



Flood Risk and Preparedness Public Information Committee



**NEW PORT
RICHEY**
FLORIDA

City of New Port Richey

Flood Risk and Preparedness Public Information Committee
An NFIP Program for Public Information

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Figure 1: Hurricane Idalia Rescue Efforts August 2023



Chapter 1: Background

History

Located in West Pasco County Florida, the City of New Port Richey was founded in 1924 on the banks of the Pithlachascotee River (Cotee River). With Sims Park and James E. Grey Preserve Park situated on the Cotee River, which allows access to the Gulf of Mexico, New Port Richey has historically been a river city. New Port Richey is 4.61 square miles with a population of 16,728, according to the 2020 census.



Figure 2: Original NPR Welcome Sign

NFIP and CRS

New Port Richey has participated in the National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) since 1993. The City currently holds a CRS rating of 7, but is striving to improve to a rating of 5 in 2024 and potentially lower in future cycle visits. As the City continues to grow in size, population and density, the evolving need to evaluate public information needs related to flooding, emergency management and resiliency has become more prevalent. Through the CRS Program for Public Information, the City will strive to better educate, inform and alert residents and business owners in a variety of subject matter.

Flood Risk

Located along the Gulf Coast of Florida, New Port Richey has been affected by numerous hurricanes including the recent, Hurricane Idalia, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Hermine. With a current total of 2949 acres of land within the City and 1307 acres, or 44%, within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA), the City has significant flood risk. The only two designated SFHA zones within the City are AE and A, with no coastal hazard V zones. Regardless, the proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and the Cotee River creates risk of storm surge, flash flooding and prolonged inundation. US Highway 19, located West of the Cotee River and East of the Gulf of Mexico, has also become a delineation between high flood risk and moderate flood risk. Neighborhoods West of US Highway 19 typically have lower natural grade, a higher Base Flood Elevation (BFE), and historically have flooded more frequently than neighborhoods to the East.

Chapter 2: Committee Members

The Community Rating System Manual details how a program for public information committee should be created. The Committee shall be comprised of at least five members of the community, with at least half of the members being stakeholders and not city staff. The manual also requires representation from the City’s floodplain management office, public information office, and a representative from the local insurance industry. Additionally, The Committee may have members or receive recommendations from city departments such as; emergency management, planning, public works, code enforcement, parks and recreation, and administration. Additional stakeholders may be; residents, real estate agents, developers, contractors, business organizations or non-profit emergency responders. The City is receptive to additional committee members, if the need arises or if stakeholders desire to serve.

With the adoption of this Flood Risk and Preparedness Public Information Committee, hereby known as “The Committee” by the City Council of New Port Richey, the following members hereby comprise The Committee.

Tammy Ledford	City Floodplain Management / CRS Coordinator
Judy Meyers	City Public Information Office
Mike Peters	Stakeholder Insurance Agent / Resident
Ashley Tharp	Stakeholder Insurance Agent
Dell DeChant	Stakeholder Chair of Environmental Committee
Billy Fernandez	Stakeholder Business Owner
Allan Safranek	Stakeholder Realtor / LDRB Board / Resident

Insert Picture

Chapter 3: Public Information Needs

The NFIP recognizes the need for targeted information to those who may otherwise be unaware of their flood risk. The Committee's primary objective is to identify these areas and decide the best action plan to disseminate the proper information. The CRS manual reiterates the importance of repetitive information in a variety of ways to drive home the imperativeness of being prepared. Figure 3 shows the damage assessment map prepared by City Staff in the wake of Hurricane Idalia. Idalia was one of the most significant natural disasters to affect the City in recent history, with flood waters rising multiple feet in many areas. This map is a cornerstone of the City's informational needs, as it displays the vulnerability of both riverfront homes built below flood elevations and homes West of US Highway 19.

