOD STUDIES AND FLOOD RISK

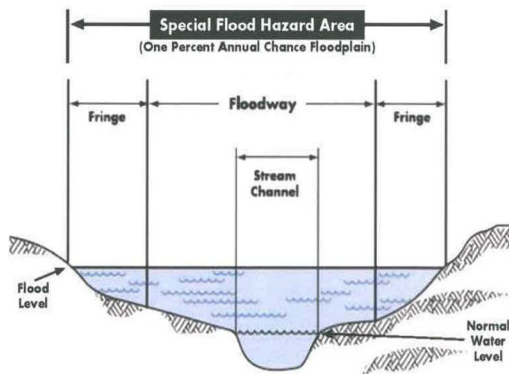
What is the NFIP?

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is a program established in 1968 by the federal government to enable property owners in participating communities to purchase flood insurance as protection against flood losses. Policy holders receive disaster assistance and participating communities enforce floodplain management ordinances that reduce future flood damages.



What are flood maps?

Flood maps, known officially as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), show areas of high and moderate to low flood risk using flood risk boundaries. FIRMs are maintained by FEMA and partnering local governments. Communities and counties use the maps to set minimum building requirements for floodplains. Lenders and insurance agents use the maps to determine flood insurance requirements and rates.



What is a high-risk flood area and the 1% annual chance flood, and why evaluate them?

A 1% annual chance flood (or base flood) has a 1% annual chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. The 1% annual chance flood risk boundary identifies areas that are expected to be inundated by the 1% annual chance flood. The 1% annual chance flood risk boundary shown on a FIRM is also called a Special Flood Hazard Area, where the NFIP's floodplain management regulations must be enforced by the community as a condition of participation in the Program. The NFIP regulations are detailed in Parts 59 through 77 of Title 44 in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

How do I check the current mapped flood risk areas?

For counties with digitally mapped flood risk areas, you can view them at: <https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-hazard-layer-nfhl>. For counties using paper copies, you can review maps at: <https://msc.fema.gov/portal>. Your local Floodplain Administrator can also answer questions you may have.

What happens if a property is mapped into a Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)?

When a property is located within an SFHA, or high-risk flood area, it has been determined to have a higher risk for flooding. If a federal mortgage is on the property, lenders must require that flood insurance cover the structure. But beware, more and more floods are occurring outside of this high-risk flood area; and purchasing flood insurance should still be considered.



What happens if a property is mapped into a Non-Special Flood Hazard Area (NSFHA)?

Where it rains it can flood. While a property located outside of the SFHA [within the NSFHA, or moderate-to-low risk flood area (shaded Zone X areas)], may have a reduced risk of flooding caused by overflowing rivers or hard rains, structures within a NSFHA are still at risk of flooding. 1 in 4 NFIP flood claims occur in these moderate-to-low-risk areas.

Why are maps updated and flood studies needed?

Flood risk studies and the resulting maps inform future development in a resilient manner, communicate risks to public safety, and influence flood insurance rates. Part of the requirements a community participating in the NFIP must uphold is to maintain representative flood risk boundary data by updating that data to reflect changes due to projects, for example. FEMA also regularly updates flood risk data for communities to incorporate more

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data and updated methods. This risk changes regularly so maps must be updated regularly.

What is the impact of a flood study on me?

There are building and land development restrictions for areas within the floodplain that may require additional permitting and/or a Letter of Map Revision. There are also insurance requirements within Special Flood Hazard Areas. Where Special Flood Hazard Areas have already been mapped, the boundaries where these requirements are enforced may change with a study. Please contact your local Floodplain Administrator for specific requirements.

What is one thing property owners should know about flood insurance?

Federal flood insurance is available to property owners, renters, and businesses in participating communities. It covers surface water inundation from any source that is generally excluded under Homeowners and Property policies. Flood insurance pays when water floods two properties or two acres or more, including mudflows, particularly after a wildfire. Insurance is for a future loss that you do not expect to happen; but those losses happen and you never know when that will occur. Flood insurance covers property after these floods.

Am I required to pay flood insurance?

If flood risk boundaries change, flood insurance rates could change for some. Residents and business owners who own property in high-risk flood areas are required to purchase flood insurance if they have a mortgage from a federally regulated or insured lender (44§CFR 64.3(b)). Insurance must be carried for the life of the mortgage. While flood insurance is not mandatory for homeowners outside of a high-risk flood area, anyone can be financially vulnerable to floods. People often mistakenly believe a building located outside of a mapped high hazard area has no risk of flooding; however, properties outside of high-risk flood areas account for more than 20% of NFIP claims and receive one-third of disaster assistance for flooding.



