Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Floodplain Considerations for Temporary Critical Facilities

Release Date: Apr 13, 2020

Even a slight chance of flooding can pose too great a threat to the delivery of services provided by a temporary critical facility. Examples include temporary medical services which are not limited to hospitals, medical sheltering, and mortuary facilities. In many situations, these critical facilities are likely to have occupants who may not be sufficiently mobile to evacuate in order to avoid injury or death during a flood. Site considerations for such facilities must include an evaluation of flood risk.

All critical facilities—including those of a temporary nature—should be located outside all high-risk flood hazard areas, including Zones V and A and Shaded X. Specifically, these facilities or uses should not be located in the Coastal High Hazard Area (including Zone V), the entire Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA, or 1-percent-annual-chance flood hazard area), or the 0.2-percent-annual-chance flood hazard area (including shaded X zones).

For assistance provided for emergency work, FEMA complies with the spirit of Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management to the extent practicable. To minimize the impacts of floods on human health, safety, and welfare, if a critical facility must be located in a high-risk flood hazard area, it should be designed to higher protection standards (if possible, for a temporary facility) and have flood evacuation plans.

The following steps should be taken when considering the placement of a temporary facility providing medical services or other critical facility to determine if the function, building systems, and equipment can remain operational in the event of a flood:

- Determine if the site, as well as ingress and egress to the site, is in a Coastal High Hazard Area (Zone V), the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA, or 1-

percent-annual-chance flood hazard area), or the 500-year floodplain (0.2-percent-annual-chance flood hazard area);

- If the site is located in any of these high-risk flood hazard areas, the facility should not be located at that site.
- If no practicable alternative sites exist, and the site must be used, an assessment of the type of flood hazards at the site should be conducted (e.g., flood velocity, flood depth, wave action, etc.), practicable opportunities for flood mitigation assessed, and a flood evacuation plan/emergency plan developed.
- The emergency plan should include a plan for site evacuation and contingency for loss of facility's function in the event the facility is damaged and can no longer serve its intended purpose.

Additional Resources

For more information, visit the Office of Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation on FEMA.gov.

For more information, visit FEMA Floodplain Management on FEMA.gov.

For more information about FEMA's Public Assistance and the COVID-19 response, contact your State Emergency Management Agency or tribal office or visit FEMA.gov/coronavirus.