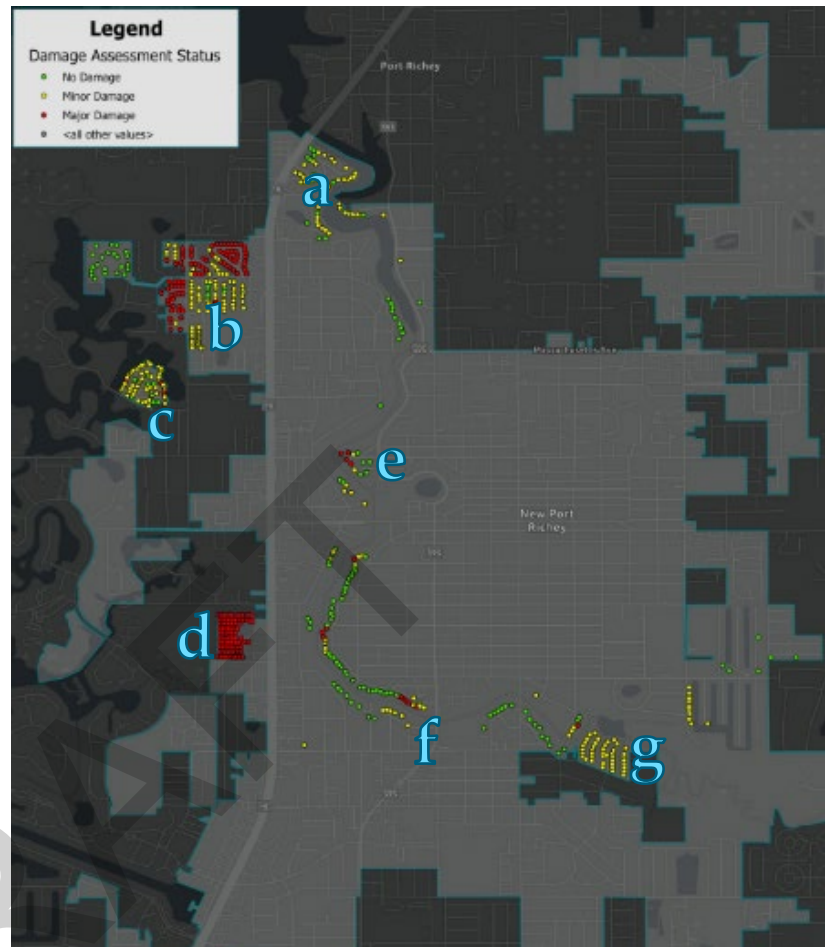


Figure 3: 2023 Idalia Flood Damage Map

Identify Priority Areas

After establishment, identifying priority areas is the next step in The Committee's objectives. The entire City of New Port Richey has some level of flood risk, but these identified areas shall be areas of focus. The CRS manual outlines potential priority areas, but they should be highly specific to the community needs. The Committee hereby establishes the following as priority areas:

1. **Flood prone areas** (legend on Figure 3)
 - a. Cotee River Heights
 - b. Oyster Bayou; *Jasmine Acres, Wedgewood Village, Gulf Coast Estates, Timber Woods, Jeriverne Plaza, Janczlik Subdivision*
 - c. Edgewater Gardens
 - d. Imperial Mobile Home Park
 - e. Sims Manor Estates
 - f. River Heights / River View Estates
 - g. Tropic Shores

2. Repetitive loss areas

Repetitive loss areas are portions of the community that have repetitive loss properties within the boundaries. Repetitive loss properties have had more than one flood claim within a 10-year period. As seen in Figure 4, many repetitive loss areas are the same as identified in Figure 3 as flood prone areas. This does not change the approach to information needs, but bolsters the need for these specific overlapping areas.

3. Mobile Home Parks

FEMA and the NFIP have recognized the risk of mobile homes within flood zones with the removal of the '36-inch rule' for qualified CRS communities. This rule in the Florida Building Code allows for substantially damaged mobile homes to be replaced at a height of 36 inches above grade. Currently, in order to qualify for participation in CRS, communities must remove this allowance in their local code. New Port Richey has removed this allowance and must now make strides to inform mobile home parks of their flood risk.

