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Iowa Flood Center Server Crashed Due to Residents Seeking Flood Maps

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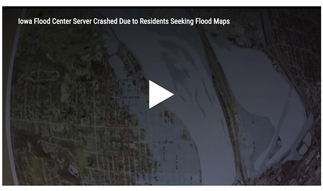

IOWA CITY, Iowa -- Last week over 80,000 people in Iowa were looking for information about floodplains on Iowa rivers. So many people sought this from the Iowa Flood Center that their server crashed.

Center leaders contacted Google to upgrade their free account with a credit card number, and Iowans could again find out how the rain that fell in northeastern Iowa could affect the river in their town.

The Iowa Flood Center was created in 2009 after major flooding in 2008 in eastern Iowa. The center operates with an annual $1.5 million budget.

"That's about fifty cents per person, per year," said Witold Krajewski, Director of the Iowa Flood Center.

"In 2008 there was a clear shortage of information," said Krajewski. "The main mission of the Flood Center is to address the situation to improve the information that is viable to the people of Iowa."

The Iowa Flood Center has produced 5,000 maps over 20 communities in the state, showing in increments of six inches of flood stage, how communities would be affected. They do this by using teams in the field to collect information on stream depth and other data, and then do mathematical models on supercomputers to produce a final user-friendly map. That would be maps that are viewed in Google Maps.

"It takes a good deal of data gathering and preparation of mathematical models that mimic water flow in the rivers and streams," said Krajewski.

The City of Cedar Rapids used Iowa Flood Center maps when planning temporary flood protection for the city.

"Fortunately for us, we did not have to test the accuracy of these maps on this go-around," said Jen Winter, Cedar Rapids Public Works Director, "We were able to build our temporary system and keep back the water, so fortunately, we didn't have to test at this point, we're going to assume they would have held correct."

The Iowa Flood Center is working to do flood mapping for the entire state, but eastern Iowa has been looking for this information a lot over the past week.

If you would like to view an Iowa Flood Center map click here.

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