

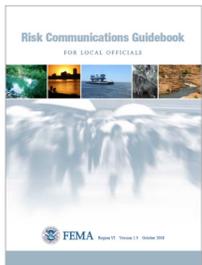
THE VOICE

FEMA REGION 6
MITIGATION NEWS
& INFORMATION

SPECIAL EDITION

COMMUNICATING DURING THE RISK MAP JOURNEY

Has your community recently gone through a flood mapping project? Are you currently going through one or planning to go through one soon? Many local officials struggle with how best to communicate the latest flood risk information to their residents and business owners before, during, or after a map change. Yet it is critically important that residents and business owners know their flood risk and actions they can take to reduce it. This newsletter provides useful information about a tool that will help you better engage your community and communicate flood risk.



FEMA RISK COMMUNICATIONS GUIDEBOOK FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS

Updating a community's flood map and study can be a long journey. Many partners, including elected officials, industry stakeholders (e.g., real estate, lending, and insurance professionals), the media, and local residents and business

owners may not fully understand the process, benefits, or potential impacts of such a study. And since flood map updates aren't a common occurrence, many local officials lack the experience or knowledge on how best to keep the community properly informed and engaged throughout the study. Yet research shows that the public turns to local officials for this information. That is why FEMA created the *Risk Communications Guidebook for Local Officials*.

WHAT IS RISK MAP?

Risk MAP (Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning) provides high quality [flood maps and information, tools to better assess the risk from flooding](#), and planning and outreach support to communities to help them better communicate flood risk and take action to reduce it (e.g., [flood insurance](#), [mitigate](#)). Each Risk MAP flood risk project is tailored to the needs of each community and may involve different products and services.

An updated version of the *Risk Communications Guidebook for Local Officials* is now available at www.riskmap6.com/guidebook.aspx. This resource provides outreach and engagement tools covering each phase of the Risk MAP lifecycle. It provides templates which allow local officials to create outreach material more relevant to their community while ensuring messaging remains consistent and continual throughout the mapping project. The *Guidebook* will assist not only with internal communication efforts with other departments and elected officials, but also with residents, business owners, the media, and local stakeholders such as lenders, insurance agents, and real estate professionals.

Each step in the mapping process has information presented in the following format:

OVERVIEW

A description and purpose of each project phase and suggested outreach, the typical coordination activities performed by FEMA, and actions that may be taken by local government entities.



PHASE ACTIVITIES

Information about FEMA's procedures, meetings, and education and outreach efforts.



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Information about the activities performed by FEMA or their partners, as well as suggested activities that could be performed by the local government.



SUGGESTED OUTREACH MATERIALS

Customizable templates and sample materials containing suggested generic language, timelines, contact information, etc., intended to be tailored by each county or community as appropriate. General outreach materials that are currently available and applicable nationwide are also included.



GUIDEBOOK TOOLS YOU CAN USE

As previously described, the *Guidebook* provides an overview of each phase of the mapping process along with suggested outreach activities and materials to use. While some of the materials are existing FEMA documents, the *Guidebook* provides more than 25 different templates that can be easily customized and made relevant for a specific community or watershed and Risk MAP phase (from Investment to Map Maintenance). This material will help them better communicate flood risk along with actions to take to reduce it (e.g., [mitigate](#), [flood insurance](#)). Each one is linked in the *Guidebook* to a specific URL on FEMA's website and they are all available in the *Guidebook's* Appendix A, found at www.riskmap6.com/guidebook.aspx. Example materials include the following:



[Template Fact Sheet](#)

What Insurance Professionals Need to Know



[Template Mapping Project Brochure](#)

Identifying the Risk



[Template Public Talking Points](#)

Regulatory Phase



[Template Stakeholder Newsletter Article](#)

Risk Identification & Assessment Phase

So, let's look at an example scenario. Let's say a local official just received preliminary flood maps and is wondering what outreach and engagement are needed. The *Guidebook* highlights the mapping-related activities which occur starting at the Consultation Coordination Officer (CCO) meeting through to when the maps become effective. It then provides example outreach activities, from setting up a Flood Risk Open House to after the Letter of Final Determination (LFD) is issued. This helps keep messages consistent and easy to understand. The templated materials also include template letters to affected property owners (newly identified [in](#) or [out](#) of the Special Flood Hazard Area), a [template postcard Open House invitation](#), and a [template post-preliminary fact sheet](#). Example social media postings (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) are provided in the [Post-Preliminary Toolkit for Local Officials](#) for four different time periods during the post-preliminary phase to ensure continual and consistent messaging.

FEMA recognizes that communities have different levels of funding and communication resources to perform outreach. Therefore, the *Guidebook* also includes a [Community Outreach Plan Template](#) to help communities develop strategies, identify key messages, and target stakeholders for their own local outreach efforts. The Plan template is scalable and can be tailored to community capabilities and capacity.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENT AND CONTINUAL MESSAGING

The only way to ensure that everyone involved in delivering products and results for the Risk MAP program are consistent in our conversations is to "stay on message." The same core ideas must be incorporated into every Risk MAP communication from every source, every time.

Messaging works best when it is incorporated into all communication methods: talking points, fact sheets, social media posts, presentations, press releases, web content, responses to media, conversations, and others.

Therefore, messaging is best done early enough to be incorporated into a project from the outset and then continually used throughout the project, keeping in mind that it should be fluid and can shift to better address the needs of a project as it progresses. The *Guidebook* will help communities achieve that.

To learn more, visit www.riskmap6.com/guidebook.aspx now and review this valuable resource. It will help those tasked with leading or participating in community outreach or engagement during any Risk MAP phase, from planning to post-effective, to better communicate flood risk and actions they can take to reduce it. To view this newsletter online, visit: www.riskmap6.com/guidebook.aspx.