

Guidance for Flood Risk Analysis and Mapping

Notice-to-User Revisions

May 2016



FEMA

Requirements for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning (Risk MAP) Program are specified separately by statute, regulation, or FEMA policy (primarily the Standards for Flood Risk Analysis and Mapping). This document provides guidance to support the requirements and recommends approaches for effective and efficient implementation. The guidance, context, and other information in this document are not required unless it is codified separately in the aforementioned statute, regulation, or policy. Alternate approaches that comply with all requirements are acceptable.

For more information, please visit the FEMA Guidelines and Standards for Flood Risk Analysis and Mapping webpage (www.fema.gov/guidelines-and-standards-flood-risk-analysis-and-mapping), which presents the policy, related guidance, technical references, and other information about the guidelines and standards development process.

Document History

Affected Section or Subsection	Date	Description
First Publication	May 2014	Initial version of new transformed guidance. The content was derived from the Guidelines and Specifications for Flood Hazard Mapping Partners, Procedure Memoranda, and/or Operating Guidance documents. It has been reorganized and is being published separately from the standards.
Second Publication	May 2016	General updates to the entire document; added information about dates on the NTU letter and discussed scenarios if an NTU is issued prior to the effective date of a study.

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1.0 Overview

The intent of a Notice-To-User (NTU) revision is to address an identified issue with a published Flood Insurance Study (FIS), Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), FIRM database, or the National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) dataset. NTU revisions are intended to update an incorrect or omitted component of a product listed above, but cannot be used to establish new or revised flood hazard information.

1.1 Types of Errors or Omissions Correctable by the NTU Process

An NTU may be used to correct an error or omission that diminishes the usefulness of a product (FIS, FIRM, FIRM database, or NFHL). Certain errors or omissions involving flood hazard information may also be corrected through the NTU process; however, an NTU cannot circumvent statutory due process requirements. The corrected products developed for an NTU should ideally be prepared by the Mapping Partner who introduced the error; however, the NTU request should be prepared by the Production and Technical Services (PTS) Quality Lead assigned to the specific FEMA Region in which the error or omission occurred.

Examples of issues that may be corrected by an NTU include, but are not be limited to:

- Incorrect map scale shown on the FIRM legend
- Incorrect map date in the FIRM title block
- Incorrect dates in the FIS report or FIRM legend
- Incorrect panel numbers or suffixes
- Incorrect Community Identification Number
- Incorrect road label on the FIRM
- Missing cross section label on the FIRM
- Incorrect file name on a product
- Projection issues in the FIRM database or NFHL
- Typographic errors in Base Flood Elevations (BFEs) on the FIRM
- Typographic errors in flood zone labels on the FIRM
- Errors or omissions in the FIRM database, including errors in the NFHL that originate in the FIRM database
- Missing or outdated tables or Flood Profiles in the FIS report
- Incorrect entries in the FIS report tables

FEMA has sole authority for determining if an NTU can be used to correct an issue. The FEMA Headquarters (HQ) Due Process Lead shall review all NTUs and make final decisions for approval. All NTUs will be reviewed individually and a course of action determined on a case by case basis.

2.0 Notice-to-User Process

The process steps for completing an NTU are outlined below and visually displayed in Figure 1.

2.1 Identifying the Need for an NTU

Issues can be identified by any stakeholder or user of the products. Generally, the Mapping Partner responsible for introducing the error will take the lead on coordinating with the PTS Quality Lead responsible for that specific region as soon as an issue is discovered. This should be done in advance of the request being raised for consideration to the FEMA HQ Due Process Lead.

2.2 NTU Request Process

If an error or omission is identified and an NTU is suggested, the following process should be followed:

- The Mapping Partner requesting the NTU should complete the Notice-to-User Request and Supporting Information Form available at: www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=7577.
- The follow items should be compiled if available:
 - Supporting documentation, such as relevant correspondence or notes
 - Screen shots showing the error or omission
 - Screen shots showing the proposed solution
- Once the NTU request form is complete, this should be provided to the PTS Quality Lead for the Region in which the NTU is occurring. This might create a situation in which the PTS Quality Lead is processing an NTU from another PTS provider or CTP. Proper coordination should accompany these examples.
- The PTS Quality Lead should inform the Region about the NTU and confirm their approval of the proposed solution. This can be done by the PTS Quality Lead or through the Regional Support Center (RSC).
- Upon FEMA Regional concurrence, the PTS Quality Lead should upload all supporting information (i.e. NTU request form, supporting information, etc.) to NTU folder on the FEMA SharePoint site (riskmapportal.msc.fema.gov), fill out the NTU Tracking spreadsheet (located in the same location on SharePoint) and inform the FEMA HQ Due Process Lead the NTU is ready for review.