4. Evacuation zones A, B & C

Hurricanes Helene and Milton, which affected the city in August and October of 2024, proved that all evacuation zones must be taken seriously. Some residents in zone A chose to "ride it out" during Hurricane Helene and put themselves at great risk. The city saw storm surge between 6-9 feet during Hurricane Helene and hundreds of homes were destroyed or had major damage. 2 weeks later, during Hurricane Milton, mandatory evacuations were ordered for zones A, B & C and those same residents made the right choice and evacuated. This pair of storms had the highest impact on the city, in recent history, and demonstrated the importance of compliance with mandatory evacuation zones.

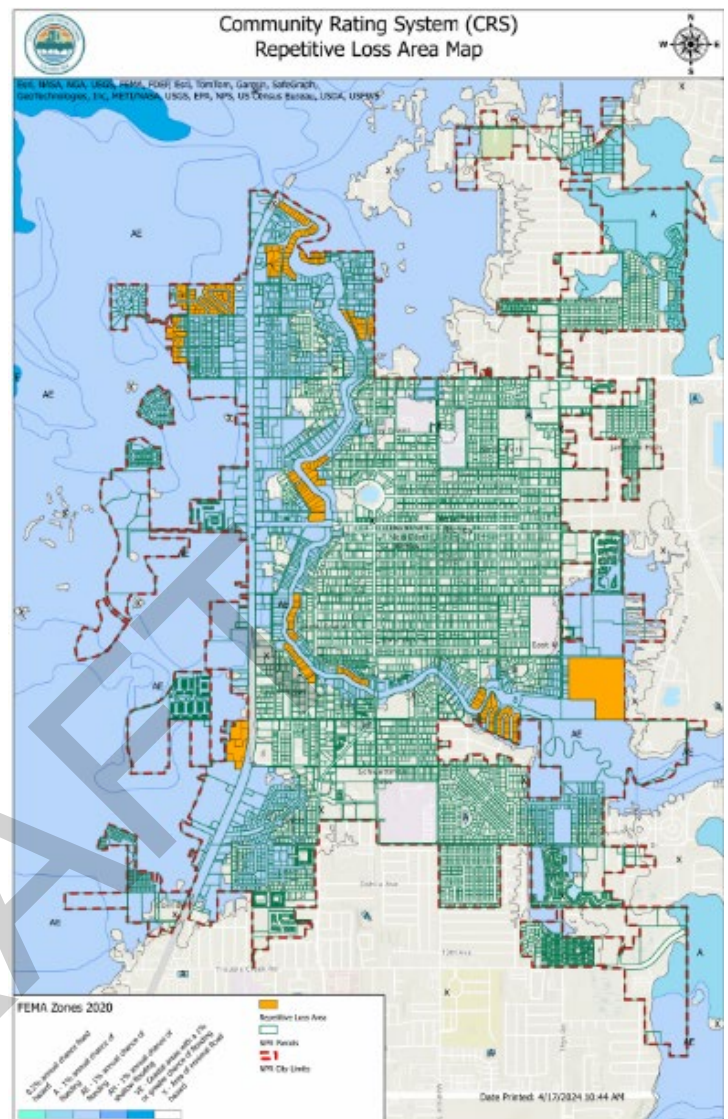


Figure 4: 2024 Repetitive Loss Areas

Determine Priority Audiences

Once priority areas are identified, The Committee shall identify priority audiences. These audiences can be related to the priority areas, but do not need to be. They can also be audiences from outside the community including; contractors, insurance agents, realtors, and residents of areas that directly surrounds the community that may be affected by the same issues. The Committee hereby establishes the following as priority audiences:

1. Residents of flood prone areas

Residents of flood prone areas are the primary audience for The Committee due to their inherit risk level. Most other audience's outreach work will be preventative in nature, but these residents are at risk now. These residents should have the most messages directed toward them. Chapter 6 will go into specific detail, but during a declared state of emergency, these residents should be the sole focus.

2. Residents of repetitive loss areas

As stated in priority areas, residents of repetitive loss areas are closely related to residents of flood prone areas and should be treated as such.

3. Owners of mobile homes and mobile home parks

Due to their construction, mobile homes pose a tremendous risk to inhabitants in times of rising flood waters. Electrical systems can fail, leaving residents without power or possibly electrify standing water. Their framing can also begin to fail with enough prolonged inundation. These residents can often have financial hardships and may have difficulty finding refuge in times of emergency and often choose to ride-it-out.



