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**HARRIS COUNTY FLOOD CONTROL DISTRICT
WILL RELEASE FLOOD HAZARD RECOVERY DATA FOR
THE VINCE BAYOU, SHIP CHANNEL, AND COASTAL
PORTIONS OF THE CEDAR BAYOU WATERSHEDS**

Data on Floodplains and Floodways Accessible via Internet

HOUSTON (September 16, 2004) – On Thursday September 16th, the Harris County Flood Control District (District) will release Flood Hazard Recovery Data (Data) for the Vince Bayou, Ship Channel, and lower Cedar Bayou watersheds, as part of the [Tropical Storm Allison Recovery Project \(TSARP\)](#). Data has now been released for all 22 watersheds in Harris County.

The Data will represent the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for the watersheds using the latest engineering methods and technology. The Data has been developed by the District and FEMA, and will be used to produce new FIRMs for communities in Harris County. Preliminary FIRMs are currently being finished and will be released to all 35 National Flood Insurance Program communities in Harris County in October.

The District believes that the floodplain and floodway boundaries reflected in the Data will be virtually identical to those reflected in the preliminary FIRMs. This confidence is due in large measure to advances in technology that have allowed a more accurate understanding of Harris County's flood risks than what was previously possible. Of particular note, is the extensive use of an aerial laser technology developed by NASA called LiDAR that was used to define the ground surface.

The District stresses that Flood Hazard Recovery Data is not a preliminary FIRM. The administrative process to adopt the FIRMs will begin when FEMA issues the maps in preliminary form in October. Flood insurance requirements and rates will not be affected until the preliminary FIRMs are finalized in 2005.

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TROPICAL STORM ALLISON RECOVERY PROJECT

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Educating the Public About Flood Risks

“The Harris County Flood Control District is providing Flood Hazard Recovery Data now in order to provide the public and their communities as much time as possible to learn about possible changes to the mapped floodplains and floodways,” explained Mike Talbott, Director of the Harris County Flood Control District. “To our knowledge, Data in this format and detail has never been released to a community prior to the release of preliminary FIRMs.”

It is hoped that the public will use the Data and the knowledge generated by TSARP to become aware of their flood risks and take appropriate steps to deal with these risks, including the purchase of flood insurance.

“An informed community is a more damage resistant community,” Talbott said.

Addresses Searches via the Internet

Flood Hazard Recovery Data is available through the TSARP web site: www.tsarp.org.

Residents in the Vince Bayou, Ship Channel and lower Cedar Bayou watersheds will be able to view Flood Hazard Recovery Data by typing in their street address and zip code. They will be able to view a map of their neighborhood and see the latest information on flood boundaries for the 1% and 0.2% (100-year and 500-year) floodplains and floodways for these areas.

Flood Hazard Recovery Data has now been released for every one of the 22 watershed in Harris County. Engineering data regarding all 22 watersheds can be ordered on the TSARP web site including LiDAR topographic data, hydrologic and hydraulic computer models (with supporting information) and plotted water surface profiles for the studied streams.

The West Fork of the San Jacinto River and some additional streams in the Greens Bayou watershed will be released in September. Preliminary FIRMs are currently being finalized and will be release in October.

While the best information about the TSARP effort and the Data can be found at the web site, the District has also established a telephone number for additional questions at 713-722-7227.

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Important Facts To Keep In Perspective

As the public continues to review the Flood Hazard Recovery Data, the District underscores the importance of keeping the following in perspective:

- The current FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps for Harris County are a solid and largely accurate representation of where the highest risks of flooding exist. New technologies and engineering methods allow for a more detailed understanding of these risks.
- TSARP represents an entirely *new* study of flooding potential, not an *update* of old information. As such, it is not correct to characterize floodplain changes as an “increase” or “decrease” in flood risk – it is simply a *new understanding* of our flood risk. For example, the detail of the ground surface defined by LiDAR is unprecedented and represents a significant difference. The new study also uses new and larger rainfall values based on additional years of rainfall records.
- If an individual finds that they do not lie within an estimated 1% or 0.2% (100- or 500-year floodplain), they should not assume that they possess no risk of flooding. Every portion of Harris County possesses some risk of flooding due to the flat terrain, clay soils, and intense levels and volumes of rainfall that this region can receive. Intense local rainfall can cause flooding well away from any channel as water tries to flow overland, and severe storms can produce more rainfall than what is depicted by the mapped floodplains (both scenarios were very evident with Tropical Storm Allison). Flood insurance is an important way for individuals to protect themselves from unidentified flooding risks.

Community Outreach and Education

The District encourages organizations that are interested in learning more about TSARP and the Flood Hazard Recovery Data to have members visit the project web site www.tsarp.org, or schedule a presentation by contacting the District’s Planning Department at 713-684-4015.

More information about the history of flooding in Harris County, the evolution of the county's drainage network, and what is being done about local flooding can be found at the District’s web site – www.hcfc.org.

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