Decommissioning of the Digital Flood Insurance Rate Map (DFIRM) Tools
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Since its initial deployment in June 2004, FEMA's Mapping Information Platform (MIP) has continued to grow and evolve to support the goals of FEMA and other mapping stakeholders.

After a thorough analysis, FEMA has decided to decommission the existing DFIRM Tools currently available on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Mapping Information Platform (MIP). In an effort to align this initiative with the planned system migration, any projects that are not scheduled to be completed by July 31, 2010 must be removed from the DFIRM Tools environment by then. And, effective immediately, FEMA has also decided that mapping partners should not start any new projects using these tools.

Below is a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about the decommissioning.

1. What are the DFIRM Tools?

   The DFIRM Tools are a suite of centrally-hosted flood map production tools that work with Geographic Information System (GIS) data and are used to produce Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps (DFIRMs). The tools were created during FEMA's Map Modernization (Map Mod) program in an effort to transform the nation's flood maps into a more reliable, easier-to-use, and readily available product.

2. Who is affected by FEMA's decision to decommission the DFIRM Tools?

   Affected users include any mapping partner who uses, or is planning to use, the DFIRM Tools in order to complete flood mapping projects. This includes Production and Technical Services (PTS), Cooperating Technical Partners (CTPs) and legacy Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contractors.

3. Why are the DFIRM Tools being decommissioned?

   The DFIRM Tools are being decommissioned because:

   - They are based upon Environmental Systems Research Institute's (ESRI) 8.3 software platform, which is an older version of the ESRI GIS software that has reached its end of life and is no longer going to be supported. The planned upgrade to ESRI 9.2 was not put into production due to technical problems that were never resolved.

   - Using tools built on an unsupported platform may impact the ability of all mapping partners to perform their work on schedule.

   - It has become more difficult to support or restore the tools if they go offline because of limited software support and documentation on the custom code and the production environment.

- Other mapping tools now exist in the market that are based on current technology and offer enhanced functionality.

- They require a large number of servers to be hosted and maintained.

4. **Why was July 31, 2010 chosen as the cut-off date?**

This date was chosen to correspond with the migration of the MIP to a new hosting facility, which is in alignment with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) information technology (IT) vision. The existing DFIRM Tools servers and software will not be migrated to the new facility.

5. **Is there any chance that the DFIRM Tools will be available past July 31, 2010?**

No, as extending this date would cause FEMA to pay for multiple hosting facilities and run software that is no longer supported by the manufacturer.

6. **Can the DFIRM Tools be modified so they can be used locally?**

FEMA is not planning to fund a modification of the DFIRM Tools since there would be a need for mapping partners to purchase local licenses for ESRI's ArcGIS 8.3, ArcSDE 8.3, Job Tracking Extension (JTX), Oracle and Label EZ, and manage the local environment they are loaded in.

7. **What other tools are available to complete ongoing flood mapping projects?**

FEMA is working with the Risk MAP contractors to develop a list of available tools mapping partners may use. The current list includes ArcGIS and Flood Map Desktop (FMD9). We will update the list as other tools are identified. Please alert us to any additional tools that are available to other mapping partners.

8. **Can the project files in .mxd format be exported from the DFIRM Tools?**

No. The individual .mxd files are not stored within the DFIRM Tools environment because they are recreated on the fly when the application is opened.

9. **What data can be exported from the DFIRM Tools?**

The GIS features and the annotation/labels that have been placed on each panel can be exported from the DFIRM Tools and used with other mapping tools.

10. **How can data be exported from the DFIRM Tools?**

This depends on if and how the data needs to be reformatted to work with another set of tools. Mapping partners may export data using the Database Exporter tool within the DFIRM Tools suite, which will produce data in Appendix L-compliant

preliminary and final schema. If there is a specific format that the data must be in, or if the mapping partner would like the annotation/labels to be exported, a request must be made to MIP Help (miphelp@riskmapcds.com) specifying these requirements.

11. What assistance will the PTS contractors provide?

PTS providers will work with their assigned FEMA Regions to provide technical assistance in defining the issue. The RSCs will assist in developing a detailed list of affected studies and mapping partners and work with the Region and the partner to develop the most effective solution for their case. They will also provide information on the technical and business issues associated with the use of any tool sets that might be available. They will assist in coordination with other PTS teams and other tool providers on technical issues. Additionally, the PTS contractors will work with the CDS contractor in developing guidance on how to move their projects from the MIP DFIRM Tools to other mapping platforms.

12. What assistance will the Customer and Data Services (CDS) contractor provide?

CDS will provide individual assistance to mapping partners who need help in exporting the data from the DFIRM Tools. In addition, they will work with the PTS contractors to develop and distribute user guidance on how to move projects out of the existing tools and into new tools. CDS will also host a series of "Lunch and Learns" for mapping partners where the PTS contractors will demonstrate available tool options and provide guidance for transitioning to the new tools.

13. How will projects that are contractually obligated to be performed in the DFIRM Tools be handled?

A list of these studies will be compiled and FEMA will work with the mapping partners to determine the best course of action for each study in order to minimize any impacts to costs and schedules.

14. What will it cost to migrate projects from the DFIRM Tools into other tools?

Some of this depends upon the tools that the mapping partner chooses, but an initial estimate is that this will initially cost somewhere between $4-5K per study. These costs may decrease once the tools and processes become more established. Other possible costs that may vary on a case-by-case basis could include training costs, licensing costs and other associated costs.

15. Will the explorer function remain active from the DFIRM Tools site?

Yes, the explorer function will remain so mapping partners can access information on the MIP.

16. Is there a planned archive of the data remaining on the old server after July 31, 2010?

We will make a final backup of the data and archive that information. However, the expectation is that the mapping partners will have migrated all active jobs from the DFIRM Tools environment before July 31, 2010.

17. Will guidance be provided to mapping partners on converting the annotation exported with the PGDB to a format compliant with the *Guides and Specs*?

Map Text has confirmed that we will be able to make their fonts available to the mapping partners under the condition that these fonts are not modified and they are not going to be used for other projects. Once the new font file is loaded into ArcGIS, all of the labels should be compliant with the *Guides and Specs*.