Figure 5: Residents of Imperial MHP after Hurricane Debby 2012

4. Owners of slab-on-grade homes

In New Port Richey, slab-on-grade homes are typically pre-FIRM built, where the concrete slab is poured directly onto the natural grade. These homes were built without consideration for flooding and pose considerable risk for both occupants and property loss.

5. Developers and contractors

As the origin of both well-built, flood resistant homes and poorly-built, flood prone homes, developers and contractors are where all structures in flood zones derive. Educating them is crucial for long-term resiliency and building rapport with them is the key to keeping New Port Richey flood resistant.

Inventory Other Public Information Efforts

Once the priority areas and audiences are established, The Committee shall examine other public information efforts. These efforts can be existing initiatives from City departments, FEMA, the Red Cross, Utility Companies and others. Although the CRS manual stresses the importance of reiterating messages across multiple information efforts, The Committee should not exactly duplicate work. An example would be; a door-to-door public information effort after a flood to inform residents of FEMA relief, when FEMA already sends representatives door-to-door to educate those affected. This should not be construed to omit FEMA relief information in flyers or brochures available all year. The Committee should glean information from and partner with other agencies, non-profits, and companies in their public information efforts.

The Committee hereby establishes the below public information efforts by other entities as available to New Port Richey residents, business owners, and stakeholders and will utilize the same.

NOAA	Homeowner's Handbook
NFIP	Flood Insurance Door Hangers
FDEM	Substantial Damage Notice to Owners
FEMA	Be Prepared for a Flood Flyer
Pasco County	Make a Plan Special Needs
FEMA	Increased Cost of Compliance Fact Sheet
NOAA	Extreme Weather Information Sheet
NFIP	Understanding Flood Loss Avoidance

Figure 6: Existing Public Information Table

Chapter 4: Community Messages

For each priority audience, The Committee shall determine what messaging to use, considering the specific needs of that audience. For instance, owners of mobile homes have different messaging needs than contractors. The CRS manual recognizes six (6) crucial topics to formulate specific messaging; know your flood hazard, insure your property for your flood hazard, protect people from the hazard, protect your property from the hazard, build responsibly, and protect natural floodplain functions. Each community may also choose up to four (4) additional topics for their needs. The topics shall be conveyed into messaging with desired outcomes.

Topic	Message	Outcome
1. Know your flood hazard	A. Your property is in a flood zone	Increase number of FIRM inquires
	B. Your property is in a repetitive loss area	Reduce repetitive loss properties
2. Insure your property	A. Everyone should have flood insurance	Increase number of flood insurance policies
	B. Renters should protect contents with flood insurance	Reduce damage to contents
3. Protect people	A. Know the flood warning signs	Reduce rescues and injury
4. Protect property	A. Elevate HVAC units	Reduced damaged units
	B. Protect you home before a storm	Reduce flood damaged homes
5. Build responsibly	A. Always check if you need a permit (Call Before You Hammer)	Reduce unpermitted structures in floodplain
6. Protect natural floodplains	A. Do not dump in the river or storm drains	Reduce waste in natural floodplains
	B. Report broken silt fences	Reduce pollutants in MS4 system
7. Travel Safe	A. Know your evacuation route	Decrease residents "riding it out"
	B. Protect Transportation	Decrease flooded vehicles
8. Be prepared	A. Have a hurricane go bag	Decrease resident evacuation time
	B. Sign up for alerts	Decrease residents "riding it out"

Figure 7: Community Topics and Messages Table

Chapter 5: Outreach projects

Outreach projects are the lifeblood of The Committee and how it intends to convey the topic messages to the proper audience and achieve the desired outcome. The CRS manual offers some suggestions on how to deliver these messages, but it is up to The Committee to decide on the best delivery methods for the community. Below are some of the City's ongoing outreach projects and potential future outreach projects. A complete messaging worksheet is included in the appendices.