The FEMA HQ Due Process Lead should review the information and either approve or disapprove the NTU request. If approved, the PTS Quality Lead will follow the steps outline below. If disapproved, the HQ Due Process Lead should propose if the corrections can be made through a future PMR or LOMR, or defer the update until a later time and noted in the Coordinated Needs Management Strategy (CNMS) database.

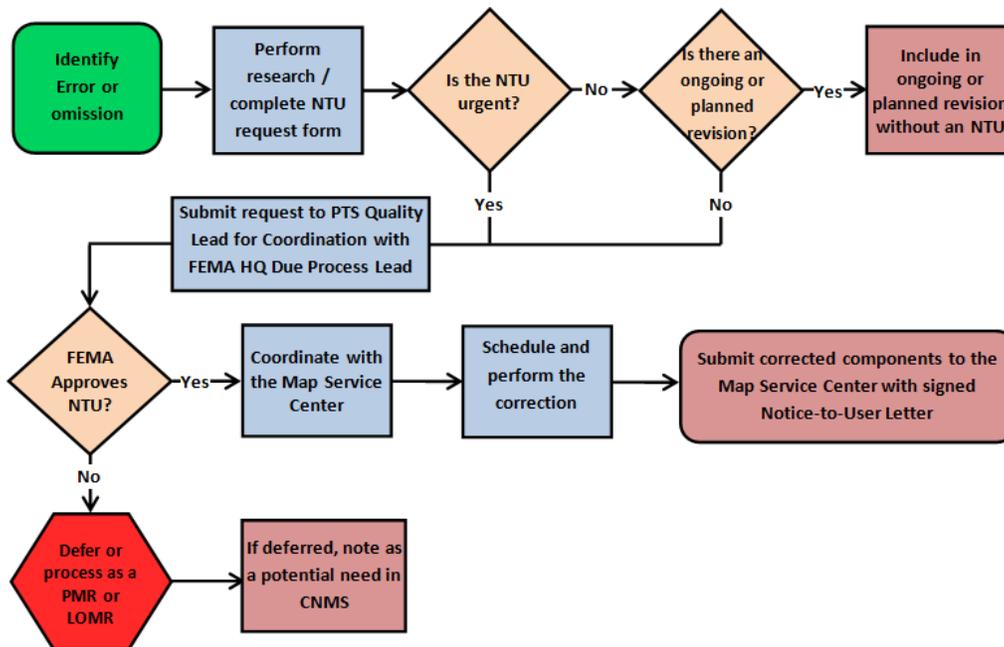


Figure 1: Notice-to-User Process

2.3 Product Corrections

If the NTU request is approved, the PTS Quality lead should inform the Mapping Partner, who should then make the proposed corrections to the affected products. When complete, the updated products should be delivered to the PTS Quality Lead processing the NTU, who will perform a quality review. The purpose of the review is to make sure the information has been updated in accordance with the NTU request approved by FEMA.

2.4 Preparation of the NTU Letter

The PTS Quality Lead should then prepare a draft version of the NTU letter. The NTU letter is made to inform the end users why they are receiving updated versions of the products. A template letter is available here: www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=7577.

It is important to consider the date on which the NTU letter and revised products will be delivered to the affected communities. There are two scenarios: 1) if the NTU is delivered after the effective date of the study or 2) if the NTU is delivered before the effective date of the study but after the Letter of Final Determination (LFD) date. Any omission or error discovered before the LFD date should be handled by the Mapping Partner as part of the Flood Risk study.

If the NTU will be issued after the effective date of the study, the PTS Quality Lead and the Mapping Partner should coordinate to project a future date in which the products will be released by the Map Service Center (MSC). While there is no specific timeframe defined, it is suggested the projected date occur approximately 1 month from the time the NTU is approved

by HQ, although that date may be adjusted as needed. The selected date will be listed on the NTU letter and displayed on the revised products (see section 7).

If the NTU will be issued before the effective date of the study but after the LFD, the date on the NTU letter should be projected for approximately 1 to 2 weeks before the effective date of the Flood Risk study. The revised products will **not** display an NTU note or NTU date.

