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

Since its initial deployment in June 2004, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 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 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?

Two options are ArcGIS and Flood Map Desktop (FMD9). Please alert us to any additional tools that are available to mapping partners.

8. Can the project files in .mxd format 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.

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. User guidance on migrating projects can be found on the MIP Web site (https://hazards.fema.gov) under *News and Highlights*.

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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 Regional Service Centers (RSC) will assist in developing a detailed list of affected studies and mapping partners and help 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 Customer and Data Services (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 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 cost and schedule.

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. FEMA Regional Offices should plan to fund these costs from their FY10 allocations. Contractors should discuss cost concerns with their FEMA project manager.

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 fonts are available to 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*. They are availabe on the MIP Web site (https://hazards.fema.gov) under *News and Highlights*.

18. What is the process to get projects out of the DFIRM Tools?

Please refer to the *User Guidance for Removing Jobs from the DFIRM Tools* for information on migrating your projects out of the tools. The guidance is located on the MIP > News and Events > Latest News on the Decommissioning of FEMA's DFIRM Tools > Resources Available.

19. If we have projects in the DFIRM Tools that are out for prelim, will we have to re-annotate?

No, since the annotations are stored in ESRI annotation features classes and CDS made arrangements that allow mapping partners to use the Map Text fonts. The font files are included with the DFIRM Tools information template that is available on the *Latest News on the Decommissioning of FEMA's DFIRM Tools* Web page.

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20. Will decommissioning the DFIRM Tools affect public access to mapping information?

No, because these tools are not directly tied into any other system and are not accessible by the public.

21. Where can I find the status of map updates?

Status of map updates can be found on the *Status of Map Change Requests* Web page located on FEMA's Web site at http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/st_main.shtm.

22. Will the Citrix Explorer functionality be retained after July 31, 2010?

The current plan is to keep the current level of access using the Citrix Explorer.

23. How can users get their data out of the DFIRM Tools after July 31, 2010?

MIP Help will be able to export data out of the DFIRM Tools after July 31, 2010 until the MIP is migrated to the new hosting facility which is due to occur in January 2011. Once the MIP has been migrated, MIP Help will no longer have access to the DFIRM Tools.

24. Will Metaman still be available after the DFIRM Tools are decommissioned on July 31, 2010?

Yes, Metaman will still be available after the decommissioning of the DFIRM Tools.

25. Will MIP users still have access to data on the J drive or will mapping partners need to copy down all of this information?

The decommissioning of the DFIRM Tools will not affect user access to the MIP J and K drives.

26. Will any additional funding be available to cover the costs associated with migrating these studies from the DFIRM Tools environment?

Any funding issues associated with this activity should be brought up with the individual FEMA Region and they can coordinate with FEMA headquarters, if necessary.

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