



# Mitigation Planning

*Hazard mitigation is sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and their property from hazards. Hazard mitigation planning is the process State, Tribal, and local governments use to identify risks and vulnerabilities associated with natural disasters, and to develop long-term strategies for protecting people and property from future hazard events.*

[www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning](http://www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning)



Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288), as amended, State, Tribal, and local governments are required to develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects.

## Mitigation Planning Process

The planning process promoted by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is as important as the resulting plan because it creates a framework for governments to reduce the negative impacts from future disasters on lives, property, and the economy. Mitigation planning includes the following elements:

**Public Involvement** – Planning creates a way to solicit and consider input from diverse interests. Involving stakeholders is essential to building community-wide support for the plan. In addition to emergency managers, the planning process involves other government agencies (e.g., zoning, floodplain management, public works, community and economic development), businesses, civic groups, environmental groups, and schools.



**Risk Assessment** – Mitigation plans identify natural hazards and risks based on history, estimate the potential frequency and magnitude of disasters, and assess the potential losses of life and property. The assessment considers the built environment, including the type and numbers of existing and future buildings, infrastructure, and critical facilities located in or near identified hazard areas.

**Mitigation Strategy** – Based on the risk assessment, communities develop mitigation goals and objectives, as part of a strategy for mitigating disaster 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.

## Benefits of Mitigation Planning

- Increases public awareness and understanding of vulnerabilities as well as support for specific actions to reduce losses from future natural disasters.
- Builds partnerships with diverse stakeholders, thereby maximizing opportunities to leverage data and resources, which can help reduce workloads and achieve shared community objectives. For example, managing floodplain development may not only reduce flood losses, but also protect water quality by restoring natural functions.



- Expands understanding of potential risk reduction measures to include structural and regulatory tools, where available, such as ordinances and building codes. Implementation of local floodplain ordinances prevents an estimated \$1.1 billion in flood damages annually.
- Informs development, prioritization, and implementation of mitigation projects. Benefits accrue over the life of the project as losses are avoided from each subsequent hazard event.

## Planning Guidance, Tools, and Training

To assist with mitigation planning, FEMA and its partners offer a variety of guidance, training, and informative publications, such as:

- Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning Guidance, or "Blue Books," designed to increase State, Tribal, and local governments' understanding of the requirements for developing new or updated mitigation plans. They also help Federal and State reviewers fairly and consistently evaluate mitigation plans from different jurisdictions.
- Training sessions, including the following courses: Mitigation Planning Workshop for Local Governments (G318), HAZUS Multi-Hazard/DMA 2000 Risk Assessment (E296), and Protecting Tribal Communities and Acquiring Resources (E344).
- A series of "How-To" guides with information beyond FEMA's basic requirements. The guides focus on initiating and maintaining a planning process that will result in safer communities and are applicable to jurisdictions of all size, resource, and capability levels.

## Hazard Mitigation Planning Results

History shows that the physical, financial, and emotional losses caused by disasters can be reduced significantly through hazard mitigation planning. A broad range of activities designed to reduce risk can result from the mitigation planning process. The examples listed below illustrate a range of possible long-term mitigation actions; however, they are not necessarily intended to serve as examples of eligible activities under the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance programs:

- Consider adopting and enforcing regulatory tools, including ordinances, regulations, and building codes to guide and inform land use, development, and construction decisions in areas affected by hazards. Where authorized, adopt more stringent criteria to provide greater protection for citizens, as conditions may change over time. For example, consider:
  - Exceeding the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) floodplain management regulations by elevating structures above the Base Flood Elevation (BFE) in high-risk areas.
  - 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.
- Develop mitigation projects to acquire and demolish flood damaged structures, such as homes or businesses, or to retrofit public buildings, schools, and critical facilities to withstand extreme wind events or ground shaking from earthquakes.

## Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA)

FEMA's HMA programs fund eligible mitigation activities that reduce future disaster losses and protect life and property. Funding is available for mitigation plan development and updates as well as mitigation projects. For more information on FEMA's HMA programs, visit [www.fema.gov/government/grant/hma/index.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/hma/index.shtm).