Once the date has been determined for either option, a copy of the draft letter should be uploaded to the NTU folder on the FEMA SharePoint site. An email should be sent to the FEMA HQ Due Process Lead requesting a review of the NTU products and letter.

2.5 Submittal to the Map Service Center

If the FEMA HQ Due Process Lead approves the NTU letter, the PTS Quality Lead should begin coordination with the MSC Lead, who is often a member of the Customer Data Services (CDS) Team, and the NFHL Lead. The PTS Quality Lead should utilize a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site of his or her choosing to send the revised products and NTU letter to the CDS and NFHL Team Lead. CDS will assist in placing the updated products in the proper location on the Mapping Information Platform (MIP) and make them available on the MSC.

If the FIRM database is affected by the NTU, the entire database (all tables and layers, not just the corrected ones) should be provided as part of the NTU. The delivery should include all database formats previously delivered as part of the original Flood Risk study.

If the NTU is a pre-effective scenario, sufficient time should be given to have the corrected products mailed out before the effective date. The CDS Team may provide a deadline for submitting the corrected products to ensure timely printing and delivery.

Once all the products and NTU letter have been provided to the CDS Team and NFHL Lead, the PTS Quality Lead will send a final email to Mapping Partner, CDS, the NFHL Lead, and HQ Due Process Lead informing everyone the NTU is ready to be processed and provide the selected date.

The CDS Team will reproduce the corrected products and distributes the NTU Letter and products to all communities that received the original products. The CDS Team will remove or overwrite the incorrect products on the MSC website. The NFHL Lead will be responsible for incorporating any applicable revisions into the NFHL.

3.0 Coordination with the National Flood Hazard Layer

If an NTU includes corrections to the FIRM database, the corrected database must be incorporated into the NFHL.

When updating the NFHL with NTU data, the Region NFHL team should update the DB_REV date and send the revision to the NFHL team with a submission type of "NTU" in the delivery manifest. This is necessary for the CDS Quality Control (QC) tool to check the DB_REV against the highest date value in the L_PAN_REVIS table instead of the S_FIRM_PAN table. See section 4.3 of this guidance document for more information on managing the FIRM database corrections associated with an NTU.

4.0 Referencing the NTU Correction on the FIS, FIRM and FIRM Database

If an NTU is released after the effective date of a study, a reference to the NTU should appear on the FIS Report, applicable FIRMs, FIRM index or in the FIRM database. There should be only one NTU note per product. If there are multiple NTUs, only the latest NTU date should be listed. The date added to the product should be the same as listed on the NTU letter. Examples are described below.

4.1 FIS Report

The following guidance applies to FIS reports being corrected via an NTU:

- **Cover Page:** The 2003 and 2013 format FIS reports should display a note on the cover page (Figures 2 and 3), shown is 12 point Franklin Gothic Medium reading “Reprinted with corrections on [date]”.
- **Notice-to-User Page (2003 format only):** The FIS report includes a note on the Notice-to-User page (behind the report cover), below the historical FIS date listings, using the same font as the date listings. The note should read:

This FIS report was reissued on [date] to make a correction; this version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.
- **Section 1.4 (2013 format only):** After the first bulleted item identifying that part or all of the FIS report is revised and republished, add an additional bullet which reads:

This FIS Report was reissued on [date] to make a correction. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details. This version replaces any previous versions.

