

Lesson 2. Gaining Support for Hazard Mitigation

Introduction

Lesson 1 introduced the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) and its intent to focus resources and communities on pre-disaster hazard mitigation and reducing disaster costs. Lesson 2 emphasizes the need for a systematic approach to community hazard mitigation, beginning with a hazard mitigation plan. An effective hazard mitigation planning process is the critical first step in making a community more disaster-resistant. This lesson introduces a methodical approach for developing a community hazard mitigation program, and highlights the first step, which is to gain community support. At the completion of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Describe a process for developing a local hazard mitigation program.
- Describe the key steps to initiating a hazard mitigation program and preparing the community for hazard mitigation planning.
- Practice identifying local stakeholders.

A Process for Building a Community Hazard Mitigation Program

Community action for developing and implementing a hazard mitigation program can be organized into the same four phases that are necessary to develop a hazard mitigation plan. Phase I is **Organize Resources**. In this phase, identify and obtain the human resources and support needed to initiate and sustain a successful hazard mitigation program in your community. Figure out what it will take for the community to support hazard mitigation planning and actions, and who must be represented on a team to ensure the success of the process.

Phase II is **Assess Risks**. The basis for effective hazard mitigation is thorough assessment of possible hazards to the community. In this phase you will determine, for each potential hazard, the probability of an event, the potential severity of the event, and the potential impact on the community in terms of human and dollar losses. These efforts may be accomplished by the community with assistance from the State, or contracted out to a company that specializes in this type of work.

Phase III is **Develop the Mitigation Plan**. The direction of the hazard mitigation plan is determined by the results of the risk assessment and the community's current and potential capabilities. In this phase you will develop hazard mitigation goals and objectives, identify possible actions to reduce high priority risks, and develop a prioritized strategy. The phase is complete when all of these are put together in a plan that will be supported by the community, accepted by the local governing body, and approved by FEMA.

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A Process for Building a Community Hazard Mitigation Program (Continued)

Phase IV is **Implement the Mitigation Strategy and Monitor Progress**. In this phase, you seek the resources and opportunities to achieve the plan's goals and objectives, and make sure the plan is kept current.

Getting Started

At the beginning of the process, it is important to decide whether your community will develop its own program and hazard mitigation plan or will join with other communities in a larger jurisdiction, such as a county, planning and development district, watershed, regional planning commission, or even multiple counties. If your community has entered into what is called a "multi-jurisdictional" plan, you should know that the DMA 2000 requires that each community wishing to receive hazard mitigation funds must participate in the planning process and officially adopt the plan.

The State also will have a hazard mitigation strategy that will identify priorities for addressing hazard risks in the State. Communicate with the State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) to find out more about those priorities. The SHMO is usually located in Emergency Management, which can be a stand-alone agency or part of another department such as natural resources, community affairs, public safety, or the military department.

The process of gaining support for hazard mitigation can be carried out in three steps which are consistent with those described in FEMA's planning guide entitled, "Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning."

- Step 1: Assess Community Support
- Step 2: Build the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team
- Step 3: Engage the Public

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Step 1: Assess Community Support

Determine if the community is ready to launch a hazard mitigation program. The key elements necessary for successful planning and program development are knowledge, support, and resources.

Knowledge

Do local officials know what hazards and risks threaten the community? It is important to determine the level of knowledge about hazards and risks among officials and the public. If elected or appointed officials and/or citizens lack knowledge about hazards and risk, find opportunities to share:

- Disaster statistics and public safety impacts of disasters, particularly the last hazard event to affect the community.
- Economic costs of hazard events and benefits of hazard mitigation.
- Hazard mitigation success stories.
- Economic benefits and costs that would be associated with public actions.
- Benefits of hazard mitigation planning.

Support

Do your local officials support hazard mitigation planning and other sustained actions to reduce the risk of damages to the community? Talk with elected and appointed officials to find out if they know the local, State, and Federal roles in hazard mitigation. Determine the likelihood of finding a champion to provide leadership and/or support for hazard mitigation planning.

If support for hazard mitigation planning is weak, enlist organizations and groups that have needs and responsibilities for reducing hazard risks, such as local and State government and FEMA, businesses at risk of hazard damages, private-sector nonprofits involved in supporting disaster victims, citizens living in high-risk areas, academic institutions, prominent local leaders, and elected officials. Identify existing local initiatives that could provide a “jumping-off point” for the hazard mitigation program, such as:

- Comprehensive, long-term plans for the future development and improvement of the community.
- National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a Federal initiative that makes subsidized flood insurance available for existing buildings if the community adopts and enforces floodplain management regulations.
- Community Rating System (CRS), a program in some communities where floodplain management programs go beyond the minimum requirements for participation in the NFIP. CRS communities’ efforts are recognized and rewarded by reducing flood insurance premiums for the community’s property owners.

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Step 1: Assess Community Support (Continued)

Resources

Does your community have the technical, financial, and human resources to develop a hazard mitigation plan and implement its recommendations? There are many technical assistance resources at the local, State, and Federal level for hazard mitigation planning and projects, including local engineers and planners, colleges and universities, regional planning associations, and professional associations.

Financial resources for hazard mitigation planning and mitigation projects may be available pre-disaster from Federal programs such as FEMA hazard mitigation grants and Department of Housing and Urban Development community development block grants. After a disaster, other Federal resources are available. These resources will be discussed in Lesson 5.

