

Wacky Winter Weather!



LPS National Flood staff members Diane Blair, Rhiannon Hanson, Lisa George and Ericka Rutherford brave the astonishing snowstorm outside our building in north Texas!

A foot of snow in Dallas was unheard of before February 2010. The massive snowstorm in north Texas was just one of numerous record-breaking storms across the country this winter. In one incredible February day, measurable snowfall was reported in 49 of 50 states (Hawaii was the only snow-free state). On the other hand, unusually warm winter temperatures have not been uncommon in recent years. Snowpack in the West in 2007 was less than half the average.

Warmer average temperatures in recent years and decades have had a wide range of effects. Just one result is dramatically visible in the West – a massive die off of western pine forests is due to an explosion of mountain pine beetles. The warmer temperatures have also resulted in greater surface water evaporation, recharging the atmosphere with moisture and causing wild fluctuations in seasonal snow accumulation.

We have witnessed vastly varied weather events. How are trends in warmer temperatures explained along-side powerful winter storms? How is this happening and is it a harbinger of future phenomenon? What does it all mean to us?

Regardless of the cause(s), it's clear that we need to be prepared for the possibility of a greater number of higher-intensity floods. Snowstorms are often accompanied by damaging floods. A study of the 155 most damaging snowstorms in the United States since 1948 found that floods accompanied 42 percent of the storms. Fluctuating precipitation patterns are also expected to contribute to increased winter flooding in some areas. Already, the increase in average winter temperatures across the western United States during the 20th century has resulted in substantially increased flood risks as more winter precipitation fell as rain rather than snow.

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Have a question or topic that you would like addressed in the *National Flood Observer*?
Sumit your suggestions to **floodinfo@lpsvcs.com**

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Charting the Course...



The biggest event of the year for LPS National Flood is FEMA's National Flood Conference, held this April 11-14 in San Diego, California. We always look forward to learning the latest news, trends and issues surrounding the flood certification and insurance industries so that we may better serve the compliance needs

of our clients. LPS National Flood has a large presence at the conference and our booth will be prominent in the exhibit hall. We look forward to spending quality time with our many customers, business partners and friends. We hope to see you there!

For more information about the 2010 National Flood Conference, visit <http://www.nfipiservice.com/nfc.html>.

If you are interested in scheduling a meeting with LPS National Flood, please contact us at **800.833.6347, option 4** or at floodinfo@lpsvcs.com.



Winter Weather

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The very unusual weather events that our nation has been experiencing over the past few years may or may not indicate the future weather patterns. But, it is clear that the risk of flooding exists for all of us – not just those who reside in FEMA-designated high risk zones. It is prudent to consider how we can more effectively protect ourselves and our

customers from the unexpected by better understanding NFIP flood insurance, excess flood insurance, and other measures that can provide peace of mind the next time severe weather strikes.

Portions of this article were excerpted from a report on extreme weather and global warming that can be viewed at www.nwf.org/extremeweather.

2010 Flood Map Revisions

The majority of flood map revisions are released in August and September just before the end of FEMA's fiscal year. In the coming weeks there will be many more communities identified as areas that will be assigned updated flood maps later this year. Below are the major 2010 flood map revisions to date.

Date	County	State
1/20/2010	Ventura	CA
2/17/2010	Hamilton	OH
5/3/2010	Douglas	NE
6/4/2010	Middlesex	MA
6/18/2010	Fairfield	CT
7/6/2010	Middlesex	NJ

Knowing your flood risk: benefit or burden??

As communities across the country are remapped as part of FEMA's Map Modernization Program, many consumers find themselves in a difficult predicament: they become better informed of newly identified, more accurate flooding risks for their properties but have to purchase flood insurance that, in many cases, has not been required before. When consumer pocket-books are affected, especially in a challenging economy, issues can escalate to lawsuits and significant political opposition.

FEMA's expressed goals with their new Risk MAP program are to improve the quality of flood hazard data available, increase public awareness of risks associated with flooding and support actions that will reduce risk to life and property, such as promoting insurance coverage and prudent land management efforts. With strategies to achieve these goals well underway, more and more consumers will find themselves faced with the awareness of flood risk and need for flood insurance.

Several disputes about revised flood maps under FEMA's Map Modernization program have already surfaced at political levels and it would not be a surprise to see an increase in this sort of noise as flood zones continue to be updated and risk communication improves. Here are a few examples of escalated push-back to remapping that have occurred over the past couple of years:

June 2008: U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) introduces H.R. 6413, a bill that would prohibit the Administrator of FEMA from updating flood maps until the Administrator submits to Congress a community outreach plan.

Fall 2008: Proposed amendments to both House and Senate versions of the Flood Insurance Reform Bill (H.R. 3121 and S. 2284) would delay use of new flood maps to determine when flood insurance is required or to adjust premium rates until all maps in a given Corps of Engineers District are "completed".

January 2009: Great Rivers Habitat Alliance filed suit against FEMA for revising a floodway boundary in St. Peters, Missouri – a move that cleared the way for significant commercial development within the Mississippi River floodplain that should still be considered high risk for flooding.

February 2009: Monmouth County, New Jersey filed a lawsuit against FEMA to protest the September 2009 scheduled release of new Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The concerns stemmed primarily from the de-accreditation of the Bayshore Levee which affects the mapped flood hazards for 1,408 residents in the area and who would now be required to carry flood insurance.

As flood maps continue to be updated and flood insurance reform is expected to be addressed in Congress in 2010, history tells us that challenges to FEMA's processes and revised flood data will likely continue, if not increase. The *National Flood Observer* will continue to follow developments related to flood insurance reform and keep the clients of LPS National Flood informed as they unfold.

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