# Moving to Digital Flood Hazard Information
## General Distribution of Paper Products to End on October 1, 2009

## FEMA Now Distributes Paper and Digital Flood Maps; That's Changing on October 1, 2009

Since the 1970's, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has provided flood hazard maps and reports to help more than 20,000 participating communities manage and reduce risks. FEMA currently distributes both paper and digital flood hazard maps and reports.

*Beginning on October 1, 2009, customers may order only digital flood hazard maps and reports.* FEMA's Map Service Center (MSC) will not produce or distribute paper Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), Flood Hazard Boundary Maps (FHBMs), or Flood Insurance Study (FIS) reports on or after this date, other than a single paper copy provided to communities when their maps are updated.

Users of paper maps should start planning to make a transition to digital flood hazard maps and reports now.

## If You Use Paper Maps Now, FIRM Scans and FIRMettes Are the Simplest Way to Use Digital Maps

The simplest digital maps to use are digital pictures of FEMA's paper maps. FEMA's entire map inventory, both current and historical maps, is available.

A FIRM Scan is a picture of a whole map. FIRM Scans are available by download and on CDs and DVDs. Because a FIRM Scan is a picture of a whole map sheet, you need a specialized large-format printer to create a paper copy.

For those who print on smaller paper sizes, FEMA provides tools that allow users to create an individualized flood map called a "FIRMette." FIRMettes (see Figure 1) are portions of FIRM Scan images formatted to fit on printers commonly found in offices. You can make FIRMettes of any map in the FEMA inventory online using the *FIRMette – Web* tool. For those who prefer to work offline, FEMA also provides a *FIRMette – Desktop* tool that makes FIRMettes from FIRM Scan data that you have copied to your computer.

See the MSC web site at http://msc.fema.gov to access the FIRM Scan data, FIRMette tools, and related instructions.

As with paper flood hazard maps, remember to check for Letters of Map Change (LOMCs) that provide updates to the FIRM Scans and FIRMettes. These are listed in the MSC catalog for each FIRM Scan.

## FEMA Publishes Other Digital Maps That Offer More Flexibility and Power

In addition to FIRM Scans and FIRMettes, FEMA provides map data and tools with which users experienced with computer mapping systems can
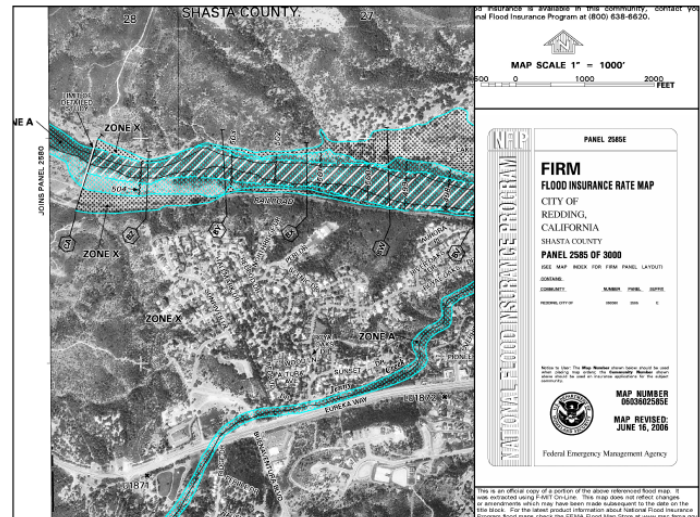


Figure 1. FIRMettes (reduced size shown) include a part of the flood hazard map, the map title block, and the map scale.

create custom maps or use with their own map data. These range from online map viewers that will be familiar to those who use Internet mapping sites to data and services used with specialized Geographic Information System (GIS) software. These products provide flexibility and support sophisticated uses. Some contain updates from LOMCs. Table 1 on the next page describes these products and tools. See the MSC web site at http://msc.fema.gov for more information.

## Use Digital Maps and Data for Official Purposes

FEMA's "Use of Digital Flood Hazard Data" policy establishes that paper and digital maps are equivalent and provides rules for using the maps and data. The policy and related information are available at http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3235. The policy implements section 107 of Public Law 108-264, 118 Stat. 724 (2004).

## FEMA Will Convert Orders for Paper Products to the Digital Equivalent Starting on October 1, 2009

For MSC accounts that have orders for paper maps, FEMA will convert the orders to requests for the FIRM Scan products on CD. Orders for paper FIS reports will be filled with digital files. If you do not wish to receive digital products, please contact the MSC before October 1, 2009, at 1-800-358-9616.