In addition to local, State, and Federal agency representatives, human resources to work on the program may come from the community's citizens, businesses, and association leaders who want to help reduce hazard risks to the community.

Step 2: Build the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

Once the community is ready to begin hazard mitigation planning, it is time to identify dedicated and interested individuals to be on the hazard mitigation planning team. Build the team from existing organizations or boards whenever possible. If the community already has a hazard mitigation plan that was developed prior to DMA 2000, contact those who led that planning effort.

Get representation from:

- Stakeholder groups that will be affected in any way by a hazard mitigation action or policy, such as businesses, private organizations, and citizens.
- Neighborhood groups, other nonprofit organizations and associations, and business organizations.
- Elected officials and Federal Government agencies involved in hazard mitigation (e.g., FEMA, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Corps of Engineers), State and regional government agencies, and academic institutions.

Step 2: Build the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team (Continued)

Obtain Official Recognition for the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team

Hazard mitigation planning efforts will be more successful if the team has official authority to develop and implement a hazard mitigation plan. Ask the local governing body to recognize the importance of the process in the form of a local executive order, a proclamation, a memorandum of agreement (MOA), or a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

Organize the Team

Develop a mission statement that will describe the overall purpose of developing a hazard mitigation plan. The mission statement should answer these questions:

- Why is the plan being developed?
- What does the plan do?
- For whom or where is the plan being developed?
- How does the plan do this?

An example of a mission statement is: *To foster, promote, and implement actions to eliminate or reduce the long-term risk to human life and property from the effects of natural hazards.*

Establish responsibilities of team members so that they know how much time they will need to dedicate.

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Step 3: Engage the Public



Photo: Public meeting.

The public (residents, businesses, and other interested parties) needs the opportunity to ask questions, make suggestions, and comment on the hazard mitigation plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval. Provide opportunities for neighboring communities, agencies involved in hazard mitigation, businesses, academia, and other relevant private and nonprofit interests to be involved as well. Citizens who become knowledgeable about the initiative may be willing to assist later in the implementation process.

There are many ways to keep the public informed and offer opportunities to become involved, including:

- Use local media. Broadcast meetings on a local access channel, produce a show highlighting recent disasters and damages, interview a hazard mitigation planning team member, and issue press releases.
- Distribute brochures and fliers with local utility and water bills, at local grocery stores, at government buildings, and at local libraries.
- Conduct outreach activities at local festivals, fairs and bazaars. Set up a booth or table for hazard mitigation-related brochures, talk with citizens, get your hazard mitigation planning team connected to the Internet, create a Web page, and/or post questionnaires.
- Host public input workshops for large or small groups of community representatives, business representatives, and residents.

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Summary

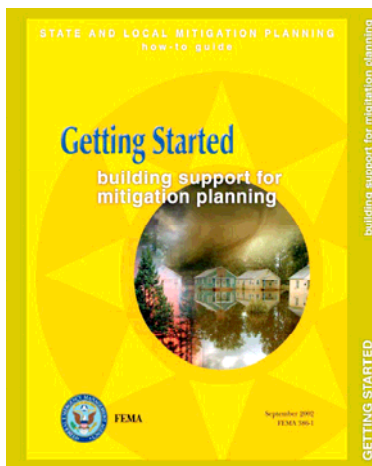


Photo: Cover of FEMA publication 386-1, "Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning".

A systematic approach is needed to successfully establish a hazard mitigation program, develop a hazard mitigation plan, and implement a hazard mitigation strategy. Four logical steps are to organize resources, assess risks, develop the hazard mitigation plan, and implement the mitigation strategy. This lesson described a process for initiating a community hazard mitigation program: assessing the community's readiness for hazard mitigation, identifying technical and other assets needed and available, establishing a hazard mitigation planning team, and engaging the public.

For more detailed instructions on how to get the a community hazard mitigation program going, refer to the FEMA 386-1 publication, "Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning."

The next lesson, Assessing Risks, will focus on the data needed to provide a foundation for an effective, cost-beneficial hazard mitigation strategy.

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Hazard Mitigation in Your Community

List individuals you would ask to be members of your hazard mitigation planning team. Then list organizations you would want to be represented and will contact to identify the appropriate team member.

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Test Yourself

1. A process for developing and implementing a hazard mitigation plan can be organized into the following four phases:

I: _____

II: _____

III: _____

IV: _____

2. Three steps for gaining support for hazard mitigation include:

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

3. If elected/appointed officials and citizens lack knowledge about hazards and risk, find opportunities to share: (*check all that apply*)

- Disaster statistics and public safety impacts of disasters, particularly the last hazard event to affect the community.
- High costs of hazard mitigation planning.
- Economic costs of hazard events and benefits of hazard mitigation.
- Hazard mitigation success stories.

4. Hazard mitigation planning efforts will be more successful if the team has official _____ to develop and implement a hazard mitigation plan.

5. Three ways to engage the public in the hazard mitigation planning process are:

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Test Yourself (Continued)

6. According to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, each community entering into a “multi-jurisdictional” plan must do this in order to receive hazard mitigation funds: *(select one)*
 - a) Have demonstrated capability to perform hazard risk assessments.
 - b) Sign an agreement to provide a designated percentage of the costs to develop the plan.
 - c) Participate in the planning process and officially adopt the plan.
 - d) Have incurred substantial damage due to hazard events within the last five years.

8. **True or False.** Citizens who become knowledgeable about the process of hazard mitigation planning may be willing to assist later in the implementation process.