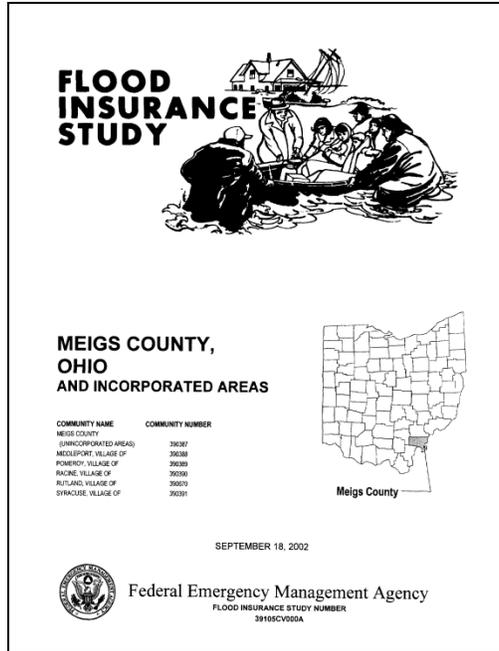


Figure 2: 2003 Format FIS Report with NTU

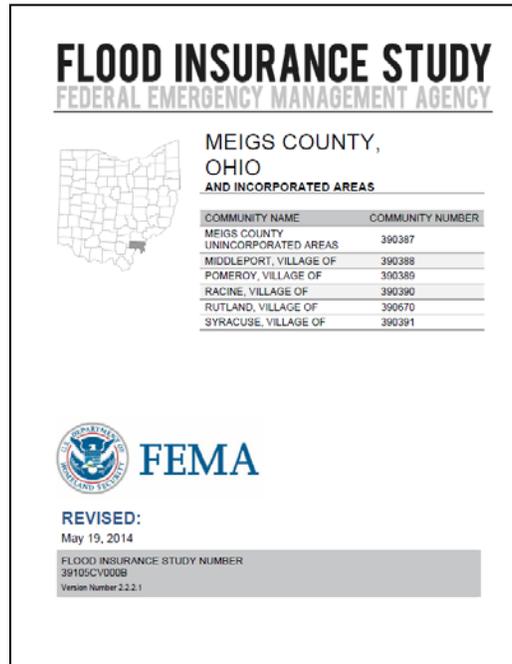


Figure 3: 2013 Format FIS Report with NTU

4.2 FIRM Panel and Index

- **FIRM Panel (2003 format):** The FIRM panel title block should include the following note in black 7 point Arial Caps Lower Case (CLC):

Notice: This map was reissued on [date] to make a correction. This version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.

The note should be located above the Notice-to-User note in the Title Block (Figure 4). If space is not available in the title block, the note should be located near the title block in the body of the map.

- **FIRM Panel (2013 format):** The FIRM panel title block should include the following note in 9 point Franklin Gothic Medium CLC:

Notice: This map was reissued on [date] to make a correction. This version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.

The note should be located above the version number (Figure 5). If space is not available in the title block, the note should be located near the title block in the body of the map.

- **FIRM Index (2003 format):** The FIRM Index title block should include the following note in black 7 point Arial CLC:

Notice: This FIRM Index was reissued on [date] to make a correction. This version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.

When space is not available in the title block, the note should be located as close as possible to the title block in the body of the map (Figure 6).

- **FIRM Map Index (2013 format):** The FIRM Index should include the following note above the FIRM Map Index title block in black 8 point Franklin Gothic Medium CLC (Figure 7):

Notice: This FIRM Index was reissued on [date] to make a correction. This version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.

