



### LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

#### Hazard Mitigation Planning for Resilient Communities

Disasters can cause loss of life; damage buildings and infrastructure; and have devastating consequences for a community's economic, social, and environmental well-being. Hazard mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. In other words, hazard mitigation keeps natural hazards from becoming natural disasters.

Hazard mitigation is best accomplished when based on a comprehensive, long-term plan developed before a disaster strikes. Mitigation planning is the process used by state, tribal, and local leaders to understand risks from natural hazards and develop long-term strategies that will reduce the impacts of future events on people, property, and the environment.

#### The Local Mitigation Planning Process

The mitigation plan is a community-driven, living document. The planning process itself is as important as the resulting plan because it encourages communities to integrate mitigation with day-to-day decision making regarding land use planning, floodplain management, site design, and other functions. Mitigation planning includes the following elements:

**Public Involvement** – Planning creates a way to solicit and consider input from diverse interests, and promotes discussion about creating a safer, more disaster-resilient community. Involving stakeholders is essential to building community-wide support for the plan. In addition to emergency managers, the planning process involves other government agencies, businesses, civic groups, environmental groups, and schools.

**Risk Assessment** – Mitigation plans identify the natural hazards and risks that can impact a community based on historical experience, estimate the potential frequency and magnitude of disasters, and assess potential losses to life and property. The risk assessment process provides a factual basis for the activities proposed in the mitigation strategy.

**Mitigation Strategy** – Based on public input, identified risks, and available capabilities, communities develop mitigation goals and objectives as part of a strategy for mitigating hazard-related losses. The strategy is a community's approach for implementing mitigation activities that are cost-effective, technically feasible, and environmentally sound as well as allowing strategic investment of limited resources.

#### Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, is intended to “reduce the loss of life and property, human suffering, economic disruption, and disaster assistance costs resulting from natural disasters.”

Under this legislation, state, tribal, and local governments must develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance through the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Programs. The regulatory requirements for local hazard mitigation plans can be found at Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations §201.6.

For more information about FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grants, visit: [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance).

## Benefits of Hazard Mitigation

Mitigation is an investment in your community's future safety and sustainability. Mitigation planning helps you take action now, before a disaster, to reduce impacts when a disaster occurs. Hazard mitigation planning helps you think through how you choose to plan, design, and build your community and builds partnerships for risk reduction throughout the community. Consider the critical importance of mitigation to:

- Protect public safety and prevent loss of life and injury.
- Reduce harm to existing and future development.
- Maintain community continuity and strengthen the social connections that are essential for recovery.
- Prevent damage to your community's unique economic, cultural, and environmental assets.
- Minimize operational downtime and accelerate recovery of government and business after disasters.
- Reduce the costs of disaster response and recovery and the exposure to risk for first responders.
- Help accomplish other community objectives, such as capital improvements, infrastructure protection, open space preservation, and economic resiliency.

Having a hazard mitigation plan will increase awareness of hazards, risk, and vulnerabilities; identify actions for risk reduction; focus resources on the greatest risks; communicate priorities to state and federal officials; and increase overall awareness of hazards and risks.

## Mitigation Activities for Risk Reduction

Possible mitigation activities may include:



Adoption and enforcement of regulatory tools, including ordinances, regulations, and building codes, to guide and inform land use, development, and redevelopment decisions in areas affected by hazards.



Acquisition or elevation of flood-damaged homes or businesses retrofit public buildings, schools, and critical facilities to withstand extreme wind events or ground shaking from earthquakes.



Creating a buffer area by protecting natural resources, such as floodplains, wetlands, or sensitive habitats. Additional benefits to the community may include improved water quality and recreational opportunities.



Implement outreach programs to educate property owners and the public about risk and about mitigation measures to protect homes and businesses.

## Mitigation Plan Implementation & Monitoring

History shows that hazard mitigation planning and the implementation of risk reduction activities can significantly reduce the physical, financial, and emotional losses caused by disasters. Putting the plan into action will be an ongoing process that may include initiating and completing mitigation projects and integrating mitigation strategies into other community plans and programs. Monitoring the plan's implementation helps to ensure it remains relevant as community priorities and development patterns change.

## Planning Guidance, Tools, and Resources

FEMA provides a variety of guidance, tools, and resources to help communities develop hazard mitigation plans. These resources and more can be found online at: [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-resources).

- [Hazard mitigation planning laws, regulations, and policies](#) guide development of state, local, and tribal FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans.
- The [Local Mitigation Planning Handbook](#) is the official guide for governments to develop, update, and implement local plans. The Handbook includes guidance, tools, and examples communities can use to develop their plans.
- [Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards](#) provides ideas for mitigation actions.
- Visit [www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-training](http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-planning-training) for more information on available online and in-person mitigation planning training.

*"FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards."*