

THE FLOOD CURRENT

MARCH - APRIL, 2000

OFMA Hosts Reception to Promote Mitigation Funding

On February 9, members of the Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association and the Oklahoma Emergency Managers Association hosted a reception at the State Capitol to visit with legislators concerning the importance of floodplain management and hazard mitigation. Members of the two organizations hoped to raise awareness and eliminate misconceptions regarding the amount of federal dollars available for mitigation after a flood. It was part of an effort to educate the state's leadership in the need for funding to carry out the program created by HB 1841 of the 1999 legislative session. House Bill 1841 created a comprehensive flood hazard mitigation program that prescribed buyout and removal of repetitively flooded structures.

At the Capitol Reception, OFMA Chair Ron Flanagan, OEMA Chair Jon Tilley, Nancy Kennedy, Anna Lee, Linda Reed, State Mitigation Officer Fred Liebe and I worked hard to promote state funding for the program.

Albert Ashwood, director of the Oklahoma Department of Civil

Emergency Management; Duane Smith, OWRB executive director; and Mike Melton, OWRB assistant to the director, along with Buddy Young, director; Ross Richardson, mitigation chief and Lonnie Ward of FEMA Region VI in Denton, Texas, attended to lend their support.

Joe Remondini and Carolyn Schultz of the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers set up the Corps' impressive flood model at the Capitol and also assisted with the reception. The model demonstrated the speed in which waters can rise and the sweeping devastation floodwaters can inflict. It amazed visitors and hammered home the mitigation message.

Right: Ken Morris, Oklahoma NFIP coordinator; Rhonda Kouba, OWRB; Hank Elling, OWRB; and Ron Flanagan, OFMA chairman.



Left: Carolyn Schultz, left, and Joe Remondini of the Tulsa District Corps of Engineers demonstrate flood model set up at the Capitol February 9 to show devastation floodwaters can inflict on homes constructed in the floodplain.

March is Flood Insurance Month

Governor Frank Keating has proclaimed March Flood Insurance Month. Avoid the personal hardship and economic distress caused by flood disasters by purchasing low cost flood insurance to protect your home and possessions. For information, call the Oklahoma Water Resources Board 405-530-8800.

FEMA Offers Home Study Option to Busy Administrators

One-day training classes are available for floodplain managers during May. However, this short course is very concentrated, and may be confusing to those without previous exposure to the program.

Among other training opportunities is the 5-day class that the OWRB, FEMA and the ODCEM offer annually in January. It is entitled "Managing Floodplain Development through the National Flood Insurance Program." Many town administrators find it difficult to be away from their offices a week, so they opt for the one-day workshop.

Now a more helpful format is available to busy floodplain administrators who find it more convenient to study on their own time. To accommodate them, FEMA has developed a Home Study Course which can be ordered by calling Jim LaPrade at 301-447-1076. Continuing education credits are available to all who pass the course.

According to Ken Morris, state NFIP coordinator, beginning in 2001, all who pursue the Certified Floodplain Managers (CFM) designation will be required to complete the course as a prerequisite for taking the CFM exam.

What Sets Federal Disaster Declaration?

When a disaster is sufficiently large to overwhelm state and local resources, a governor may request a presidential disaster declaration in order to receive federal disaster assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Assistance Act. In such instances, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides a recommendation to the president whether federal disaster assistance is warranted. In September, 1999, FEMA issued a rule that establishes the factors it will consider when evaluating a governor's request.

Noting that this does not affect presidential discretion in declaring disasters and does not change published regulations and policies established under the Stafford Act, the agency stated how it will evaluate requests as they apply to its programs. Under the Public Assistance Program, FEMA will examine the estimated cost of the assistance, using such factors as the cost per capita impact within the state.

FEMA currently uses the figure of \$1 per capita as an indicator that the disaster is of sufficient magnitude to warrant federal assistance. This figure will be adjusted annually based on the Consumer Price Index. In addition, FEMA established a minimum threshold of \$1 million in public assistance damage per disaster, because the agency believes that even the least populated states can cover that level of damage.

FEMA will also evaluate the impacts of a disaster at the county, local government and tribal level, particularly if critical facilities are involved; the amount of insurance coverage in force; the degree of hazard mitigation undertaken prior to the disaster; recent disaster history; and the availability of other federal assistance.

Under the Individual Assistance Program, FEMA will consider:

- *Concentration of damage*
- *Degree of trauma*
- *Impacts on special populations, such as low-income, elderly, or unemployed*
- *Assistance received from voluntary agencies*
- *Amount of insurance coverage*
- *Average amount of individual assistance by state.*

Are You Using "Best Available" Flood Data?

When areas have been designated as Special Flood Hazard Areas on the community's Flood Hazard Boundary Map (FHBM) or Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) and no Base Flood Elevations (BFE) or an identified floodway have been developed, communities are required to apply the provisions of 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 60.3 (b) (4). This requires that communities:

Obtain, review and reasonably utilize any base flood elevation and floodway data available from a federal, state or any other sources.

Data obtained is to be used by communities as criteria for requiring that new construction and substantial improvements have their lowest floors elevated to or above BFE (nonresidential structures can also be floodproofed to or above the BFE) and for prohibiting any encroachments in a floodway that could result in any increase in flood levels during occurrence of the flood discharge.

The data obtained should be used as long as it reasonably reflects flooding conditions expected during the base flood, are not known to be scientifically or technically incorrect, and represent the best data available. Data from a draft or preliminary Flood Insurance Study (FIS) constitute available data under 44 CFR 60.3 (b) (4).

Floodplain Management Bulletin 1-98 provides guidance on the use of FEMA draft or preliminary Flood Insurance Study data as "best available" data for regulating floodplain development. Copies of Floodplain Management Bulletin 1-98 can be ordered from FEMA Distribution Facility by calling 1-800-480-2520. Fax requests to 301-362-5335.

May is Flood Awareness Month

Governor Frank Keating has proclaimed May Flood Awareness Month.

360 Oklahoma communities participate in the National Flood

Insurance Program.

79 other communities have not yet joined the program, and as a result, have no flood damage prevention ordinances in place to protect the lives and livelihood of their citizens against devastating effects of flooding.



Lonnie Ward, FEMA Region VI; Dorothy Martinez, NFIP, Houston; OFMA members Joe Remondini, Carolyn Schultz, Ken Morris; Albert Ashwood, Oklahoma Civil Emergency Management; and Ron Flanagan, OFMA chairman, watch Governor Frank Keating sign documents proclaiming March Flood Insurance Month and May Flood Awareness Month.