



NFIP/CRS UPDATE

February March 2017

This Elevation Certificate is Easier to Use

On March 1, 2017, the Federal Emergency Management Agency made a handier version of the Elevation Certificate for the National Flood Insurance Program available on its website (<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/160>). It's the same form—there were no substantive changes, and the actual look and physical format remain the same. What this version does is incorporates changes to the programming of the fillable PDF that make it easier to use.

The following improvements were made to the Elevation Certificate (FEMA form 086-0-33):

- Both items A8 and A9 now accept alpha and numeric characters.
- If the wrong box is checked in Item B12 (Coastal Barrier Resources System CBRS or Otherwise Protected Area), the user can highlight and delete to remove the selection.
- Section C2.a through C2.h and Section E have been adjusted to allow correct rounding for decimal input.
- Photos can now be deleted by clicking the “Clear Photo” button to the right of the caption box.

The expiration date, of November 30, 2018, remains on the form. As a reminder, only this fillable version or the four-page Elevation Certificate form released on June 6, 2016 can be used after January 1, 2017. No earlier versions can be accepted for CRS purposes. Note that an 8-page form-only version of the Elevation Certificate is available at the link above website so users can work with a smaller file size. ≡ ≡ ≡

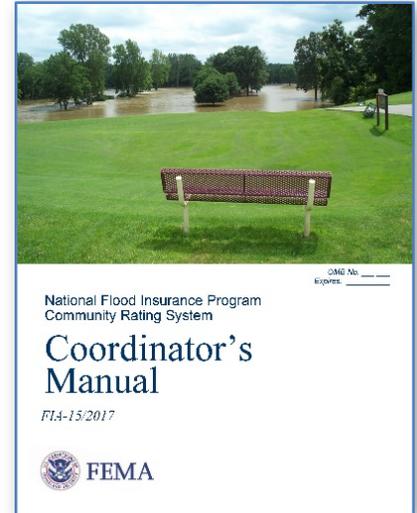
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Release of 2017 CRS Coordinator's Manual

The draft of the latest edition of the *CRS Coordinator's Manual* is undergoing final review at the Office of Management and Budget to ensure adherence with the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act. When OMB issues its final approval, the new 2017, *Coordinator's Manual* will be available for download at www.CRSresources.org and at other sites.

As noted in the last issue of the *NFIP/CRS Update*, the 2017 edition will introduce no major changes in the CRS. Rather, there will be many improvements, clarifications, and minor corrections. None of this will require substantive changes to a community's CRS program or procedures. The most significant changes were discussed in previous issues of the *NFIP/CRS Update*, and if more questions arise, future newsletters will provide more explanation.



Don't Forget . . .

- You do not need to alter the way you prepare for your next verification visit. Just get ready as you always do. Your community's coverage under the new edition will be phased in. Your ISO/CRS Specialists will work with you to anticipate any different documentation or other changes that will apply in the future.
- When approved, the 2017 *Coordinator's Manual* will be available for download at www.CRSresources.org and will also be posted on the website of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.
- Changes from previous editions will be marked with vertical bars [*like this*] in the margins of the pages of the 2017 *Coordinator's Manual*. This will help you spot places that you may want to review, to see if the change affects your community. ≡ ≡ ≡

Take Advantage of Courtesy Reviews

If your community will be requesting CRS credit for new activities you have undertaken since joining the CRS, be sure to contact your ISO/CRS Specialist to request a "courtesy review."

Under this process, your ISO/CRS Specialist will take an informal look at your ordinance language, outreach project, or other product and suggest minor changes that may result in a better score. Do this any time, but in advance of your request for credit so there won't be any delay in getting the points you deserve.

Debbie's Dish . . . on CRS Users Groups

Debbie Cahoon Vascik, CFM
Users Groups Liaison

Stepping onto New Shoes

Today is Joe's first day at his new job. His title is Floodplain Administrator for the City of Watery Way. He's excited about the possibilities, eager to meet his co-workers, and determined to excel in his responsibilities. Joe holds a cup of coffee in one hand and a pad of paper and a pen in the other hand. He walks into the conference room, ready for his first staff meeting. After all the introductions and staff reports, Joe's supervisor looks at him and says, "Welcome to Watery Way, Joe. We have the CRS cycle visit next month. You're now the CRS Coordinator. Good luck." Uh.....the what?