Why should property owners purchase flood insurance if it rarely rains?

Areas experiencing a drought can be especially affected by flooding. After a drought, the ground may not be able to absorb the water and if a flood occurs, it could damage your property. No one can predict the frequency or severity of a storm. In some areas, particularly below a burn scar, even ¼ inch of rain can cause a flood or a mudflow. You just need to expect it and protect your property.

If a property owner's mortgage is paid off, is flood insurance still required?

Once a mortgage has been satisfied, the mandatory purchase requirement is removed. It is then up to the property owner to decide if they want to continue coverage. However, if a federal disaster occurs in a high-risk flood area and the property owner is given a grant to recover, flood insurance is then required in perpetuity. Additionally, most disaster recovery funding is low-interest loans provided through the Small Business Administration. This federal agency requires flood insurance regardless of the flood risk area for the life of the loan.

If a property is mapped out of the Special Flood Hazard Area, can the property owner be reimbursed for previous flood insurance premium payments?

It is highly recommended that all property owners purchase and maintain flood insurance. If a structure is not in a high-risk area as the result of a map revision, there are two options. The first option is to cancel the policy, but you run the risk of no coverage if the property is affected by a flood. This option is not recommended with storms coming more frequently and severely. The second option is to have the policy rewritten to a lower-priced policy. Contact your lender or insurance agent to determine if your policy can be modified and if any premium refunds are available.

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How can I determine my current home elevation?

The elevation of your home can help determine flood insurance rates. If you don't have an Elevation Certificate, FEMA encourages you to consult your local building officials who may have existing elevations from the original building permit for your house. You also can hire a surveyor to determine your current home elevation. For more information, visit [floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) and review information regarding Elevation Certificates.

What can property owners do to mitigate their risk?

There are several activities that property owner can do to mitigate the flood risk. If you are building new construction, go high, no basements. Elevate your utilities. If you have a large property, build on higher ground or outside of the high-risk area. If you are rebuilding, elevate the structure to reduce the risk of flood inundation. Install sewer back up preventers. The best way to mitigate the risk is to buy flood insurance either from the NFIP or the private flood insurance market. Contact your insurance agent or company for more information. Visit <https://www.ready.gov/> for more information.

What can a property owner do to amend the map results?

Sometimes, there are no options for amendments to change the results. A [Letter of Map Amendment \(LOMA\)](#) based on an Elevation Certificate may work to change insurance requirements, but there is a cost. The price of an Elevation Certificate varies and may not result in a change. If the Elevation Certificate shows that the zone is changed or the elevation of the lowest floor, including basement or crawlspace, is above the expected flood height, FEMA may issue a LOMA to remove the insurance requirement. Or, the information can be used to adjust insurance coverage, if a LOMA is not possible. You can also contact your Floodplain Administrator to see if the structure was built to a different standard. If you can document that, the cost of flood insurance may be lower.

Can I provide data to challenge a study?

Everyone will have the opportunity to review preliminary FIRMs and appeal them using scientific and technical data during a 90-day Appeal Period. A [Letter of Map Change \(LOMC\)](#) can also be pursued if a change is warranted later.

Can I build in a Special Flood Hazard Area?

Building requirements are subject to local ordinances and there are typically restrictions to building safely and not impacting other areas in the stream if development is to occur.

Where can I get more information on flood insurance or flood studies?

- Contact your local Floodplain Administrator for most questions related to flood hazards and FIRMs.
- You can research the purchase of flood insurance through the NFIP's [FloodSmart.gov](#) website, which has tools to help you determine policy coverage, estimate rates, and find an agent based on your address.
- You can call FloodSmart toll free at 1.888.379.9531 for general questions about flooding and the NFIP.
- Within Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, North Dakota, and South Dakota, contact Diana Herrera, Senior Regional Flood Insurance Liaison, for insurance questions at 303.235.4988 or by email at diana.herrera@fema.dhs.gov.
- For Colorado, the [CWCB's hazards website](#) also provides information on grants, local flood issues, and links to information on flood insurance.
- For information about flood insurance studies, see [Flood Map Products | FEMA.gov](#).

TYPICAL SCHEDULE & PROGRESSION OF A FLOOD STUDY

