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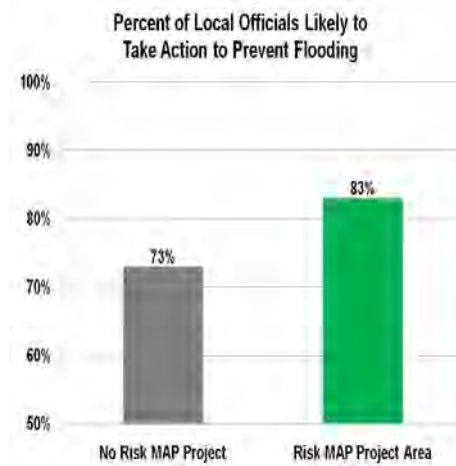


2011 Local Official Survey Findings on Flood Risk

FEMA conducted its second nationwide survey of local officials to baseline, then track progress toward, achieving Goal 2 of the Risk MAP Multi-Year Plan, which is to “Ensure that a measurable increase of the public’s awareness and understanding of risk management results in a measurable reduction of current and future vulnerability to flooding.” The results from the local official survey are valid at the national level. The following are key findings.

Those In Risk MAP Project Areas Are More Likely To Take Action And Communicate

- **Risk MAP projects lead to action.** Seventy-four percent of local officials who said they had participated in a Risk MAP project stated that they were more likely to take action to reduce flood risk as a result. In addition, action to reduce flood risk was more likely to occur in Risk MAP project areas than where they did not occur (83% in Risk MAP project areas vs. 73% where a Risk MAP project did not occur).



- **Risk MAP projects lead to communication.** Seventy-one percent of local officials who participated in a Risk MAP project said they were more likely to communicate with their community about flood risk as a result.

Survey authorized by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget: Control No 1090-0007.

Research Objectives

To survey local public officials to:

- Determine their awareness and understanding of local flood risk
- Identify the types of flood prevention or flood risk reduction activities undertaken
- Determine if and how they share flood risk information with their citizens
- Understand how FEMA can make it easier for them to communicate about flood risk

Research findings will inform and refine Risk MAP’s National Outreach and Community Engagement Strategies and will be shared across FEMA and Federal Agencies that address common issues (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers).

Research Methodology

- A total of 785 online surveys were collected from local officials who would likely have awareness of issues related to flooding.
- Responses collected via e-mail from June 6-July 4, 2011.
- The response rate to the online survey was 11%.
- The respondents were comprised of local officials holding a variety of titles, including floodplain manager (15%), city administrator/manager (14%), and mayor (12%).
- Chi-Square testing was performed between all categorical variables to determine the correlations between observed and expected results.

RiskMAP
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They Know Their Communities Are At Risk

- **Local officials believe their communities are at risk of flooding.** As in 2010, two thirds (68%) of local officials believed their community was at risk for flooding, with 70% characterizing that risk as low to moderate. Those who characterized their risk as high were more likely to be within five miles of a coast (23% compared to 14% overall).
- **They learn about flood risk from flood maps and personal experience.** Community flood maps or personal flood experience were each cited by 69% of respondents as a source of information about flood risk. Those who experienced a flood within the year were most likely to say their community was at risk of flooding (92%) while 57% of those whose most recent flood was more than 10 years ago thought their community was at risk. Only 15% had never had a flood in their community.

They Have Taken Steps To Reduce Risk

- **Those aware of their risk take action.** Public officials who thought their community was at risk for flooding were more likely to say their community had taken action to prevent flood risk, with 83% compared to 58% of those who did not think their community was at risk. They also were more likely to say that flood insurance was available, 88% compared to 71% who said their community was not at risk for flooding.
- **Most local officials have taken steps to reduce their community's flood risk.** As in 2010, almost three quarters (74%) of respondents said their community had taken action to prevent or reduce flooding or flood risk. Those in urban communities were much more likely to have taken action to reduce flood risk (91% compared to 68% of rural communities).
- **Local officials reduce flood risk or impacts through floodplain management.** Of those who took action, 76% cited floodplain management, 62% mentioned stormwater management, and 50% cited drainage improvements.
- **Experience with significant floods leads to action.** Eighty-six percent of those who had a federally declared disaster took action to prevent future flooding compared with 73% of those who had not experienced a similar type of disaster.
- **Those that don't take action do not believe their community is at risk or have resource limitations.** Like the general public, local officials who did not take action to reduce flood losses said they do not believe their community is at flood risk (43%) or due to resource limitations (40%). Also, 22% of public officials were not sure which actions to take.
- **Reviewing flood maps leads to action.** The 90% of local officials who said they had reviewed their community's flood map were more likely to have taken action to reduce flood risk (77.9% compared to 41.3% who said they had not reviewed their flood map). Being new to their current position was correlated with not reviewing the flood map – 17.5% of those who did not review their flood had served less than one year.
- **Those who communicate about flood risk take action.** Close to half (47.3%) of those who had taken action to prevent flooding communicated at least annually about flood risk while only 13.6% of those who have not taken action to prevent flooding communicate that often about flood risk.

Many Do Not Communicate Often About Risk

- **Many local officials do not communicate often about flood risk.** While more than 20% of officials communicate several times each year about flood risk, nearly one-third (30%) have never communicated with citizens about flood risk, which is similar to what was found in the 2010 survey.
- **Local officials conduct outreach through community meetings and other events and on the Internet.** Almost half (47%) of public officials mentioned using community meetings, open houses, and other events to conduct outreach on flood risk. Forty-three percent said they used their community website to reach the public, and 36% used media outreach.

- Local officials prefer to let the community know about flood map updates online, in local media, or through community meetings. Local media (64%), the community website (63%), and community meetings (60%) were the most common methods that would be used to let citizens know about new flood maps.

- FEMA can provide tools to make the sharing of flood risk information easier.

Respondents said the following tools would make it easier for local officials to share flood risk information

with the public: information to add to community websites (57%), publications for building owners on reducing risk (52%), customizable letters or brochures (47%), and media materials such as draft press releases (36%).