Ongoing Outreach Projects

City Newsletter "The Bridge"

The City produces and distributes a quarterly newsletter titled "The Bridge". The Committee, primarily through committee member Alli Buckman, will disseminate flood risk information through each edition of The Bridge.

City Website (WEB)

The City will continue efforts to revamp the current flood information page of the City website. The Flood Information section of the website is readily available from the website homepage. The Flood Information page shall have, at a minimum, links to current public information efforts, a link to www.floodsmart.gov, and a link to FEMA's flood insurance page www.fema.gov/business.nfip. The website shall be checked by City staff monthly at a minimum to ensure accuracy and that all links are operational. This is credited under activity 352.c.

Mailers

The City will continue to send out mailers with flood information, as outlined on the outreach projects worksheet. These mailers will be general and specific in nature. The most current Flood Information brochure will be mailed out to all properties within the Special Flood Hazard Area at a minimum of once per year.

Social Media

The City will continue to utilize social media to communicate message related to flooding on a monthly basis. This avenue will be highly utilized during pre-event public information efforts, as outlined in Chapter 6. The City will promote all of its outreach events that receive credit under its Program for Public Information (PPI).

Door Hangers

The City will continue to utilize door hangers for pre and post event information. These will be primarily distributed in priority areas.

Annual Hurricane & Flood Expo

The City will continue to host an annual Hurricane Expo during the Pre-Hurricane Season, as outlined in Chapter 6. The Expo will include vendors related to flood preparedness.

Real Estate Brochures

The City will continue to partner with as many real estate offices that are willing, to distribute Real Estate Brochures on the importance of obtaining flood insurance and to research flood risk before purchasing real estate. The City will also have them available at **four (4)** buildings; City Hall - 5919 Main St, The Library 5939 Main St, The Rec Center 6630 Van Buren St, and The Police Department 6739 Adams St. This is also credited under activity 342.c.

Build Smart Brochures

The City will have the Build Smart Brochures available at **four (4)** buildings; City Hall - 5919 Main St, The Library 5939 Main St, The Rec Center 6630 Van Buren St, and The Police Department 6739 Adams St. These brochures cover the FEMA 50% rule, best practices to protect natural floodplains, floodplain regulations, and Increased Cost of Compliance opportunities.

Flood Protection Library (LIB) & Locally Pertinent Documents (LPD)

The City will have nine (9) FEMA publications on flood protection topics housed in the public Library. The City will have also have additional references on the community's flood problems housed in the public library. These are credited under activity 352.a and 352.b.

Flood Information Brochures

The City will have the Flood Information Brochures available at **four (4)** buildings; City Hall - 5919 Main St, The Library 5939 Main St, The Rec Center 6630 Van Buren St, and The Police Department 6739 Adams St. This brochure covers a broad spectrum of flood information for residents.

City Hall Flood Information Board

The City will dedicate an informational board to flood information in the main hallway at City Hall. This board is strategically placed near the billing department and has frequent foot traffic. The board will be updated quarterly at a minimum.

NFIP Understanding Flood Loss Avoidance flyer

The City will have the Understanding Flood Loss Avoidance flyer from NFIP available on the city website, city facilities and distributed as a part of the Flood Response section.

Stormwater inlets signage

The City will have all public stormwater inlets inscribed with signage to protect stormwater systems and natural waterway conveyances. This is also credited under activity 542.d.

River Cleanup Days

The City will advertise and host an annual cleanup day for the Cotee River. The amount of debris collected from the river will be documented and publicized. This is crucial to restoring and maintaining the natural floodways.

Neighborhood Cleanup Days

The City will continue to advertise and host a bi-annual neighborhood clean day. Allowing residents to dispose of large debris items, free of charge, will reduce the potential of dumping and impact on natural waterways, floodways and drainage.

Property Protection Advice(PPA) & Protection Advice Provided After a Site Visit (PPV)

The City will provide one-on-one advice about property protection and provide financial advice, such as Increased Cost of Compliance through FEMA and resiliency grant through Pasco County. The City will also make a site visit before providing the advice, as requested. This is credited under Activity 362.

LMS Working Group

City staff is part of the Pasco County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group and a signatory to the 2020 ALL Hazard Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. The City will offer input regarding specialized needs during the next update cycle.

