

FLOOD CURRENT



Education Efforts Abundant and Fruitful



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Last January, the OWRB hosted an extremely successful week-long workshop for state floodplain officials entitled "Managing Floodplain Development Through the NFIP." Held in Norman under the tutelage of instructors Ken Morris, of the OWRB, and Lonnie Ward, with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the classes culminated in a two-hour examination for 31 local officials seeking to become Certified Floodplain Managers (CFMs). The CFM program, established by the Association of State Floodplain Managers, recognizes continuing education and professional development that enhance the knowledge and performance of local, state, federal, and private-sector floodplain managers. I'm happy to report that all 31 individuals who took the test passed, attesting to their advanced knowledge of NFIP standards and procedures and the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Act. I'd like to thank the members of the Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association, our partners in this effort, for making this workshop our most successful ever, as well as the OWRB's Rhonda Bowers, who reviewed the CFM applications and class enrollment procedures.

The OWRB's annual Floodplain 101 Workshops represent extremely beneficial training exercises. This year's sessions, held throughout the state in May, featured a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) representative who presented a short-course on the agency's Wetlands Restoration Program. Wetlands are just one of the many important benefits provided through Oklahoma's vital floodplain areas.

Through a proclamation signed recently by Gov. Henry, Oklahomans once again observed Flood Awareness Month in May, and Flood Insurance Month was celebrated in March. Each year, these proclamations provide critical assistance to the OWRB and our floodplain management partners in "getting the word out" about wise development and the persistent dangers posed by floodwaters.

Through a grant from Oklahoma Emergency

Management, the OWRB is compiling a database of repetitive loss structures in Oklahoma. Among associated tasks, staff will verify addresses, take digital photos, and obtain longitudes and latitudes of these structures. This information will prove vital in mitigating future flooding disasters, especially in securing funds to remove these structures from harm's way. On a related note, OWRB staff are revising the Guidebook for Local Floodplain Ordinance Administrators and working to develop Oklahoma's Floodplain Management 101 Textbook. These educational materials can be used as a home study course, CFM study guide, and textbook for the OWRB's Floodplain Management 101 workshops.

In April, the Governor signed legislation establishing accreditation standards for Oklahoma's floodplain administrators. The OWRB will administer the training accreditation provisions of the new law, House Bill 2284, which was introduced this session by Representative Thad Balkman and Senator Bruce Price. The bill will play a vital role in floodplain management



Severe flooding from more than five inches of rainfall on March 4 damaged some 278 residences, businesses, and other structures in the Town of Kingfisher. Water rose to nearly five feet in some areas of the community.

Spring Floodplain Workshops

The OWRB's floodplain administrator workshops, held each spring, are key aspects of the Board's continuing education and public information effort through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and are a primary focus of Oklahoma's annual statewide flood awareness campaign.

The five workshops held throughout Oklahoma (in McAlester, Lawton, Woodward, Bartlesville, and Midwest City) in May 2004 not only serve to provide community officials with the latest information concerning the operation and benefits of the NFIP, they point out the extreme importance of annual training to the local floodplain manager. Such training heightens confidence in the enforcement and administration of local flood ordinance and are key ingredients in the OWRB's goal of establishing ownership at the local level.

'McReady' for Floods

The McDonald's Corporation, Governor Brad Henry, and state emergency management officials and organizations are teaming up to increase awareness of severe weather preparedness in the state. To prepare Oklahomans for future weather emergencies, "McReady Oklahoma" will feature displays, brochures, and related educational materials at more than 140 McDonald's restaurants throughout the state. The brochures will convey information on floods, tornadoes, lightning, and other emergencies as well as measures to protect citizens and their families from those dangers. April was declared McReady Oklahoma Family Preparedness Month by Governor Henry.

"Over the years, we've seen more than our share of destruction caused by tornados and severe weather," said Governor Henry. "But many of us have also learned that being prepared and knowing what to do before the storm hits— saves lives. That's what this campaign is all about."

"We are honored to be part of this groundbreaking program," said Albert Ashwood, Director of Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management (ODEM), another McReady Oklahoma partner. "We've known for years that preparedness is the key to saving lives when it comes to severe weather. The McReady program allows us to drive the message home and better prepare families and entire communities." Other McReady partners include the American Red Cross, National Weather Service, Oklahoma Citizen Corps, Oklahoma Emergency Management Association, Oklahoma Floodplain Management Association, OG&E Electric Services, R.D. Flanagan & Associates, The Salvation Army, and Tulsa Mayor's Citizen Corps/Tulsa Partners, Inc.

May is Flood Awareness Month in Oklahoma

Flood Safety Tips

- Avoid walking through floodwater. Water only six inches deep can sweep you off your feet if it is moving swiftly.
- Do not drive into a flooded street. Cars can be swept away by two feet of moving water. If you come to a flooded area, turn around and go another way. Most flood-related deaths are caused by people driving through high water.
- Watch out for fire hazards. Be aware of broken or leaking gas lines, flooded electrical circuits, electrical appliances, and flammable materials coming from upstream.

After the Flood:

- Take care of yourself first. Protect yourself and your family from stress, fatigue, and health hazards that follow a flood.
- Dry out your home. Floodwaters damage materials, leave mud, silt and unknown contaminants, and promote the growth of mildew.
- Restore the utilities. Cleaning up after the flood will be much easier if you have heat, electricity, clean water, and sewage disposal.
- Clean up. The walls, floors, closets, shelves, contents and other flooded areas of your home should be thoroughly washed and disinfected.
- Rebuild and flood proof. Take time to rebuild correctly and make improvements that will protect your building from future floods.
- Prepare for the next flood. Protect yourself with flood insurance, a flood response plan, and community flood protection programs.