Poor Joe. Sure, he's familiar with floodplain management. It's been his career for the past 10 years. But this thing called CRS? Joe's heard of the program, but he doesn't have a clue what's involved in it, only that it's something about activities and flood insurance. He talks to his co-workers. They tell him that Jack used to be the Floodplain Administrator and he handled all of the CRS stuff. The co-workers don't know anything else about CRS because Jack did it all himself and didn't ask for any help, nor did he share his knowledge with anyone in his department. He would send an email to the various city departments to request things like drainage maintenance inspection records or site visit reports, but he never told anyone why he was asking for those items. But now Jack's gone and Joe has to fill his shoes. Where to begin?

Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common when it comes to CRS. Often, a CRS Coordinator title is simply inherited or given to a staff member whose plate is already overflowing with other responsibilities. If the community hasn't been keeping up with the program all year long, then it goes into crunch time starting in August when it's time to submit a recertification or, in Joe's case, when it's time for the five-year visit.

If staff members are not adequately trained and familiar with the demands of CRS participation, the class rating and insurance discounts are at risk. New CRS Coordinators struggle to understand the manual they've just been handed, and they need to find a way to get to know the program without attending a four-day class, a trip that an understaffed and low-budget community simply cannot afford to provide.

As Joe sits stunned in his modest cubicle, not knowing where to start on his first big project, he checks his email and sees a message from Jane, a Floodplain Administrator in the next town over, Wettsville. Jane is inviting Joe to attend the kick-off meeting for the new CRS Users Group that's going to start soon. Jane explains that the purpose of the CRS Users Group is to bring communities together, help them learn about the CRS, give them an opportunity to explore the ins and outs of the program among their peers, and share their knowledge and experiences. Yes! This is just what Joe needs!

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DEBBIE'S DISH (cont.)

Joe emails Jane and RSVPs for the kickoff meeting. He's confident that he's taking a step in the right direction toward understanding the CRS and his responsibility to do the best job possible for the sake of Watery Way and its citizens. Joe is still bothered by the fact that the previous CRS Coordinator did not think to copy documentation or leave any kind of guidance for staff members, but he doesn't want the citizens of Watery Way to suffer for his lack of knowledge. Joe is eager to see how much he can learn from the CRS Users Group and its members. Convinced that the CRS Users Group will help guide him through the learning curve and challenges of understanding the CRS, Joe dives into the *CRS Coordinator's Manual*, determined to overcome the struggle of inexperience.

And as he learns more and more about the new program he's suddenly in charge of, he makes a promise to himself that he'll be diligent in recordkeeping and sharing his knowledge with co-workers so that future Floodplain Administrators are not left in the dark wondering what to do with this thing called CRS. The lesson here is don't be a Jack ...be a Joe. ≡≡≡

Tidbits from the CRS Task Force

The Community Rating System Task Force met in San Antonio, Texas, during the week of January 30th, 2017. The meeting included these items:

- Updates were presented on efforts by the CRS Task Force committees, and on CRS training. Representatives from the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration headquarters spoke on FIMA's priority efforts that are pertinent to the CRS.
- The current, 2013 *CRS Coordinator's Manual* is still applicable until the 2017 edition is approved by the Office of Management and Budget.
- A committee is considering issues related to establishing a one-foot freeboard requirement as a prerequisite for CRS participation, and expects to make a recommendation to the CRS Task Force this year. Future issues of the *NFIP/CRS Update* will provide details and request input from stakeholders on this suggestion.
- A proposal is being developed to consider making it possible for communities to submit CRS credit documentation materials through a website application.

The Community Rating System Task Force is the inter-agency, multidisciplinary advisory body that has provided guidance to FEMA since the inception of the program. The CRS Task Force is made up of professionals from diverse backgrounds—representatives of FEMA, the insurance industry, professional organizations, local governments, and other governmental entities. It serves to monitor the program, discuss needed changes, and make recommendations to FEMA.

