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## **FEMA RELEASES PRELIMINARY FLOOD INSURANCE RATE MAPS FOR ALL OF HARRIS COUNTY**

*The preliminary maps are accessible via the internet*

HOUSTON (October 18, 2004) – On Monday October 18<sup>th</sup>, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) for all of Harris County. The release of the Preliminary FIRMs begins the official FEMA public review process that will ultimately result in the Preliminary FIRMs being finalized and adopted, which is expected in late 2005.

FEMA will meet with all 35 National Flood Insurance Communities in Harris County. Once these meetings are complete, FEMA will publish two official public notices ten days apart. The official 90-day appeals and protests period will begin on the date the second notice is published. For more information about filing an appeal or protest contact your local floodplain administrator or go to [www.tsarp.org](http://www.tsarp.org).

The Preliminary FIRMs show the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for all of Harris County using newly acquired topographic data and the latest engineering methods and technology. The maps have been developed by FEMA and the Harris County Flood Control District as part of the [Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project \(TSARP\)](http://www.tsarp.org). The floodplain delineations shown on the official FEMA Preliminary FIRMs are similar to those previously released by the Harris County Flood Control District as Flood Hazard Recovery Data.

The new Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps can be viewed at the project website [www.tsarp.org](http://www.tsarp.org), by contacting your local Floodplain Administrator, or by attending one of five Public Information Fairs scheduled for early November. A list of Floodplain Administrators is available at [www.tsarp.org](http://www.tsarp.org) or you can call your city hall or Harris County for the unincorporated areas.

Flood insurance requirements and costs will not be affected until the preliminary FIRMs are finalized.

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**TROPICAL STORM ALLISON RECOVERY PROJECT**

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## Public Information Fairs

Five Public Information Fairs will be held throughout Harris County to allow the public to view the Preliminary FIRMs, ask questions and learn about flood insurance and the FEMA appeals, protests, and map adoption process. The five Public Information Fairs will be held from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM at the locations and dates listed below.

### **Northwest Harris County**

November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Doss Community Center,  
2500 Frick Rd. Houston, TX 77038

### **Central Harris County**

November 4<sup>th</sup>, Houston Zoo, George R. Brown Education Center,  
1513 N. Macgregor, Houston, TX 77030

### **Southeast Harris County**

November 8<sup>th</sup>, Texas Chiropractic College, Russell Education Center Auditorium,  
5912 Spencer Hwy, Pasadena, TX 77505

### **Northeast Harris County**

November 10<sup>th</sup>, James Driver Community Center,  
10918 \_ Bentley St., Houston, TX 77093

### **Southwest Harris County**

November 11<sup>th</sup>, Grace Presbyterian Church, Massey-Tucker Fellowship Hall,  
10221 Ella Lee Lane, Houston, TX 77042

## Address Searches via the Internet

FEMA Preliminary FIRMs are available through the TSARP web site: [www.tsarp.org](http://www.tsarp.org). Residents in Harris County can view the Preliminary FIRMs to see the latest information on flood boundaries for the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for these areas.

The TSARP website has a new tool to assist the public in viewing the new FEMA Preliminary FIRMs. The FEMA Preliminary FIRM Lookup Tool allows the public to locate a specific FEMA Preliminary FIRM Panel and view or download that panel by providing an address, zip code, FIRM panel number or just zooming in on the map. The public will still be able to view the preliminary data, current floodplain maps and other TSARP products such as the two-foot contours, by using the TSARP Interactive Mapping Tool.

While information about the TSARP effort and the FEMA Preliminary FIRMs can be found on the web site, the project has also established a telephone number for additional questions at 713-722-7227.

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## Important Facts

- The current FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Harris County constitute the best representation of where the highest risks of flooding from streams and tidal surge exist. New technologies and engineering methods allow for a more detailed understanding of these risks.
- TSARP represents an entirely *new* study of flooding potential, not an *update* of old information. As such, it is not correct to characterize floodplain changes as an “increase” or “decrease” in flood risk – it is simply a *new understanding* of our flood risk. For example, the detail of the ground surface defined by an air borne laser technology called LiDAR is unprecedented and represents a significant difference. The new study also uses new and larger rainfall values based on additional years of rainfall records.
- Every portion of Harris County faces some risk of flooding due to the flat terrain, clay soils, and intense levels and volumes of rainfall that this region can receive. Intense local rainfall can cause flooding well away from any bayou or creek as water flows overland simply trying to reach a bayou or creek, and severe storms can produce more rainfall than what was used in the computer models to produce the mapped floodplains. During Tropical Storm Allison, roughly 65% of the areas that flooded were outside the mapped 1% floodplain and those areas experienced flooding because of the intense rainfall the area received and the resulting overland flow condition that occurred.
- Historically, about one-third of all flood insurance claims are for buildings located outside the 1% (100-year) chance floodplain. Purchasing flood insurance is an important way for individuals to protect their financial well being from both identified and unidentified flooding risks.

## Community Education

Information about purchasing flood insurance and the National Flood Insurance Program can be found at [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov).

More information about the history of flooding in Harris County, the evolution of the county's drainage network, and what efforts are being taken to minimize local flooding can be found at the District's web site – [www.hcfcd.org](http://www.hcfcd.org).

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