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When it comes to work on existing buildings that are located in mapped Special Flood Hazard Areas, I'm guessing that more questions arise when looking at additions than other improvement and renovation projects that don't change the footprint or total square footage of a building.

Luckily, answers to questions about how to handle additions (and other improvements and repair of damage) are now available in FEMA P-758, *Substantial Improvement/Substantial Damage Desk Reference*. But, of course, we know it's rarely as simple as some would like because several factors must be considered for each and every building. FEMA P-758 explains that the following questions have to be answered:

- What is the flood zone?
- Is the base building pre-FIRM or post-FIRM?
- Is the building residential or nonresidential?
- Is other work being done in the base building?
- Is the addition structurally connected or not structurally connected to the base building?

Last year, the Florida State Floodplain Management Office developed a "Quick Guide for Handling Additions to Buildings in Special Flood Hazard Areas" (see below for link). The guide has three decision charts to help answer those questions and to identify when proposed additions and base buildings are required to comply with the floodplain management requirements of a community's regulations (or building code). The guide also shows portions of two "compliance" matrices from FEMA P-758, one for Zone A and one for Zone V. These tables are handy-dandy references that identify what has to be done for compliance based on "types of work" and whether a building is pre-FIRM or post-FIRM.

Florida's Chart 1 is shown below. It covers making decisions when the only work proposed is the lateral addition, without any other work in the base building. A key factor is whether the addition is or is not structurally connected. According to FEMA P-758, a lateral addition is "structurally connected" if its load-bearing structure is connected to the load-bearing structure of the base building, which typically also involves significant alteration of the common wall. Those familiar with FEMA guidance know that FEMA has long referred to "no more than a doorway in the common wall" as a criterion that determines whether the base building has to be brought into compliance.

Making an addition by itself compliant is fairly straightforward – elevate or dry floodproof (allowed only for nonresidential buildings in Zone A). Additional care should be taken when an addition triggers bringing the base building into compliance to make sure both the local official and the applicant/owner understand what it means to meet the same requirements that apply to new construction. Section 6.3 of the SI/SD Desk Reference explains what it means, separately addressing lowest floor elevations, enclosures, basements, utility and building service equipment, flood damage-resistant materials, and making buildings reasonably safe from flooding. The Desk Reference also has simple illustrations and Florida's guide includes figures that show different scenarios involving additions.

Resources:

- Florida's Quick Guide to Additions: www.floridadisaster.org/Mitigation/SFMP/Documents/FloridaDEM_Guidance4Additions_033111.pdf
- FEMA P-758: www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4160 or for hard copies call the FEMA Distribution Center at 800-480-2520,

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