

Community Rating System Overview and Participation

Release Date: Jun 30, 2021

The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) [Community Rating System \(CRS\)](#) was implemented in 1990 as a voluntary program for recognizing and encouraging community floodplain management activities that exceed minimum NFIP standards. Any community fully compliant with NFIP floodplain management requirements may apply to join the CRS.

Over 1,500 Communities Participate in the CRS

The CRS has 1,520 communities throughout the United States that participate in the program by implementing local mitigation, floodplain management, and outreach activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. These CRS communities have over 3.6 million policyholders, accounting for more than 70% of all NFIP flood insurance policies.

Under the CRS, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reward community actions that meet the three goals of the CRS:

1. Reduce flood damage to insurable property
2. Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP
3. Encourage a comprehensive approach to floodplain management

CRS Class Ratings

The CRS uses a Class rating system that is similar to fire insurance rating to determine flood insurance premium reductions for residents. CRS Classes are rated from 9 to 1. Today, most communities enter the program at a CRS Class 9 or Class 8 rating, which entitles residents in Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) to a 5% discount on their flood insurance premiums for a Class 9 or a 10% discount for Class 8. As a community engages in additional mitigation activities, its



residents become eligible for increased NFIP policy premium discounts. Each CRS Class improvement produces a 5% greater discount on flood insurance premiums for properties in the SFHA.

CRS Class changes occur on April 1 and October 1 of each year. The data contained in this fact sheet were current through April 2021. A list of CRS communities is available on the [CRS webpage](#).

CRS Credit

A community accrues points to improve its CRS Class rating and receive increasingly higher discounts. Points are awarded for engaging in any of 19 creditable activities, organized under four categories:

1. Public Information
2. Mapping and Regulations
3. Flood Damage Reduction
4. Warning and Response

Overview of Activities Credited Under the CRS

Public Information

- **Activity 310 (Elevation Certificates)** - Maintaining construction certificates and making them available to the public
- **Activity 320 (Map Information Service)** - Providing Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) and other map information, and publicizing that service.
- **Activity 340 (Hazard Disclosure)** - Real estate agents' advising potential purchasers of floodprone property about the flood hazard, and local regulations requiring disclosure of the hazard
- **Activity 350 (Flood Protection Information)** - Maintaining a community public library and/or website that contains flood-related information
- **Activity 360 (Flood Protection Assistance)** - Advising property owners and renters about how to protect buildings from flooding and publicizing that service
- **Activity 370 (Flood Insurance Promotion)** - Assessing flood insurance coverage in the community and implementing a plan to promote flood insurance



Mapping & Regulations

- **Activity 410 (Floodplain Mapping)** - Developing regulatory maps for areas not mapped by FEMA or flood mapping based on future conditions, detailed topography, or other standards
- **Activity 420 (Open Space Preservation)** - Keeping floodprone land free of development
- **Activity 430 (Higher Regulatory Standards)** - Regulations that exceed the NFIP's minimum criteria for floodplain management
- **Activity 440 (Flood Data Maintenance)** - Gathering and/or maintaining more accessible, useful, and/or accurate floodplain data for regulation, insurance rating, hazard disclosure, and property appraisals
- **Activity 450 (Stormwater Management)** - Watershed planning and regulations that prevent future development from increasing flood hazards or diminishing water quality

Flood Damage Reduction

- **Activity 510 (Floodplain Management Planning)** - Adoption of flood hazard mitigation and/or natural functions plans using the CRS planning process, and/or conducting repetitive loss area analyses
- **Activity 520 (Acquisition and Relocation)** - Acquiring insurable buildings and relocating them out of the floodplain, and leaving the property as open space
- **Activity 530 (Flood Protection)** - Protecting buildings from flood damage by floodproofing, elevation, or minor structural projects
- **Activity 540 (Drainage System Maintenance)** - Annual inspections of channels and retention basins, and maintenance of the drainage system's flood-carrying and storage capacity

Warning and Response

- **Activity 610 (Flood Warning and Response)** - Timely warning of flood threats and coordinating flood response activities.
- **Activity 620 (Levees)** - Annual levee inspection programs and plans to respond to floods caused by levee failure
- **Activity 630 (Dams)** - State dam safety programs and plans to respond to flooding caused by dam failure.



Formulas and adjustment factors are used to calculate credit points for each activity. There are several CRS program requirements for all communities. All CRS program requirements and credit opportunities can be found in the *CRS Coordinator's Manual* and the *2021 Addendum to the CRS Coordinator's Manual*, available on the [CRS webpage](#).

Benefits of the CRS

Lower-cost flood insurance rates are only one of the rewards a community receives from participating in the CRS. Here are some other benefits:

- Citizens and property owners in CRS communities have increased opportunities to learn about risk, evaluate their individual vulnerabilities, and take action to protect themselves, as well as their homes and businesses.
- CRS floodplain management activities provide enhanced public safety, reduced damage to property and public infrastructure, and avoidance of economic disruption and loss.
- Communities can evaluate their flood programs against a nationally recognized benchmark.
- Technical assistance in carrying out some activities is available to community officials at no charge.
- CRS communities have incentives to maintain and improve their flood programs over time.

CRS Training

CRS Specialists are available to assist community officials in applying to the program and in designing, implementing, and documenting the activities that earn even greater premium discounts. A week-long CRS course for local officials is offered free at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) on the National Emergency Training Center campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and can be field deployed in interested states. A series of webinars is offered throughout the year.

How to Apply



To apply for CRS participation, a community must initially inform the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Regional Office of its interest in applying to the CRS and will eventually submit a CRS application, along with documentation that shows it is implementing the activities for which credit is requested. The application is submitted to the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO)/CRS Specialist. ISO works on behalf of FEMA and insurance companies to review CRS applications, verify communities' credit points, and perform program improvement tasks.

A community's activities and performance are reviewed during a verification visit. FEMA establishes the credit to be granted and notifies the community, the State, insurance companies, and other appropriate parties.

Each year, the community must verify that it is continuing to perform the activities that are being credited by the CRS by submitting an annual recertification. In addition, a community can continue to improve its CRS Class rating by undertaking new mitigation and floodplain management activities that earn even more points.

For More Information

A list of resources is available at the [CRS webpage](#). For more information about the CRS, email the Community Rating System team at fema-crs@fema.dhs.gov.

