Important changes to the [Community Name] flood hazard maps are underway. As floodplain boundaries change, your clients will likely turn to you to help them with decisions about protecting their property and other assets. The changes may also affect your own business, so be sure to stay informed.

[Community Name] Flood Maps   
Are Changing

In [month, year], the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), under the Department of Natural Resources, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will be releasing new **preliminary** flood hazard maps, known as Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) for [specific watersheds/all of County Name]. The new FIRMs will show the extent to which areas of the county are currently at risk for flooding.

The remapping effort—part of FEMA’s nationwide flood Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning (Risk MAP) effort—was necessary because flood hazard and risk information shown on the flood maps need to be updated. Detailed studies in some areas are over [years] old. Since then, the drainage patterns have changed, new land development has occurred, and mapping and modeling technology has significantly improved.

Know the Effects and   
the Flood Insurance Options

While the FIRMs may not become effective for another [number] months or more, it is important for insurance professionals to understand the effects that these map changes have on flood insurance requirements and what options are available for their clients.

Properties may be mapped into higher risk zones, have changes in their Base Flood Elevation (BFE), be mapped into lower risk zones, or remain in the same zone. Insurance professionals need to properly educate property owners about these map changes, how they affect the flood insurance requirements, and the insurance options available.

**NFIP RATING OPTIONS COULD SAVE YOUR CLIENTS MONEY**

If a building is newly identified to be in a high-risk zone

(noted on the flood maps with the letter beginning with the letter “A” [or “V”]) and there is a mortgage on the property through a federally regulated or insured lender, flood insurance will be federally required. If a property is already in a high-risk area, its Base Flood Elevation (BFE) may change [or it may be mapped into a higher risk zone (e.g., Zone AE to Zone VE)]). Either of these changes could result in higher flood insurance premiums.

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) provides lower-cost flood insurance rating options. For example, buildings newly identified to be in a high-risk area may be eligible for the lower-cost Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) rates for the first 12 months after the maps become effective. Premiums will then increase no more than 18 percent a year until they reach their full-risk rate. This is known as the Newly Mapped procedure.

For buildings that don’t qualify for a PRP, or are in a high-risk zone and there is an increase in the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) [or are being mapped into a higher risk zone (e.g., Zone AE to VE)], FEMA allows for the lower BFE [or lower risk zone] to be used for rating. This is known as “grandfathering.”

Because these “grandfathered” insurance rates may be less than the rates for the zone or BFEs shown on the new FIRM, it is important to compare both when discussing insurance options.

Conversion Keeps   
Clients Protected

Some properties flood risk may decrease and change from a high-risk zone to a moderate- or low-risk zone (shown on the new FIRM as an “X” or shaded “X” zone). Federal requirements for the mandatory purchase of insurance are lifted, though some lenders may continue to require coverage.

Property owners should be reminded that the risk has only been reduced, **not removed.** Coverage can be maintained by converting their current policy to the lower-cost Preferred Risk Policy (PRP). This conversion is backdated to the current policy’s effective date and then the cost of the PRP is deducted from the original premium paid. So, no additional funding is required from the insured and it results in a refund of premium. The NFIP also allows agents to keep the commission on both policies.

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| IF MAPS SHOW... | THESE REQUIREMENTS, OPTIONS AND SAVINGS APPLY |
| Change from moderate or low flood risk to high-risk (e.g., flood Zone B, C, or X to Zone A, AE, AH, AO[, V or VE]) | **Flood insurance is mandatory.** Flood insurance will be federally required for most mortgage holders. Insurance costs may rise to reflect the true (high) risk.  **Rating Options can offer savings.** The NFIP provides savings by allowing lower-cost Preferred Risk Policy (PRP) rates to be used the first 12 months after a new flood map becomes effective. Premiums will then increase no more than 18 percent each year. Affected property owners are encouraged to buy a PRP before the maps become effective for additional savings. |
| [Change from high-risk Zone A or AE to higher-risk Zone V or VE or increase in Base Flood Elevation (BFE)] | **[An increase in risk can result in higher premiums; however, “grandfathering” can offer savings.** The NFIP grandfathering rules allow policyholders who have built in compliance with the flood map in effect at the time of construction to keep their previous zone or BFE to calculate their insurance rate. This could result in significant savings. A grandfather-rated policy can be assigned to new owners at the time of sale.] |
| Change from high flood risk to moderate or low risk (e.g., flood Zone [V, VE,] A, AE, AH, AO, to Zone X or shaded X) | **Flood insurance is optional but recommended. The risk has only been reduced, not *removed*.** Flood insurance can still be obtained, and at lower rates. More than 35 percent of all Georgia flood insurance claims have occurred in moderate- and low-risk areas.  **Conversion offers savings.** An existing policy can be easily converted to a lower-cost Preferred Risk Policy, if the building qualifies. Note that lenders always have the option to require flood insurance in these areas. |
| No change in risk level | **No change in insurance rates.** However, this is a good time to review your coverages and ensure that your building and contents are adequately insured. |

A New Vertical Datum Is Being Used

As part of the nationwide Risk MAP effort, the new FIRMs are using a new vertical datum as the base for all elevations (NAVD88). This datum is a much more accurate one than the 80-year old one used for the previous flood maps (NGVD29). As a result, a building’s base flood elevation could show one measurement on the old map (i.e., 25') and another measurement on the new map (i.e., 26') and its actual elevation will not have changed. So, before grandfathering a property where elevation is involved, make sure the elevation on the elevation certificate and the base flood elevation (BFE) on the FIRM both use the same vertical datum. If you have to use two different datums, conversion factors can be obtained from [community name] and are reflected on the new FIRMs and in the Flood Insurance Study (FIS).

Stay Informed

Knowing when and where map changes are occurring allows insurance professionals to properly educate their clients on the insurance options available. Prepare by staying in contact with local officials and periodically visiting the [community or county name] web site at [web link]. The preliminary maps can be viewed at [www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com](http://www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com) when they are released. The maps will also be available for viewing at [put location and times it is open]. Questions can be directed to the [identify where] by calling [phone number] during business hours [days and times].

* For specific rating information about the Newly Mapped Procedure, grandfathering and conversion, visit: [www.FEMA.gov/Flood-Insurance-Manual](http://www.FEMA.gov/Flood-Insurance-Manual)
* For more information about the nationwide Risk MAP effort, visit: [www.FEMA.gov/Risk-Mapping-Assessment-Planning](http://www.FEMA.gov/Risk-Mapping-Assessment-Planning)
* For more information about the Georgia MAP program, visit: [www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com](http://www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com)

Mapping Milestones

**[DATE]:** Preliminary flood maps released

**[DATE]:** Open House Held; Public Review

**[DATE]:** Start of [90-day] Public Comment Period [(for filing of appeals and comment)]

**[Target Date, Month or Season (e.g., Fall 2018)]\*:** New flood maps take effect; new flood insurance requirements also take effect

**Visit** [www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com](http://www.GeorgiaDFIRM.com) to learn more about the mapping process and where and when meetings may be held

For general information, call:

The [name of local call center or contact number] at [phone #]. Open [enter hours of operation].

\*Date subject to change pending completion of review process