



Storm Water Phase II Final Rule

Urbanized Areas: Definition and Description

Storm Water Phase II Final Rule Fact Sheet Series

Overview

1.0 – Storm Water Phase II Final Rule: An Overview

Small MS4 Program

2.0 – Small MS4 Storm Water Program Overview

2.1 – Who's Covered? Designation and Waivers of Regulated Small MS4s

2.2 – Urbanized Areas: Definition and Description

Minimum Control Measures

2.3 – Public Education and Outreach

2.4 – Public Participation/Involvement

2.5 – Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination

2.6 – Construction Site Runoff Control

2.7 – Post-Construction Runoff Control

2.8 – Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

2.9 – Permitting and Reporting: The Process and Requirements

2.10 – Federal and State-Operated MS4s: Program Implementation

Construction Program

3.0 – Construction Program Overview

3.1 – Construction Rainfall Erosivity Waiver

Industrial "No Exposure"

4.0 – Conditional No Exposure Exclusion for Industrial Activity

As discussed in Fact Sheet 2.1, *Who's Covered? Designation and Waivers of Regulated Small MS4s*, the Phase II Final Rule covers all small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) located within an "urbanized area" (UA). Based on the 1990 Census, there are 405 UAs in the United States that cover 2 percent of total U.S. land area and contain approximately 63 percent of the Nation's population. These numbers include Puerto Rico — the only U.S. Territory with UAs.

UAs constitute the largest and most dense areas of settlement. UA calculations delineate boundaries around these dense areas of settlement and, in doing so, identify the areas of concentrated development. UA designations are used for several purposes in both the public and private sectors. For example, the Federal Government has used UAs to calculate allocations for transportation funding, and some planning agencies and development firms use UA boundaries to help ascertain current, and predict future, growth areas.

What Is an Urbanized Area (UA)?

The Bureau of the Census determines UAs by applying a detailed set of published UA criteria (see 55 *FR* 42592, October 22, 1990) to the latest decennial census data. Although the full UA definition is complex, the Bureau of the Census' general definition of a UA, based on population and population density, is provided below.

An *urbanized area* is a land area comprising one or more places — central place(s) — and the adjacent densely settled surrounding area — urban fringe — that together have a residential population of at least 50,000 and an overall population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile.

The basic unit for delineating the UA boundary is the census block. Census blocks are based on visible physical boundaries, such as the city block, when possible, or on invisible political boundaries, when not. An urbanized area can comprise places, counties, Federal Indian Reservations, and minor civil divisions (MCDs - towns and townships).

How Can Status as a Regulated Small MS4 Be Determined?

The drawing below (see Figure 1) is a simplified UA illustration that demonstrates the concept of UAs in relation to the Phase II Final Rule. The "urbanized area" includes within its boundaries incorporated places, a portion of a Federal Indian reservation, an entire MCD, a portion of another MCD, and portions of two counties. Any and all operators of small MS4s located within the boundaries of the UA are covered under the Phase II Final Rule, regardless of political boundaries. Operators of small MS4s located outside of the UA are subject to potential designation into the Phase II MS4 program by the NPDES permitting authority.

Operators of small MS4s can determine if they are located within a UA, and therefore covered by the Phase II storm water program, through the following two steps:

— **STEP 1** —

Refer to a listing of incorporated places, MCDs, and counties that are located entirely or partially within a UA. Such a listing, based on the 1990 Census, can be found in Appendix 6 to the Preamble of the Phase II Final Rule; it does not include governmental entities already permitted under Phase I. If a small MS4 is located in a listed incorporated place, MCD, or county, then the operator of the small MS4 should follow step (2) below. (Note: Appendix 6 can be obtained from the EPA Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) or downloaded from the OWM web site.)

— **STEP 2** —

Some operators of small MS4s may find that they are located within an entity listed in Appendix 6 but not know if their systems are within the urbanized portion of the listed entity. In such a case, they should contact one or more of the following institutions for more detailed information on the location of the UA boundary:

- ❑ **The State or NPDES Permitting Authority (may be the State or the U.S. EPA Region)**

Storm Water Coordinators: The NPDES permitting authority may be the State or the U.S. EPA Region. The Storm Water Coordinators for each U.S. EPA Region are listed in the *For Additional Information* section in Fact Sheet 2.9. These regional contacts can assist with UA information and provide the names of State storm water contacts. Regional and State contact information can also be obtained from OWM.