Guests at the meeting included Michael Segner, CFM, State NFIP Coordinator for Texas; Jessica Baker, CFM, Texas Floodplain Management Association; and Joe Fernandez, CFM, San Antonio River Authority.

The CRS Task Force plans to meet again in May 2017. ≡≡≡

Success with CRS

This month: A snapshot of the numerous floodplain management and CRS activities being carried out in Fort Collins, Colorado. For more details, see www.fcgov.com/flooding. For more stories, see the Success with CRS website at www.CRSresources.org/success.

Fort Collins sees How it's Doing, Gets Better —All with CRS

As one of the very-highest-rated members of the Community Rating System, Fort Collins, Colorado—a CRS Class 2 as of May 2016—can rightfully boast of numerous achievements in developing and maintaining its comprehensive floodplain and stormwater management programs. Although much of the City's initiatives were underway before it joined the CRS, the City credits the CRS with supplying both a roadmap and tangible metrics to help.

“The CRS gives our data-driven policymakers a way to gauge how we are doing in floodplain and stormwater management compared to other communities,” says Marsha Hilmes-Robinson, Floodplain Administrator. The flood insurance premium discounts Fort Collins earns through the CRS are not really the driving force that they are with other CRS communities, because Fort Collins has relatively small floodplains and thus a low National Flood Insurance Program policy base. “But how Fort Collins is doing compared to other communities does matter to our decisionmakers. The CRS provides that data. The CRS is really it,” she says.

Fort Collins's 150,000 people occupy 56 square miles at the base of the Rocky Mountains in north-central Colorado. Rivers and streams drain the mountain watersheds and flow through city on the way to the plains, posing challenges to managing seasonal and storm-related high flows and the occasional risk of flash floods.

Over the years the City has developed a thorough network of mitigation and management approaches for addressing stormwater issues, protecting open space, providing for detention basins, and adopting and enforcing strict standards for development, buildings, and infrastructure.

A Program for Public Information

A more recent focus for the City has been bolstering its already-robust public outreach efforts.

When the new CRS-credited activity “program for public information” was introduced in 2013, Fort Collins undertook to develop one as a new tool for itself. “We gathered a group to develop a Program for Public Information, following the process in the *CRS Coordinator's Manual*,” Hilmes-Robinson explains.

The committee drew up a public outreach strategy, identified priority audiences and the flood-related messages that those audiences need to receive, made a list of projects to convey those messages, and set a schedule for implementing them.

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Fort Collins gets Better (cont.)

An unanticipated outcome of the CRS’s Program for Public Information process, according to Hilmes-Robinson, was getting people talking who had never gotten together before. “We developed a better relationship with outside entities, such as the Board of Realtors® and Colorado State University, neither of which had been active participants up until then.”

Two notable outreach projects the City conducts are a brochure and signs on city benches.

- The City revised its **brochure about safety and flood insurance** that it sends to people who live in the floodplains. “The CRS guidelines for PPI credit helped us make the messages in the brochure more action-oriented,” Hilmes-Robinson notes.
- **Signs on benches**—The City had received compliments on the visibility and memorability of flood-related messages posted on bus-stop benches. “So it made sense to include that outreach project in our strategy and receive CRS credit for it,” Hilmes-Robinson explains. They feature messages about flood safety—“Don’t Drive through Floodwater.”



courtesy City of Fort Collins

University Students a Priority Audience in Program for Public Information

Colorado State University’s 31,000 students form a significant transient population for Fort Collins. Students occupy a lot of off-campus housing, some of it in floodprone areas and a good proportion of it in the form of basement apartments, which are highly vulnerable to flood damage.

“Informing students about flood risk is one of our most important missions,” says Hilmes-Robinson, so that task was incorporated into the Program for Public Information.