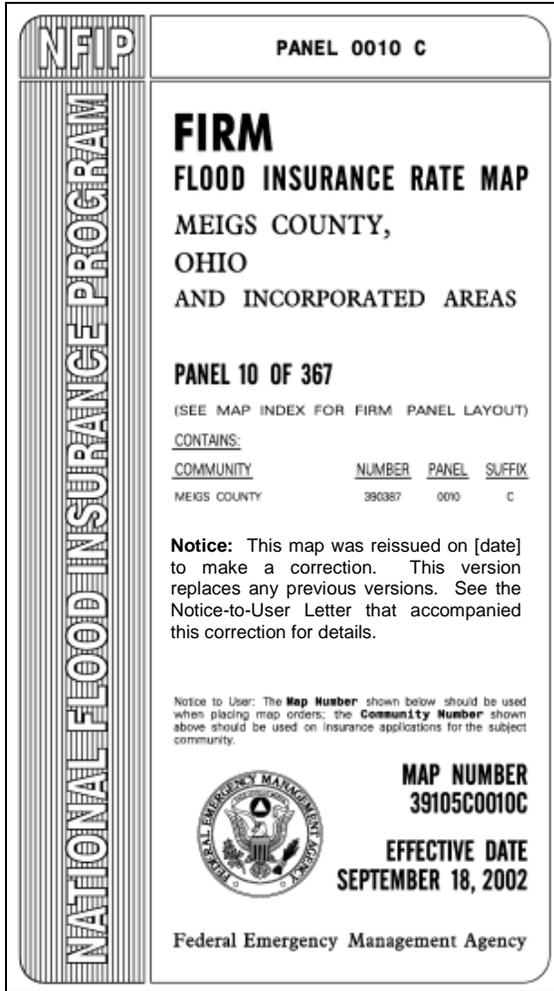


Figure 4: 2003 Format FIRM Title Block with NTU Notation

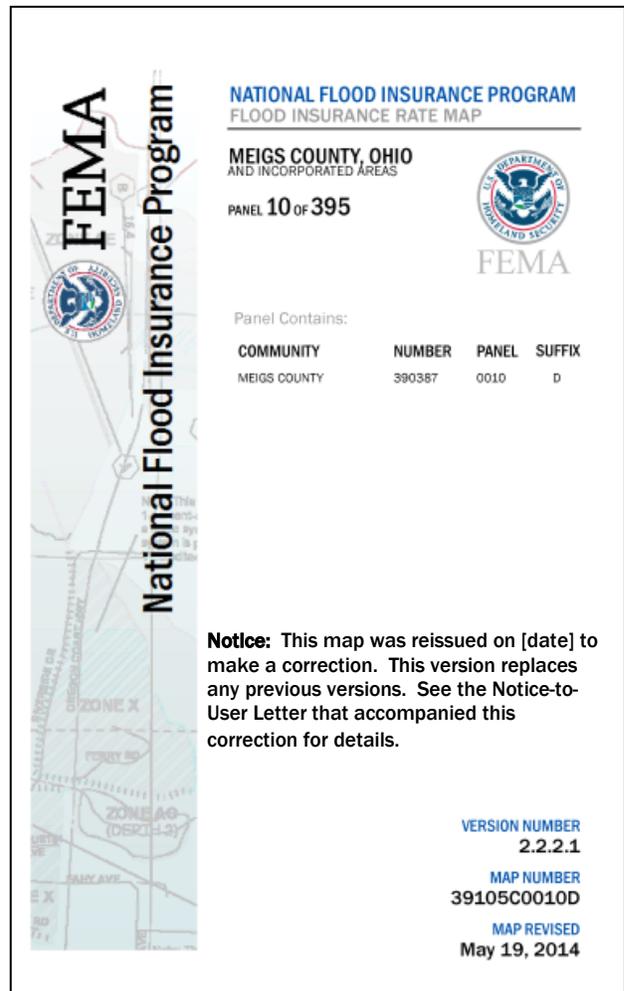


Figure 5: 2013 Format FIRM Title Block with NTU Notation

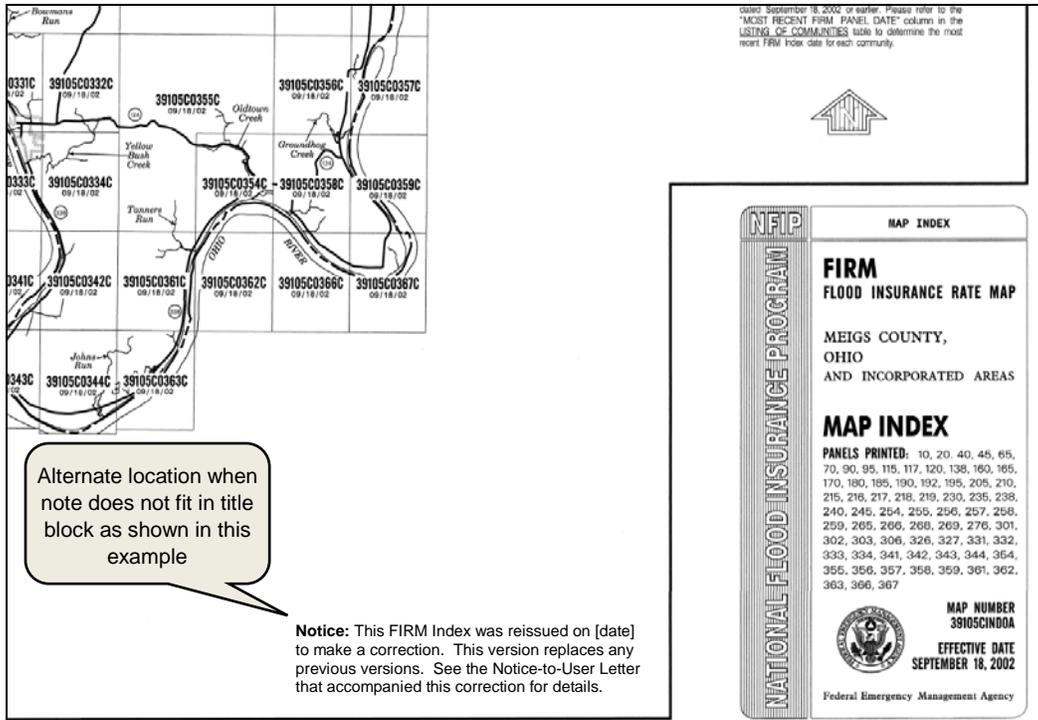


Figure 6: 2003 Format FIRM Index with NTU Notation

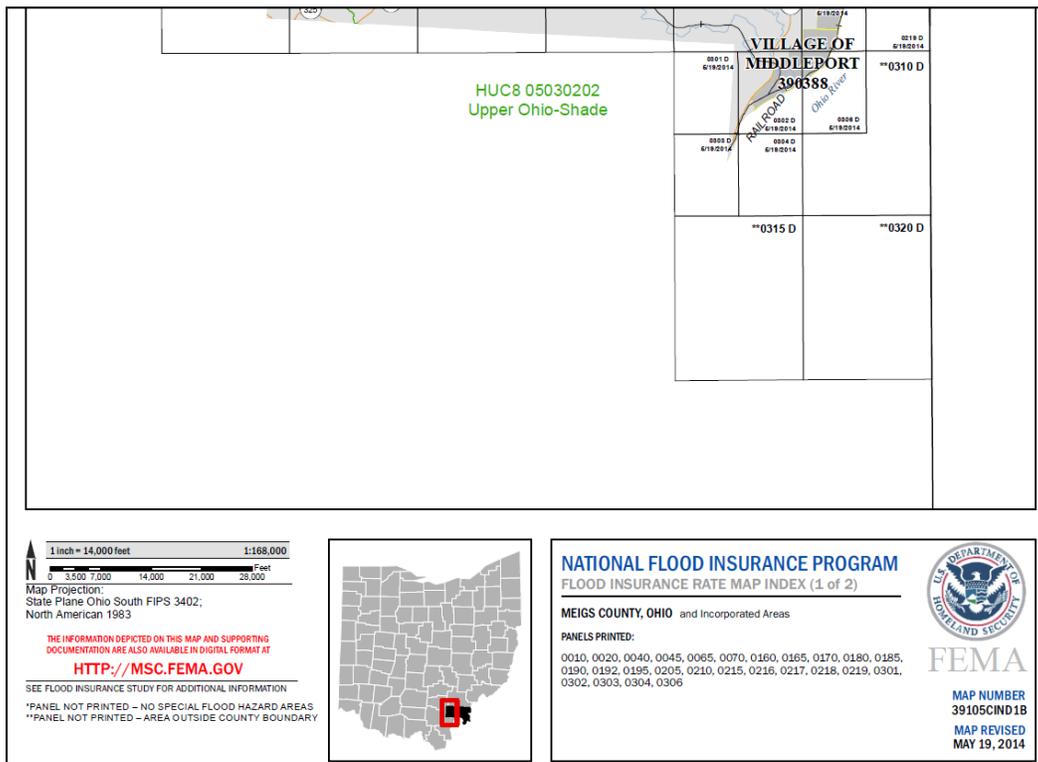


Figure 7: 2013 Format FIRM Index with NTU Notation

4.3 FIRM Database

When correcting the FIRM database through an NTU, the following steps should be used to affirm that a corrected database is issued.

- **2003, 2011, and 2013 Schema FIRM Database:** A new record is added to the L_PAN_REVIS table for each corrected FIRM panel.
 - If this table was not previously part of the FIRM database, a record is created and the table submitted with the other NTU products (if applicable).
 - If the FIS or the FIRM Database is revised as part of the NTU, “FIS” or “FIRM DB” is entered in this table in the FIRM Panel ID field. All fields in this table are required.
 - The REVIS_DATE matches the NTU reissuance date on the FIRM panels, FIRM Index, and FIS report (if applicable).
 - The same revision note used on the actual FIRM, FIRM Index, or FIS report is placed in the FIRM DB REVIS_NOTE field in the L_PAN_REVIS table for revisions to these products. The REVIS_NOTE for FIRM Database revision reads:

Notice-to-Users: This FIRM database was reissued on <date> to make a correction. This version replaces any previous versions. See the Notice-to-User Letter that accompanied this correction for details.

- NTU notations in FIRM DB will stack in the L_PAN_REVIS table if there are multiple NTUs for a dataset.
- PTS RFHL teams incorporate FIRM database revisions into the NFHL, update the DB_REV date as usual, and send the revision to the CDS NFHL team with a submission type of “NTU” in the delivery manifest. This submission type notation is necessary for the CDS QC tool to correctly check the DB_REV against the highest date value in the L_PAN_REVIS table instead of the S_FIRM_PAN table as with normal submissions.