

Subject: Governor Declares March Flood Insurance Month

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OKLAHOMA CITY - Each year in Oklahoma, thousands of citizens who experience flood damage lack the protection afforded through readily available flood insurance. To enhance awareness of the availability of federal flood insurance, as well as inform Oklahomans about intelligent floodplain management and development procedures, Governor Brad Henry has designated March as "Flood Insurance Month" in Oklahoma.

"All too often, property owners and renters become aware of flood insurance and other protection measures only after a flood has financially devastated them or their community," said Duane Smith, Executive Director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB)."

The Governor's proclamation provides the OWRB, insurance companies and emergency management organizations with a valuable opportunity to spread the word on the availability of relatively inexpensive flood insurance."

Smith added the timing of the Flood Insurance Month designation is appropriate because Oklahoma's spring flooding season is just around the corner. "Most flood insurance policies require a 30-day waiting period," he pointed out. "Because, historically, most of Oklahoma's flooding disasters have occurred during the spring, now is the time for those citizens who reside in designated floodplains to purchase flood insurance, if they have not already." Smith added that a flood insurance policy could be purchased from any licensed property insurance agent.

Of the 39 presidentially declared disasters in Oklahoma since 1955, 29 have involved flooding. In an effort to mitigate such emergencies, Governor Dewey Bartlett designated the OWRB as the agency to coordinate the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) in 1969. The NFIP assists Oklahomans and its 378 member communities by making flood insurance available at affordable rates and helping communities make wise decisions concerning floodplain use. To be eligible for flood insurance, participants must establish a floodplain board, recognize floodplain boundaries and restrict development in those areas. Such strategies typically result in reduced federal outlays to mitigate flood damages. The OWRB coordinates the NFIP in Oklahoma in a cooperative partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, Oklahoma Floodplain Managers Association and Oklahoma Insurance Department.

As an integral part of Oklahoma's spring flood insurance campaign, the OWRB is sponsoring one-day workshops throughout the state to update city, county and tribal floodplain administrators on NFIP compliance requirements and provide assistance in the development, administration and enforcement of local floodplain management regulations that guide floodplain development.

The Certified Floodplain Manager (CFM) exam will be offered to pre-approved candidates at the close of each training day.

There is no registration fee for the workshops, which feature speakers from the OWRB, Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,

Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality, City of Broken Arrow, Hydropower International Services, Meshek & Associates, the National Weather Service and RD Flanagan & Associates.

Training is the key, according to Gavin Brady, OWRB State Floodplain Manager. "I want to impress upon city and county officials the importance of regular training, at least annually. These educational opportunities not only help floodplain administrators better enforce local ordinances, they build confidence."

Additional information, including maps to each location, can be found at www.owrb.state.ok.us.

Sessions are scheduled for:

March 6

McAlester - 101 & 202

Eastern Okla. State College, Room 109

1802 E. College Avenue

March 14

Norman - 101

1704 Asp. Ave.

Oklahoma Center for Continuing Education University of Oklahoma March 20 Lawton -

101 & 202 Lawton Public Library 110 SW 4th March

22 Bartlesville - 101 Tri County Technology Center

6101 SE Nowata Road

March 27

Oklahoma City - 202

3800 N. Classen Blvd.

March 29

Woodward - 101 & 202

High Plains Institute of Technology

3921 34th St.

The OWRB also works closely with the Oklahoma Insurance Department (OID) to educate state property/casualty agents and adjusters on NFIP rules and procedures. Because the Water Board's workshops are accredited by the OID, agents and adjusters can earn up to six continuing education credits for attending at least one workshop every two years. Also, the Oklahoma Real Estate Commission will provide continuing education credits for the floodplain management 101 workshops for Real Estate Professionals who complete the appropriate forms available from their web site.

More than 88 percent of homes and businesses in the state that lie in the 100-year floodplain have no flood insurance, according to Brady. "It is disheartening relatively few people take advantage of the benefits afforded through the purchase of flood insurance, especially since it is inexpensive and offers such comprehensive protection against one of our most common natural disasters," he said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT:

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