

Flood rating gets rise out of owners

Sherwood | Longtime residents suddenly have a high-risk address, at least to FEMA

By **ERIC MORTENSON**
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Wade Anderson and Barry Kennedy are neighbors on Gleneagle Drive in Sherwood. They got new five-digit house numbers when the city adopted a new address system about a year and half ago, but otherwise nothing has changed since their homes were built almost 40 years ago.

Except the Federal Emergency Management Agency now says Anderson, Kennedy and some of their neighbors live in a flood zone. And not just any flood zone, but a red banner "high risk" special flood hazard area, according to a mapping system on FEMA's Web site.

But plug in Anderson's and Kennedy's old three-digit house numbers and the FEMA system comes up with a different flood hazard rating: moderate to low risk.

All of which would be just baffling, maybe even amusing, if it were just one of those bureaucratic who's-on-first routines that happen sometimes. But the new flood hazard designation shows up when Gleneagle residents refinance their loans or sell their homes. All of a sudden, the owners are required to buy flood insurance, costing \$300 to \$500 annually.

Kennedy says the whole thing is ridiculous. He hasn't seen

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any flooding on Gleneagle Drive in the 38 years he's lived there, not even during the 1996 flood that nearly swamped parts of downtown Portland.

"I don't understand what's going on; it doesn't make any sense," Kennedy said.

Anderson opts for the technical explanation.

"Something rejiggered itself when they went to the new ad-

"It's a glitch in the system. FEMA has not posted any of the new information anywhere. We're at a loss as to why it's doing that."

Kendra Smith
project manager for Clean Water Services

resses," he said. "Our whole street is affected."

Rob Dixon, the city's community development director, said Sherwood is working with FEMA to figure out what happened.

"We're not sure that it has anything to do with the city re-addressing," he said. "We don't really know why it changed."

He's not alone.

Clean Water Services, a Hillsboro-based agency, recently

contracted with FEMA to complete a flood study update for the Tualatin River and its tributaries, including the Sherwood area. FEMA is preparing new maps based on the study but hasn't implemented them yet, said Kendra Smith, the project manager for Clean Water Services.

"It's a glitch in the system," Smith said. "FEMA has not posted any of the new information anywhere. We're at a loss as to why it's doing that."

Some properties could be listed at a higher flood hazard risk because of that study but that's unlikely in Sherwood, Smith said. Sherwood has done a good job of not allowing development within its 100-year flood plain, she said. "I'd be surprised if there were any that changed from low to high hazard," she said.

Smith suggested property owners go to the nearest City Hall or county office and consult flood hazard maps on file. They could photocopy a map to show lenders or others that their homes are not within a high-risk flood zone, she said.

A FEMA public affairs official did not return a call seeking comment.

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