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# Reduce Your Property's Natural Hazard Risk

Each year, flooding causes an average of over 90 percent of the disaster related property damage in the United States and accounts for 75% of all Presidential disaster declarations. Flood risk may change in a community due to the development of surrounding areas. It is important for home and business owners to be aware of the natural risks they may face.

The good news is that there are ways you can reduce the likelihood of repetitive flood damage to your home and property. If your home has been previously damaged or you live in an area where flooding is likely to occur you can take steps to reduce the possibility of flooding.

Although recent improvements in construction practices and regulations have made new homes less susceptible to flooding, there remains a great deal of housing in the country that was built prior to these practices and regulations being in existence. Between 1978 and 2004, more than 112,000 homes were flooded more than once, subjecting homeowners to a cycle of flooding and rebuilding.

## What is Your Flood Risk?

To provide communities with the information they need to enact and enforce floodplain management and ordinances, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) conducts flood studies and publishes the results in a Flood Insurance Study (FIS) text and Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). These documents are used to manage development within a community and provide a basis for insurance rates to be established.

You can review the FIRM to determine flood risk in your property vicinity at <http://msc.fema.gov>. On the left side of the web page you can enter your address to identify the FIRM panel your property is located on. You can also use the Map Search function available at the top of the page to enter your address and determine your flood risk.

[FloodSmart.gov](http://FloodSmart.gov) allows you to enter your home address in their **One-Step Flood Risk Profile** and receive a report that includes your flood risk, estimated flood insurance premium rates and links you to local flood insurance agents.

## Is Updated Analysis Available?

FEMA regularly updates its flood study inventory by performing flood insurance restudies to update the FIS and FIRMs throughout the nation. As communities mature and develop, their flood risk may change due to development within or upstream of the community. Once completed, FEMA issues Preliminary FIRM panels for community review.

### Key Points

- Risk changes over time. Communities can reduce future flood risk by adopting and enforcing higher standards.
- Property owners can save money by reducing their vulnerability to flooding.
- Build correctly and higher to reduce vulnerability to flooding.
- Under new Federal law, flood insurance premium rates on many properties in special flood hazard areas will increase.
- Formerly subsidized flood insurance premiums will increase to reflect actual flood risk. Reduce risk to reduce premiums.
- Flood insurance premiums are based on flood risk as depicted on the current effective FIRM panel.
- Long-term insurance savings can far exceed initial construction costs.

### Additional Resources

- Homeowners Guide to Retrofitting (FEMA P-312)  
<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=1420>  
This guide is designed for readers who have little or no experience with flood protection methods or building construction techniques.
- Get your One-Step Flood Risk Profile at FloodSmart.gov  
<http://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart>
- Review the Current Effective Flood Insurance Rate Map in your vicinity  
<http://gis1.msc.fema.gov/Website/newstore/Viewer.htm>
- Check the availability of Updated and Preliminary Analysis in your vicinity  
<http://maps.riskmap6.com>

Information available for States of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas.



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These preliminary FIRMs can serve to identify how development has modified the flood risk in your community and in your vicinity. Ask your local community officials about the availability of preliminary information for review in your community. The flood elevations and flood hazard areas shown on the preliminary maps can better inform your building, retrofitting and remodeling investments. For more information on the availability of Preliminary flood hazard information, visit: <http://maps.riskmap6.com>

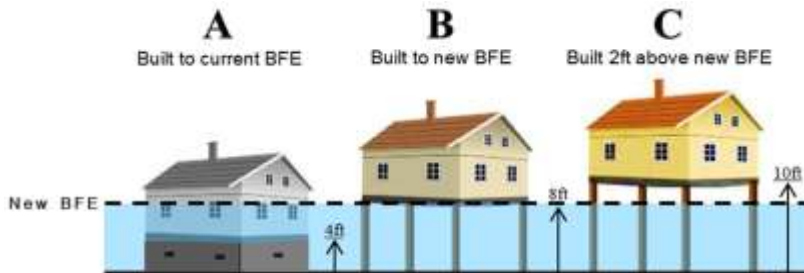
## Coastal Building Considerations

Maps prepared along the nations coastline typically include Velocity Zones (Zone VE) areas that indicate waves of 3.0 feet or higher are expected during a 1-percent annual chance storm. Be warned that waves of 1.5 feet or higher are known to move buildings from their foundations during storm events. In Zone AE areas immediately adjacent to the Zone VE areas may consider coastal construction techniques to reduce the possibility of flood damage during future storms. Inquire with your local floodplain administrator to see if you should consider coastal construction techniques for your property.

## How High Is High Enough?

While no two structures or situations will be the same, elevation of a structure above the published Base Flood Elevation has been shown to greatly reduce the possibility of flooding. But how high should you build? Let's review a few scenarios.

**Situation A.** House is built with the Lowest Floor at the current community BFE standard. **Situation B.** Home is built 4 feet higher than the current BFE, at new BFE. **Situation C.** Home is Built 6 feet higher than the current BFE.



Home Elevation	4ft	8ft	10ft
Total Cost (Foundation)	\$18,000	\$29,000	\$30,000
Monthly Mortgage Payment Increase	n/a	\$49*	\$54*
Annual Flood Insurance Premium	\$31,500	\$7,000	\$3,500
Monthly Cost (mortgage increase + flood insurance)	\$2,625	\$632	\$346
Savings Over 10 Years	n/a	\$239,160**	\$273,480**

### Determining Your Options

If your property is in an area prone to flooding you should be aware that under new Federal law, FEMA has been asked by Congress to begin removing formerly subsidized flood insurance premiums. This will increase premium costs to individuals to reflect actual flood risk of the property beginning January 1, 2013.

The possibility of flood insurance premium increase or the memory of a previous flood event may be a reason to review your options for retrofitting, rebuilding or reconstruction of your home.

Here are a few steps to review your need for retrofitting and the options available to your home:

1. Determine the hazard to your home. Is your home flood prone?
2. Inspect your home to determine the construction and foundation type. Identify your Lowest Floor Elevation.
3. Check with your Local Officials to understand local ordinances, regulations and permitting requirements.
4. Consult a Design Professional and a Contractor. Determine if retrofitting, remodeling or reconstruction could reduce your risk or flooding, in turn minimizing the cost of Flood Insurance for the life of the structure.
5. Submit for required permits and begin reducing your flood risk to future storm events.

**\$2,279 per month savings** compared to the current BFE

\*Based on the additional expense, compared to Scenario A, of elevating a home from the current BFE to the new BFE.

\*\*Based on a lower flood insurance premium, compared to Scenario A, minus an increase in monthly mortgage payment.