

Publishing flood risk information

Delivering the Flood Risk Regulations

Briefing 1

The Flood Risk Regulations require flood maps to be produced and published for rivers, the sea, reservoirs and surface water by 22 December 2013. This monthly update provides information about what we are doing and what it means for you.

Why are we doing this?

Although we are doing this to implement the requirements of the Regulations, we are also taking this opportunity to review and improve the way we communicate flood risk information. We want to make information more accessible and clearer so people can find it, understand it and take action.

A lot of work is underway to produce the maps. To co-ordinate the amount of information you receive, we will be producing a regular briefing going forward that will keep you updated on what is happening.

Why do you need to know about this?

Although we already provide a lot of information about flood risk, we're making changes to our existing information as well as publishing some information for the first time. The public, local government, businesses and NGOs will be interested in these changes and what it means for them. We want you to come on this journey with us so it isn't a surprise to you. We want you to be aware and engaged with what we are doing so that you feel confident and happy with what the new information means and you can explain it to others.

What are we doing?

The Regulations require us to produce maps which show where gets wet (the extent, depth or level and velocity or flow) and what gets wet (for example people, infrastructure, and designated sites). The Regulations refer to these maps as 'hazard' and 'risk' maps, but we know these terms can be confusing, so we are avoiding using these when describing the work we are doing.

Maps for rivers and the sea - where gets wet

We will be replacing the Flood Map on our website as the main source of information on flooding from rivers and the sea with a map using our National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) data. It is an improvement on the current Flood Map as it takes flood defences into account and gives people a more realistic picture of their flood risk. The new map will also be using new likelihood categories so they match those being used on the surface water maps. The Flood Map won't just disappear. It will remain on our website and will still be used by people for land-use planning purposes.

Environment Agency teams have been busy over the past few months reviewing the new likelihood categories and data. We are currently working up ideas and options to help us decide what the new maps will look like and what the new categories will be called.

The Regulations also require us to provide information on depth or level and velocity or flow. We are working with Environment Agency regional modelling and hydrology teams to get this information. We plan to display it alongside the river level information on our website.

Maps for surface water - where gets wet

Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) are required under the Regulations to produce maps for surface water flooding (in Flood Risk Areas) and we are required to publish them. Although we only have to publish surface water flood mapping in Flood Risk Areas, we would like to publish it for all of England. We recently asked LLFAs for their views on the phasing of publication and most of the LLFAs who expressed

an opinion would prefer all the mapping to be published at the same time. We are still considering how best to do this.

Maps for reservoirs - where gets wet

We already provide flood risk information for reservoirs on our website. These maps show the extent of flooding, but do not include information about depth or velocity. We require Cabinet Office approval to publish reservoir information that includes depth and velocity which is restricted due to concerns over national security. We are currently in discussions with Defra about this.

Maps for rivers, the sea, reservoirs and surface water - what gets wet

We have consulted widely on different options for producing maps which show what gets wet i.e. people, infrastructure and designated sites. Based on feedback, our current plan is to keep the maps as simple as possible to meet the Regulations without putting extra pressure on staff or our partners. We think it is more important to concentrate on producing maps showing the extent of flooding and on providing risk information through the Flood Risk Management Plans.

Summary flood risk report

As part of our aim to make flood risk information more accessible and useful, we are developing a web page that will give customers an overall summary of flood risk from all the different sources. We are aiming for this to be available for the December deadline. We will continue to push this work forward and get it available as soon as possible. In the meantime, we are working with the digital team to make sure the content surrounding the new maps is as user friendly and clear as possible.

How will we publish this information and tell people about it?

We are planning the communications and engagement of this work over four phases.

- Phase 1 - Awareness raising (May - July) - high level information and updates on what we are doing and why.
- Phase 2 - Awareness raising and engagement (August - November) - provide more detailed information and arrange meetings with key audiences to ensure they feel involved and have an opportunity to input.
- Phase 3 - Go live (December) - new information available. All staff and partners are prepared to deal with customer queries.
- Phase 4 - Post go live (January 2014) - reviewing work done and identifying next steps.

We will be producing material to support internal and external awareness and engagement including briefing notes, frequently asked questions, presentations and example maps.

What are the main activities over the next month?

Our priorities during June are:

- LLFAs review and feedback on the surface water mapping by 22 June.
- Local teams will be checking and processing the NaFRA validation information.
- Collating information on river flows and levels.
- Preparing presentations and briefings to update senior Environment Agency staff.
- Finalising our communications and engagement plan.
- Starting to develop presentations and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

Further information and next update

If you have any questions or require further information please contact [Jo Diamond](#).

We will be producing regular updates on this work. This particular update can be to brief both Environment Agency staff and external partners. We will be reviewing this for future updates and may produce separate updates if required.

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