- “For the last two years we have had a **booth at CSU’s Housing Fair**,” which is attended by about 2,000 students every year, explains Hilmes-Robinson. The displays, handouts, and expert staff at the booth offer both students and the managers of student-occupied property a wealth of information about flooding, especially basement flooding, maps, and flood insurance for renters. As a bonus, the carryover value of targeting these young people is enormous—it introduces flooding, flood insurance, and floodplain management to a younger generation who will carry that understanding and informed outlook with them into the future.
- Realizing that today’s students rely heavily on their smartphones, Fort Collins developed a **mobile application for flood information**. Through the app, students can examine flood maps from both the City and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This approach puts the information about potential flood threats at the students’ fingertips when they are considering whether to rent a given property.

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Fort Collins gets Better (cont.)

CRS helps Boost Local Standards

Three recent enhancements to the City’s existing regulatory standards are a direct result of its participation in the CRS, according to Hilmes-Robinson.

- Fort Collins has identified four categories of critical facilities that are particularly crucial to protect from flood damage: facilities for at-risk populations, essential service facilities, hazardous materials facilities, and government service facilities. Since 1995, the City has prohibited locating them in either the FEMA-mapped floodplain or the City’s mapped floodplains.
- Erosion buffers were established to protect the banks of creeks and rivers and to avoid damage to nearby structures.
- To maintain its high CRS class, Fort Collins was required to identify all of its high-risk dams, map the projected inundation levels in the areas below those dams, and conduct assessments of the risk to life and property in the hazard areas. All that information had to be entered into the city’s geographic information system (GIS). “We went into that kicking and screaming,” Hilmes-Robinson remembers, “but it turned out to be a very good thing for us. I’m not sure we would have done it if it had not been for the CRS.”

The effectiveness of Fort Collins’s efforts is borne out in reduced damage, notes Hilmes-Robinson. “In the 2013 flood we had no structural damage along the Poudre River. That’s not bad for between a 25- and 50-year flood.” ≡ ≡ ≡



Online Resources

At CRSresources.org

Check frequently at www.CRSresources.org to see what’s been added in the way of CRS materials. All documents referred to in the *Coordinator’s Manual* are posted here as soon as they are available. If you cannot find a piece of information or document, please notify your ISO/CRS Specialist or NFIPCRS@iso.com. Here are some recent additions to the website.

- **Webinar Schedule**—A schedule for the first part of 2017 is posted under the Training & Videos tab at www.CRSresources.org/training. This link has registration information. Also, see the webinar schedule below.
- The most recent issue of the *NFIP/CRS Update* newsletter, (December 2016/January 2017), along with all other past issues, can be found at www.CRSresources.org/100.
- **Success with CRS** is a tab on the www.CRSresources.org website, featuring short articles about the many different ways in which communities have found their own types of success through the CRS. ≡ ≡ ≡

Training Opportunities

Webinars

The CRS offers webinars to help communities understand and meet their CRS requirements. Many will be recorded, so they can be accessed later. Registration is free, but required, as space is limited. Some courses provide continuing education credits for Certified Floodplain Managers (CFMs). See www.CRSresources.org/training. The following one-hour topical webinars are on the calendar, and others will be scheduled. All webinars begin at 1:00 pm EST / 10:00 am PST.

- **The Role of the Community CRS Coordinator** — April 18, 2017
- **Repetitive Loss Properties and the CRS** — April 19, 2017
- **Introduction to the CRS** — May 16, 2017
- **The CRS and Coastal Hazards** — May 17, 2017
- **Preparing for a Verification Visit** (1 hour and 15 minutes) — June 20, 2017
- **Developing Outreach Projects for Activity 330** — June 21, 2017
- **Changes in the 2017 CRS Coordinator’s Manual** — July 18, 2017
- **CRS Class 4 Prerequisites** — July 19, 2017
- **Preparing an Annual Recertification** — August 15, 2017
- **Flood Warning & Response (Activity 610)** — August 16, 2017
- **Preparing an Annual Recertification** — September 19, 2017
- **Floodplain Management Planning (Activity 510)** — September 20, 2017
- **Introduction to the CRS** — October 17, 2017
- **Developing a CRS Program for Public Information** — October 18, 2017
- **Preparing for a Verification Visit** (1 hour and 15 minutes) — November 14, 2017
- **Working with Repetitive Loss Properties** — November 15, 2017
- **Introduction to the CRS** — December 12, 2017
- **The CRS and Coastal Hazards** — December 13, 2017

If you’d like to have a webinar on the FEMA Elevation Certificate, or a particular CRS activity, contact your ISO/CRS Specialist.