Future Outreach Projects

Flood Awareness Week March 2025

The City will utilize Flood Awareness Week in March 2025 as an educational initiative for all City residents.

High water mark signage

The City will install high water mark signage in flood prone areas. This signage will alert residents where the highest water level was in a previous major flood event.

Local School Outreach - Early Education

The City will attempt to partner with local schools to give presentations or provide information on flood risks.

Publicizing Capital Improvement Projects

The City will publicize ongoing capital improvement projects via signage, social media and The Bridge.

Public Presentations

The City will attempt to partner with varying groups, agencies and/or associations to give presentations on flood issues.

CONA

Builders Association

West Pasco Board of Realtors

Chapter 6: Flood Response Public Information

Natural disaster events can be some of the most stressful times for residents and business owners. Although The Committee will operate throughout the year through different outreach projects, special care should surround hurricane season. The Committee will have four different phases during this time; pre-hurricane season, post-hurricane season, pre-event information and post-event information. The area, audience and messaging will depend on which phase the City is experiencing. This chapter will be credited under activity 332.b Flood Response Preparations (FRP). This messaging should be closely associated with the City's Emergency Management Operations.

Pre-Hurricane Season - April 1 - May 30

Ongoing Outreach Projects - The City will utilize its various ongoing outreach projects, outlined in Chapter 5, to communicate general and specific messaging to target areas and audiences.

Social Media - The City will utilize its various social media outlets to communicate flood and emergency related information. This information will include; evacuation zones, best practices for flood protection, planning ahead for hurricane season, etc.

Hurricane & Flood Expo - The City will host an annual Hurricane & Flood Expo. This will be open to the public and host numerous city departments, state and federal agencies and private organizations. The event will include booths that will communicate, demonstrate, and provide handouts on emergency response, flooding, insurance, utilities, construction, realty, and more.



Figure 8: 2024 New Port Richey Hurricane Expo

Pre-Event Information

Social Media - The City will utilize its various social media outlets to communicate flood and emergency related information. This information will include; evacuation orders, states of emergency, city specific hurricane impact projections, available hurricane shelters, city facilities available for resident use, among others.

Emergency alerts - The City will utilize Pasco County emergency text alerts, the Nixle text alert system and, in a mandatory evacuation situation, Police personnel to alert neighborhoods to evacuate.

Post-Event Information

Social Media - The City will continue to utilize it's social media outlets to communicate aftermath, cleanup, and rebuilding information.

Aftermath information - Damage assessment on private and public properties will begin as soon as possible after the storm by the Building Official and Inspectors. Structures will be marked as SAFE or UNSAFE to occupy and any specific comments will be inserted on the placard. Contact information will be inserted on the placard so property owners may follow up for individualized assistance.

Public Works Cleanup guides - Cleanup guides will be provided in person to affected areas during the damage assessment phase.

Door Hangers for Substantial Damage - Partnering with the City's Flood Risk and Preparedness Public Information Committee, if a property is determined to qualify under Substantial Damage, information on Substantial Damage and requirements for obtaining a building permit will be left with the homeowner or occupant.

Handouts for Increased Cost of Compliance (external) - The City will mail out the ICC handouts, as provided by FEMA, to affected residents.

Post-Hurricane Season - After November 30

The City will hold multiple meetings to debrief on the previous hurricane season and any events that occurred during that time. The City's Emergency Response Team will meet to discuss actionable items to improve operations, response, and city-wide preparation to any events that occurred. Those items will be communicated to the Committee which will then meet to discuss actionable items to improve messaging, communication, and any pitfalls in the Committee document. The Committee will recommend any changes in the document to the City Council.

Chapter 7: Program Adoption

The Community Rating System requires approval of this document so that it has formal, official status within the community.

Insert formal adoption of the Flood Risk and Preparedness Public Information Committee.

Annual Review, Evaluation and Re-Adoption

DRAFT

Appendices

Meeting Agendas

Minutes

Outreach Project Messages Worksheet

Flood Response Project Worksheet

External Public Information Efforts

Internal Public Information Efforts

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