



FEMA
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MEMORANDUM FOR: Federal Coordinating Officers

ATTENTION: Regional Directors Regions I-X
Response Division Directors
Recovery Division Directors
Mitigation Division Directors
David I. Maurstad

FROM: David I. Maurstad
Acting Director
Mitigation Division
David Garratt
for David Garratt
Acting Director
Recovery Division

SUBJECT: Issuance and Use of Advisory Base Flood Elevations in the
Implementation of FEMA Assistance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a responsibility to help ensure that communities affected by catastrophic events are returned stronger and less vulnerable to loss of life and property from future disasters, based on the best data available identifying the risk. In light of the devastating hurricane events in the Gulf Coast region, FEMA has gathered and is assessing available flood hazard data for the areas impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Based on a preliminary assessment, FEMA has determined that the 1% annual chance flood event depicted on the effective or preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps in some locations does not adequately reflect post-storm conditions. Accordingly, to assist local communities in their rebuilding efforts, FEMA is developing advisory base flood elevations (ABFEs) and, potentially, flood recovery mapping to reflect the ABFE boundaries in these and other areas.

Although the ABFEs will be made available on an advisory basis for use by state and local governments in their recovery efforts in general, activities implemented under FEMA Public Assistance and Mitigation programs must comply with the data. From the date of this memorandum, the mandatory use of ABFEs for funding activities under FEMA programs will be effective for all locations where FEMA has issued ABFEs following a Presidential declaration of a major disaster. To date, ABFEs exist for limited locations in Mississippi and Louisiana; however, FEMA continues to gather and assess the flood hazard data for other locations in States affected by significant events.

As part of the recovery effort, it is important that the ABFEs be used by federal, state, and local governments as a tool to make sound decisions during recovery and rebuilding efforts in order to mitigate losses from future flood events, protect lives, and protect the private and public investment in rebuilding. With the issuance of ABFEs for the areas impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as other events, use of the ABFEs will be required for implementation of FEMA's Public Assistance program, mitigation assistance programs (e.g., Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant program and Flood Mitigation Assistance program), and Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management. As such, applicants requesting FEMA program funds in areas where ABFEs have been issued will be required to use the ABFEs for activities carried out under these programs. FEMA will provide assistance to communities in using the ABFEs as they evaluate their risk during the mitigation planning process, and in project development. The ABFEs also will be provided to other federal and state agencies, and local governments to assist in carrying out their recovery efforts.

Additional guidance will be provided by the Recovery and Mitigation Divisions for their respective program areas. If you have questions regarding the development and release of ABFEs or their use in the implementation of Mitigation programs, contact Mike Buckley, Deputy Division Director, Mitigation Division at 202-646-3595. If you have questions regarding the implementation of advisory flood data in the implementation of the Public Assistance program, contact James Walke, Chief, Public Assistance Branch at 202-646-2751.

cc: Gil Jamieson