

## Bonita Springs/FEMA Guidelines - Property Elevation Requirements in Woodlake

If you are considering to remodel, redevelop or sell your Woodlake property, this simplified summary is intended to introduce you to current Bonita Springs, Building Code & FEMA elevation requirements and to provide you with related resources you can draw upon.

In essence, these requirements are somewhat complicated, are continually subject to change and vary by each individual property in Woodlake. Currently Woodlake is primarily situated in a FEMA "AE" Flood zone which governs elevation requirements for first living floor elevations, garage and mechanical equipment (like hot water heaters, outside air conditioning units. etc). To view FEMA's current flood insurance rate map and search by address visit FEMA's National Flood Hazard Layer (NFHL) Viewer ([arcgis.com](https://arcgis.com)) .

Elevations are measured in something called NAVD - whose starting point of reference is to Mean Sea Level (MSL) which is zero. Currently the Woodlake neighborhood FEMA minimum baseline elevation requirement is 10' NAVD' to which the Florida Building Code adds 1' making the minimum elevation requirement for compliance 11' NAVD; again depending upon an individual property location. This 11' elevation compliance does not mean 11' above the existing grade/ground – but rather the mean sea level. The existing ground elevations (approximately) for this area range between 8.5' – 10' NAVD.

Buildings with a finished floor below the 11' elevation are considered "non-conforming" triggering a "Substantial Improvement/Damage Restriction" (aka 50% rule). In plain terms this means that all permitted repairs/improvements to the structure will be reviewed for compliance to the 50% rule. How do they do this? The structure value (not including the land value, pools, irrigation, etc.) is identified by a breakdown from the Lee County Property Appraiser and compared to the cumulative value of permits over a specific time period, which ranges between 1 and 5 years. The total permitted value cannot equal 50% of the building value. Total projects that exceed the 50% cap requires that the building be brought into current code compliance which may include elevating the house, raising the a/c equipment or adding flood vents to the garage spaces.

At the time Bonita Bay was originally developed, the City of Bonita Springs was not yet incorporated and some individual property elevation data was recorded by Lee County, the governing body at the time. During the past 3 years, Ayita Lonergan (the City's Floodplain Manager and Building Inspector) has been assembling all Bonita Bay elevation records that have been recorded by Lee County an/or the City of Bonita Springs. To reference this data for your particular property (if a record exists for your property) go to:

[www.cityofbonitaspringscg.org](http://www.cityofbonitaspringscg.org). On this website click on FEMA (top center), then click on the Elevation Certificate Option, insert your street address and press search.

Elevation certificates dated prior to 2008 require some conversion and review because FEMA changed the way the measurements were made; specifically in 1999 and elevation certificate that says 10' does not equal 10' to the way they measure now. You can reach the City's Floodplain Manager, Ayita Lonergan at (239) 450-4989 for help with this.

Should have questions, prefer an individual consultation on elevation requirements or are considering a remodel and want to pre-crunch the numbers, contact **Ayita Lonergan** in the Bonita Springs Development office (cell: 239-450-5989) or send her an email at [awilliams@cityofbonitaspringscg.org](mailto:awilliams@cityofbonitaspringscg.org). Ayita is quite knowledgeable on this subject and is more than willing to help more specifically define elevation requirements pertaining to your specific property. Also be aware that both City of Bonita Springs and FEMA regulations are highly fluid and subject to further change at any time.