

*March 2016 Volume 14*

# THE VOICE

FEMA REGION 6 MITIGATION NEWS & INFORMATION

## The Voice- New Year, New Look

FEMA Region 6 is excited to share the new look for The Voice, our Mitigation News and Information publication! In order to improve the experience of our readers, we have upgraded to an HTML email delivery system. We hope that you will appreciate the utility of this change, especially how much easier it will be to share the specific content pieces on your own media channels. As always, you will be able to access PDF versions of the latest and past issues of The Voice on our [website](#).

## Get High Marks for Flood Risk Awareness



*Observing high water mark on a home*

### **What is a High Water Mark?**

A high water mark is a physical marker that shows the maximum elevation reached by flood waters during a flooding event. After the flood water has receded, natural marks (made

from silt and debris or just as a result of the water itself on structures) illustrate how high the water reached. High water marks provide valuable data about flood elevations and areas that are likely to flood.

### Why is it important to “know your line?”

High water marks are great tools for flood risk awareness. While floods are the most common and costly natural disaster in the United States, home and business owners often take few or no steps to protect against these potentially devastating events. Over the life of a typical 30-year mortgage, homes and businesses in high-risk areas have a 26 percent or greater chance of flooding—that’s more than twice the chance of a fire! Unfortunately, many still refuse to believe their home or community is at risk of flooding. High water marks are incontrovertible proof that flooding can and will happen in a given area.

### Be a High Water Mark Community!

To address this challenge, FEMA developed the High Water Mark (HWM) Initiative—a community-led, federally-supported awareness program. The HWM Initiative helps increase the general public’s understanding of flood risk by showcasing local flooding history and motivating residents in a particular locale to take action to reduce the risk. Upon entering the program, the community hosts a launch event to announce the initiative and posts high water mark signs in prominent places to show how high flood waters have risen in the past. Communities also create a comprehensive plan on ways to take mitigation actions as a community and strategies to engage residents about flood risk over time.

### To get the ball rolling in your community:

- **Learn more**—Click to [download](#) and share the Region 6 HWM Initiative flyer. Visit [www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative](http://www.fema.gov/high-water-mark-initiative) to read about successful HWM communities.
- **Sign up**—Interested community leaders should contact Vincent Brown at [Vincent.Brown@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:Vincent.Brown@fema.dhs.gov) to get started on preparing and signing your Memorandum of Understanding.
- **Make a plan**—Work with us to identify your community’s risk and what actions you are willing to take to reduce it. The HWM Initiative is just the beginning!



## Know Your Risk: Spotlight on Extreme Events

Going forward, each newsletter will feature an infographic of an extreme event that highlights basic information about the event,

## Emergency Planning for Schools and Churches: There's a Planning Guide for That!

your community's risk, and how you can communicate it to your community and stakeholders. We hope that you will share the infographic on social media and in your newsletters. (Please let us know when you do!) Our inaugural spotlight focuses on tornadoes. Stay tuned for spotlights on other extreme events!

#### Our next few spotlights may include:

- **Tornadoes**
- **Fires**
- **Hurricanes**
- **Dam/Levee Break**

## Ready for Spring Flooding?

Years of drought and wildfires coupled with predicted heavy rainfall could result in devastating floods this spring. What does that mean for your community? Because there is typically a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance takes effect, now is the time to help property owners better understand their flood risks and the importance of having flood insurance. It only takes one storm or an early spring thaw to trigger enormous flooding.

Properties directly affected by recent fires and those located downstream of burn areas are at a heightened risk of experiencing a flood. The charred ground in burn-scarred areas cannot easily absorb water, which places residents at an increased risk for flash flooding and mudflows. Remind your community that flood risk isn't solely based on flood history—it's also a result of factors such as fires, river flow, topography, and changes due to [recent building and development](#).

To educate members of your community about their flood risk and financial preparedness, FloodSmart—the marketing and education campaign of the National Flood Insurance Program—offers several tools and resources on [FloodSmart.gov](#) that you can use:

- [The Cost of Flooding tool](#)—Embed this on your website to illustrate how just a few inches of water can cost tens of thousands of dollars in damage;
- [The Floodafter Fire tool](#)—This, along with the [factsheet](#) simulates how fires can increase flood risk;

Schools, institutions of higher education, and houses of worship can play a key role in taking preventive and protective measures to stop an emergency from occurring or reduce the impact of an incident. To help school officials and congregation leaders plan for emergencies, the U.S. Department of Education, FEMA, and partners offer the following guides:

- [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans for K-12](#)
- [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education](#)
- [Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship](#)



***FloodSmart has the tools to help***

- Checklists—Share with [residents](#) and [business owners](#) to help them prepare before the next disaster strikes;
- [Before, during, and after](#) the flood infographics outline the actions residents can take to stay safe and file an insurance claim; and
- Social media [messages](#)—Share through Facebook and Twitter.

Whether you are an agent, local official, or property owner, changes in the weather this spring make it an especially important time to understand the flood risk you face and review your flood policy. Look to your local officials if you have questions about the flood risk in your area. Talk to someone about protecting what matters. It's a conversation you won't regret.

