

Risk MAP Success Story: Fairbanks, Alaska: A Benchmark for Cooperation

Background and Issue

Because accurate structure elevation information is critical in the establishment of flood insurance policy rates, the availability of reliable and geographically convenient survey monuments and benchmarks is an important element of a community's flood mitigation and prevention infrastructure.

A review of the city of Fairbanks' benchmarks determined that in at least one area at risk, the cost required to calculate adequate elevation data was prohibitively high for many homeowners, thus preventing many property owners from obtaining information needed for a Letter of Map Amendment or other required documentation for flood insurance purposes.

Approach

The special emphasis on community engagement and outreach in FEMA's Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) guided FEMA's efforts in informing the city of changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) due to the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012 (BW12) that would likely affect many property owners in Fairbanks.

Impact

A result of this outreach and discussion with Fairbanks regarding the need for more elevation monuments in vulnerable areas led the city to erect a well-placed benchmark in an at-risk area of the city. The placement of this benchmark is estimated to have reduced the cost of obtaining accurate elevation information for homes and other structures in the area from approximately \$1,800 to \$600, thus enabling more homeowners the ability to obtain the elevation data they need to make informed decisions regarding flood insurance and other mitigation needs.

These watershed efforts exemplify the Risk MAP program mission: collaborative process, quality data, mitigation planning and action, leading to risk reduction.

Risk MAP Project Phases

Risk MAP is not just a "mapping" program. While Flood Insurance Rate Maps, Flood Insurance Studies, and other "final products" are an important component of Risk MAP, Risk MAP seeks to offer local communities a holistic approach to floodplain management and risk mitigation. This involves communication. Through Risk MAP, FEMA seeks to engage with all relevant stakeholders, not just local government, but also business leaders, non-profit organizations, landowners, and other community members with an interest in mitigating the devastating effects that flooding can have on a community.

This success story is relevant to the Risk MAP project phases described on the Risk MAP Success Stories Homepage. Find more success stories about each of these project phases by visiting the Risk MAP Success Stories Homepage (www.fema.gov/RiskMAP/Success-Stories).