

Review the glossary of FEMA terminology provided by the government's flood map resources page of key terms related to Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) and their importance in understanding FEMA's role in flood risk management.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA is the federal agency that responds to disasters in the US. FEMA administers the National Flood Insurance Program.

Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs)

The official flood rate map for a community. The FIRM maps out flood risk and outlines the flood zones.

Floodplain

All of the flood-prone land area shown in a FIRM. Coastal Flooding (areas near the coast at risk to flood) and Riverine Flooding (areas near streams and rivers at risk to flood) are the most common types of flooding in New York. The 100-year flood plain is the area with a 1% chance of flooding in any given year. The 500-year flood plain is the area with a 0.2% chance of flooding in any given year.

Flood Zone

A geographic area characterized by its risk of flooding. For example, high-risk flood zones have a 1% chance of being flooded each year. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) has five zones: VE zones, A zones, AE zones, AO zones, and X zones.

HFIAA (Homeowner Flood Insurance Affordability Act)

The HFIAA reversed some of the changes to the National Flood Insurance Program made under Biggert Waters. It repealed the price increase trigger for new policies; it repealed the price increase trigger for homes upon their sale; it repealed the price increase trigger for homes that were remapped into a higher risk flood zone; and it limited rate increases to 18% a year for all policies.

High-Risk Flood Zone

In high-risk flood zones, there is a 1% chance of flooding every year, meaning there is at least a 1 in 4 chance of flooding over the course of a 30-year mortgage. High-risk flood zones start with either the letter A or V.

Medium-Risk Flood Zone

In medium-risk flood zones, there is a 0.2% chance of flooding every year. In New York City, the X zone is our only medium-risk flood zone. Homeowners in the medium-risk flood zone are not required to purchase flood insurance unless they have received federal disaster assistance in the past.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)

The NFIP is the federal program that provides nearly all flood insurance in the US. It is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Post-FIRM

Property that was built after a community adopted its Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). New York City adopted its first FIRM in 1983, so all buildings built after 1983 are known as "post-FIRM."

Pre-FIRM

Property that was built before a community adopted its Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). New York City adopted its first FIRM in 1983, so all buildings built prior to 1983 are known as "pre-FIRM."

Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)

SFHA is another term used to describe high-risk flood zones. In an SFHA, there is a 1% chance of flooding every year, meaning there is at least a 1 in 4 chance of flooding during a 30-year mortgage. Zones in the SFHA start with either the letter A or V (VE, A, AE, & VO). Home and business owners in high-risk flood zones with a mortgage are required to purchase flood insurance.

V Zone

The V zone is a high-risk flood zone. The "V" stands for "velocity" because this zone can face damage from waves as well as from flooding. Property owners in V zones will likely be required to purchase flood insurance.

X Zone

The X zone is a moderate risk flood zone. Property owners in X Zone are not required to purchase flood insurance, unless they have received federal disaster assistance in the past.

Source: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/floodmaps/resources/glossary.page#firms>