

Hazard Mitigation Planning for Local Governments

This fact sheet provides an overview of mitigation planning for local governments.

Natural hazards can cause loss of life and damage property and infrastructure. These events can also harm a community's economic, social and environmental well-being. Hazard mitigation lessens the impacts of natural hazards by taking actions before the next event. Hazard mitigation plans raise awareness of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities. They also identify ways to reduce risk and focus local resources on the greatest risks. At the same time, they communicate local priorities to state and federal officials.

The Local Mitigation Planning Process

The mitigation planning process encourages local governments, including special districts, to work mitigation into other planning processes. Examples of these may include land use, housing, transportation, economic development, floodplain management and others. Mitigation planning has four steps:

1. **Identify the Planning Team and Organize Resources:** Gather the resources you will need for a successful mitigation planning process. Reach out to technical experts. Define the planning area. Find partners, such as non-profits, to join the planning process. The [2022 Local Mitigation Planning Policy Guide](#) explains this process.
2. **Assess Risks:** Identify each hazard's characteristics and potential effects. Find where the hazard may occur. Which people, properties or assets may be in harm's way? It is wise to speak with representatives from sectors that support diverse communities within the planning area. It is also a good idea to talk with people representing community lifelines, such as water and power infrastructure.
3. **Develop a Mitigation Strategy:** Set goals and long-term strategies to avoid or lessen the effects of natural hazards. Local governments should base their strategy on an assessment of their regulatory, administrative and financial capabilities that can support risk reduction.
4. **Adopt and Implement the Plan:** Bring the plan to life by adopting it and carrying out the mitigation actions in the strategy.

Benefits of Hazard Mitigation for Local Governments

Mitigation is an investment in future safety and sustainability. Mitigation planning helps you act now, before a disaster, to reduce losses. Mitigation plans are also a prerequisite for some kinds of non-emergency disaster assistance. Mitigation planning can:

- Increase public safety and prevent loss of life and injury.



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- Reduce damage to existing and future development.
- Prevent harm to economic, cultural and environmental assets.
- Reduce downtime, speed up recovery and lower response costs.
- Meet other community objectives. These include capital improvements, infrastructure protection, open space preservation and economic resilience.

Mitigation Actions for Risk Reduction

Mitigation actions can reduce losses from natural hazards. The four types of mitigation actions are:

- **Plans and Regulations:** Set policies or codes that guide the way government authorities develop land and build structures.
- **Structure and Infrastructure Projects:** Update existing buildings and infrastructure or build to higher standards.
- **Education and Awareness Programs:** Teach visitors, residents, and elected officials about hazards and ways to reduce risks.
- **Natural Systems Protection:** Minimize damage and losses while saving or restoring the functions of natural systems.

Mitigation Plan Implementation and Monitoring

Communities can act by completing mitigation projects and adding mitigation to other plans and programs.

Monitoring how the plan is carried out makes sure it stays relevant as priorities and development patterns change. A local government must update its hazard mitigation plan every 5 years.

FEMA has several guides, tools and resources to help communities create hazard mitigation plans.

- [Hazard mitigation planning regulations and guidance](#) direct the development of state, local, tribal and territorial hazard mitigation plans.
- The [Local Mitigation Planning Policy Guide](#) is an official document local governments can use to develop, update and carry out their plans. It includes tools and examples. The [Local Mitigation Planning Handbook](#) is also a useful reference.
- [Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards](#) gives example mitigation actions based on hazard type.
- [Create a Hazard Mitigation Plan](#) has planning resources and information on virtual and in-person trainings.