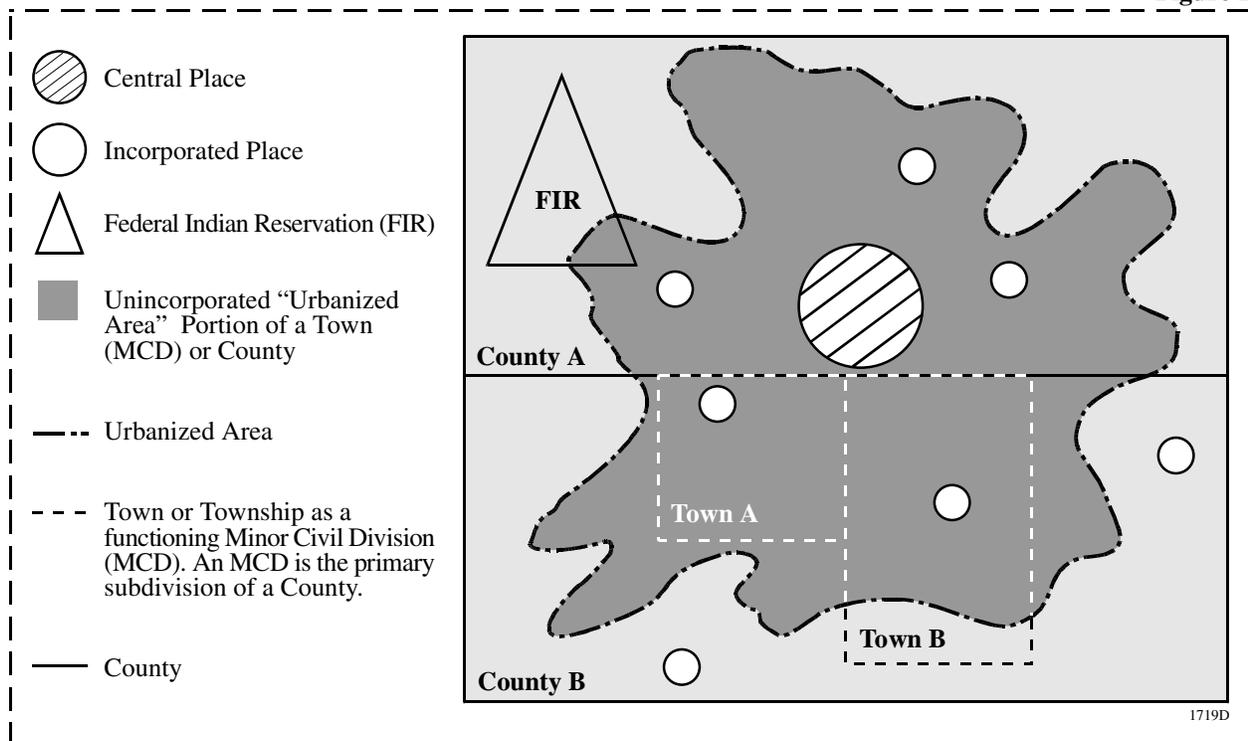
State Data Centers: Each State’s Data Center receives listings of all entities that are located in UAs, as well as detailed maps and electronic files of UA boundaries. The Bureau of the Census web site includes a list of contact names and phone numbers for the data in each State at www.census.gov/sdc/www.

State Planning/Economic/Transportation Agencies: These agencies typically use UAs to assess current development and forecast future growth trends and, therefore, should have detailed UA information readily available to help determine the UA boundaries in any given area.

- ❑ **County or Regional Planning Commissions/Boards**

As with State agencies, these entities are likely to have detailed UA data and maps to help determine UA boundaries.

Figure 1



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❑ The Bureau of the Census

Urbanized Areas Staff: 301 457-1099

Web Site: www.census.gov

The site provides information on purchasing UA maps and electronic files for use with computerized mapping systems. Obtain free UA cartographic boundary files (Arc/Info export format) for Geographical Information System (GIS) use at: www.census.gov:80/geo/www/cob/ua.html.

UA Maps: Detailed UA maps are available for purchase with a \$25 minimum order (\$5 per map sheet). Each map sheet measures 36 by 42 inches. For prices and a listing of UAs, visit www.census.gov/mp/www/geo/msgeo12.html. Order from the Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (MS 1921), P.O. Box 277943, Atlanta, GA 30384-7943 (Phone: 301 457-4100; Toll-free fax: 1-888-249-7295).

❑ U.S. EPA

EPA is modifying a web-based geographic program called *Enviromapper*. This will allow MS4 operators to enter a location and see a detailed map of the UA boundary. Information about *Enviromapper* will be available at www.epa.gov/owm/phase2.

How Will the Year 2000 Census Affect the Determination of Status as a Regulated Small MS4?

The listing of incorporated places, MCDs, and counties located within UAs in the United States and Puerto Rico, found in Appendix 6, is based on the 1990 Census. New listings for UAs based on the 2000 Census are scheduled to be available by July or August of 2001. Once the official 2000 Census listings are published by the Bureau of the Census, operators of small MS4s located within the revised boundaries of former 1990 UAs, or in any newly defined 2000 UAs, become regulated small MS4s and must develop a storm water management program.

Any additional automatic designations of small MS4s based on subsequent census years is governed by the Bureau of the Census' definition of a UA in effect for that year and the UA boundaries determined as a result of the definition.

Once a small MS4 is designated into the Phase II storm water program based on the UA boundaries, it can not be waived from the program if in a subsequent UA calculation the small MS4 is no longer within the UA boundaries. An automatically designated small MS4 will remain regulated unless, or until, it meets the criteria for a waiver (see Fact Sheet 2.1 for more information on the regulated small MS4 waiver option).

For Additional Information

Contact

- ☞ U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management
 - Phone: (202) 564-9545
 - Internet: www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater

Reference Documents

- ☞ Storm Water Phase II Final Rule Fact Sheet Series
 - Internet: cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/swfinal.cfm
- ☞ Storm Water Phase II Final Rule (64 FR 68722)
 - Internet: www.epa.gov/npdes/regulations/phase2.pdf