For more on the CRS webinars, go to www.CRSresources.org/training. If you have questions about or suggestions for the CRS Webinar Series, contact Becca.Croft@atkinsglobal.com.

Training Opportunities (cont.)

Workshops and Training related to the CRS

- **The Community Rating System (E0278)** (field-deployed course is designated as L0278)
..... June 26–29, 2017; September 11–14, 2017

This is the all-purpose training course for the CRS. It is taught at both the Emergency Management Institute (see below) and at sites throughout the country at the request of interested communities, groups, or states, pending available funding.

- Attendees of E0278 CRS courses based on previous *Coordinator's Manuals* may want to repeat this course. Therefore, restrictions on repeat attendance have been waived.
- For continuing education credit for Certified Floodplain Managers, the ASFPM will award CECs earned at the E0278 CRS course.
- No more than two persons per community may attend at one time.

Prerequisite: To enroll in the CRS course, you must be a Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM®), or have completed the National Flood Insurance Program course (E0273), or be a full-time floodplain manager with over two years of specific floodplain management experience.

- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts II (E0282)** April 24–27, 2017
- **Managing Floodplain Development through the NFIP (E0273)**
..... May 22–25, 2017; August 21–24, 2017

E0273 is also field deployed periodically. Contact your State NFIP Coordinator for more information [see <http://www.floods.org/index.asp?menuID=274>].

- **Advanced Floodplain Management Concepts III (E0284)** July 24–27, 2017
- **Residential Coastal Construction (E0386)** August 28–31, 2017
- **Unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance—
Application Review and Evaluation (E0213)** June 19–20, 2017
- **Unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance—
Developing Quality Application Elements (E0212)** May 15–18, 2017
- **Unified Hazard Mitigation Assistance—
Project Implementation and Programmatic Closeout (E0214)** June 21–22, 2017
- **Retrofitting Floodprone Residential Buildings (E0279)** May 22–25, 2017
- **Fundamentals of Building Science (E0312)** September 25–28, 2017

CRS communities can receive CRS credit points after their staff members complete certain training sessions. Under Section 432.o, regulations administration (RA) of the *Coordinator's Manual*, five points are provided for each member of a community's floodplain permit staff who graduates from courses E0194, E0273, E0278, E0282, E0284, or E0386 (up to 25 points). Graduating from E0279 is worth up to five points under Activity 360 (Flood Protection Assistance).

About the Emergency Management Institute

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI), in Emmitsburg, Maryland, offers training on topics related to floodplain management, mitigation, and construction, including the basic CRS course (E0278). These are oriented to local building, zoning, planning, and engineering officials. Tuition is free for state and local government officials, travel stipends are available, and on-campus lodging is free. Free transportation is provided from the airport to the campus and back to the airport. The only out-of-pocket expense is a meal ticket—all-you-can-eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Go to the EMI website for specific details at http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/NETC_Welcome_Package.pdf. The application to attend can be found at <http://training.fema.gov/Apply/>, or call EMI at 1-800-238-3358 or (301) 447-1035. Signed applications should be submitted through the state's Emergency Management Training Officer.

Bring the CRS to Your Home Town

The CRS conducts the field-deployed CRS course (L0278, the same as EMI's E0278) throughout the year, depending on funding availability. A state, CRS Users Group, or organization that would like to host a course or discuss CRS training opportunities should contact its FEMA Regional CRS Coordinator (see www.CRSresources.org/100). ≡ ≡ ≡

Statement of Purpose

The *NFIP/CRS Update* is a publication of the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System. It provides local officials and others interested in the CRS with news they can use.

The *NFIP/CRS Update* is produced in alternate months. It is distributed electronically, at no cost, to local and state officials, consultants, and other interested persons. Communities are encouraged to copy and/or circulate the *Update* and to reprint its articles in their own local, state, or regional newsletters. No special permission is needed.

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