Government organizations will continue to be exempt from fees for FEMA flood hazard products.

If you have questions or comments about this change, please email mailto:FEMAMapSpecialist@mapmodteam.com.

Table 1.  Summary of FEMA digital flood hazard products and tools, available from the MSC at http://msc.fema.gov.

| Digital Flood Hazard Product or Tool | What is it?  What does it do? | Available Coverage | What do I need to use it? | Suitable for ... | Learn more |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Digital Flood Hazard Maps** | | | | | |
| FIRM Scans | Image data that provides a picture of an entire FIRM or FHBM. | Everywhere FEMA has mapped flood hazards. | Software, such as *FIRMette – Desktop* (or *F-MIT*), that lets you view and print TIFF or PNG-formatted image files. | Viewing flood hazard maps, printing your own flood maps for an area of interest. | http://msc.fema.gov.  Follow the link "Product Information," and then "NFIP Flood Maps." |
| Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) database | The initial flood hazard GIS data for a community or county. | Only where FEMA has modernized maps. | Software, such as *MapViewer – Desktop* or GIS or other mapping software. | Creating custom maps, viewing attribute data, and incorporating flood hazard data into custom software applications. | http://msc.fema.gov.  Follow the link "Product Information," and then "DFIRM databases." |
| National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) GIS data | Flood hazard GIS data for a State. | Only where FEMA has modernized maps.  Includes changes from Letters of Map Revision (LOMRs). | Software, such as *MapViewer – Desktop* or GIS or other mapping software. | Creating custom maps, viewing attribute data, and incorporating flood hazard data into custom software applications. | A user guide is available at http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3291. |
| NFHL Web Map Service | Web service that makes map overlays and lets users view attribute data from the NFHL. | Only where FEMA has modernized maps.  Includes changes from LOMRs, and locations of Letters of Map Amendment (LOMAs) and Lettters of Map Revision Based on Fill (LOMR-Fs). | Internet connection and GIS or other mapping software that lets you use a web map service. | Creating custom maps, viewing attribute data, and incorporating map images of flood hazard data into custom software applications. | A user guide is available at http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3292 |
| **FEMA-provided Tools for Digital Flood Hazard Maps** | | | | | |
| *FIRMette – Desktop* (or F-MIT) | Desktop software to create a map from a portion of a FIRM Scan. | Works with FIRM Scan data on your computer. | FIRM Scan data copied to your desktop and ability to view and print PDF files. | Viewing flood hazard maps and printing an area of interest. | Download the software under "FIRMette - Desktop (F-MIT)" at http://msc.fema.gov.  The software includes a tutorial. |
| *FIRMette – Web* | Internet software to create a map from a portion of a FIRM Scan. | Everywhere FEMA has mapped flood hazards. | Internet connection, web browser software, and ability to view and print PDF or TIFF files. | Viewing flood hazard maps and printing your own flood maps for an area of interest. | FIRMette tutorial at http://msc.fema.gov |
| *MapViewer – Desktop* | Desktop software to make maps and view attribute data. | Works with DFIRM databases and NFHL GIS data on your computer. | DFIRM databases or NFHL GIS data on CD or copied to your desktop. | Viewing custom flood hazard maps and attribute data.  Making comments on preliminary DFIRMs. | Download the software under "MapViewer – Desktop (beta)" at http://msc.fema.gov. |
| *MapViewer – Web* | Internet software to make maps and reports from the NFHL. | Only where FEMA has modernized maps.  Includes changes from LOMRs, and locations of  LOMAs and LOMR-Fs. | Internet connection, web browser software, and ability to view and print PDF files. | Creating custom maps and reports, and viewing attribute data. | A user guide is available at http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3290. |
| NFHL Google Earth™ utility (kmz) files "Stay Dry" and "FEMA NFHL" | Files that allow the viewing of the NFHL Web Map Service in Google Earth™. | Works with the NFHL Web Map Service. | kmz files, Internet connection, and Google Earth viewer software. | Quick looks at NFHL flood hazard data.  Dynamic visualizations of flood data. | User guides are available at http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3289 and http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3293 |
| **Flood Insurance Study (FIS) Reports** | | | | | |
| FIS report file | A book that contains information about flooding in a community. It is developed in conjunction with the FIRM. | Available for most areas.  Generally, wherever FEMA has published Base Flood Elevation information. | FIS report file and ability to print and view PDF files. | Reading about the flood study for a community or county and related engineering data. | FIS report tutorial at http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/ot_fisr.shtm |