

## **Section One: Introduction**

### ***Hazard Mitigation Planning***

Hazard events are inevitable. It is just a matter of when they happen and how well a community is prepared for such an event. Mitigation reduces risk and is a socially and economically responsible action to prevent long term risks from natural and man-made hazard events.

Natural hazards, such as severe winter storms, tornados, high winds, severe thunderstorms, flooding, extreme heat, drought, agriculture diseases (plant and animal), earthquakes, landslides, and wildfires are a part of the world around us. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little we can do to control their force and intensity. Man-made hazards are a product of the society that we live in and can occur with significant impacts to communities. Man-made hazards include levee failure, dam failure, chemical and radiological fixed site hazards, major transportation incidents, terrorism, civil disorder, and urban fire. These hazard events can occur naturally or as a result of human error.

All jurisdictions participating in this planning process are vulnerable to a wide range of natural and man-made hazards that threaten the safety of residents, and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property, cause environmental degradation, or disrupt the local economy and overall quality of life.

Mitigation planning is described as having the potential to produce long-term and recurring benefits by breaking the repetitive cycle of disaster associated loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation planning is that pre-disaster investments will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery, and reconstruction. Furthermore, mitigation practices will enable local residents, businesses, and industries to re-establish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the local economy back on track sooner and with minimal interruption.

The benefits of mitigation planning go beyond reducing hazard vulnerability. Measures such as the acquisition or regulation of land in known hazard areas can help achieve multiple local goals like preserving open space, improving water quality, maintaining environmental health, and enhancing recreational opportunities. Mitigation planning also offers the following benefits:

- Saving lives and property;
- Saving money;
- Speeding up recovery following disasters;
- Reducing future vulnerability through wise development and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction;
- Enhancing coordination within and across participating jurisdictions;
- Expediting the receipt of pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding; and,
- Demonstrating a firm commitment to improving local health and safety.

As a jurisdiction formulates a comprehensive approach to reduce the impacts of hazards, a key means to accomplish this task is through the development, adoption, and regular update of a HMP. A HMP establishes the vision, guiding principles, and specific actions designed to reduce current and future hazard vulnerabilities. The LPSNRD Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is an effective tool to incorporate hazard mitigation principles and practices into the day-to-day activities of county and municipal governments. This plan offers specific actions designed to protect residents, as well as the built environment from those hazards that pose the greatest risk. Identified mitigation actions go beyond recommendations for structural solutions to reduce existing vulnerability, such as elevation, retrofitting, and acquisition projects. Local policies on growth and



#### *FEMA definition of Hazard Mitigation*

*“Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from [natural] hazards.”*

development; incentives tied to natural resource protection; and public awareness and outreach activities are examples of other actions intended to reduce future vulnerability to identified hazards.

### ***DMA2000***

In an effort to reduce the nation’s mounting natural disaster losses, the U.S. Congress passed the DMA 2000 to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Section 322 of the DMA 2000 requires that state and local governments develop, adopt, and routinely update a HMP in order to remain eligible for pre- and post-disaster mitigation funding. These funds include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM), and the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program (FMA). They are administered by the FEMA under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

This plan was developed in accordance with current state and federal rules and regulations governing local HMPs. The plan shall be monitored and updated on a routine basis to maintain compliance with the legislation – Section 322, Mitigation Planning, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as enacted by Section 104 of the DMA2000 (P.L. 106-390) and by FEMA’s Final Rule (FR) published in the Federal Register on November 30, 2007, at 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 201.

### **HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE (HMA) & NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM (NFIP)**

On June 1, 2009, FEMA initiated the HMA program integration, which aligned certain policies and timelines of the various mitigation programs. These HMA programs present a critical opportunity to minimize the risk to individuals and property from hazards while simultaneously reducing the reliance on federal disaster funds. In addition to the HMA, communities can participate in the Community Rating System (CRS) in order to reduce vulnerabilities and inform residents.

Each HMA program was authorized by separate legislative action, and as such, each program differs slightly in scope and intent.

- **HMGP:** To qualify for post-disaster mitigation funds, local jurisdictions must have adopted a mitigation plan that is approved by FEMA. HMGP provides funds to states, territories, Indian tribal governments, local governments, and eligible private non-profits following a presidential disaster declaration. The DMA 2000 authorizes up to 7% of HMGP funds available to a state after a disaster to be used for the development of state, tribal, and local mitigation plans.
- **FMA:** To qualify to receive grant funds to implement projects such as acquisition or elevation of flood-prone homes, local jurisdictions must prepare a mitigation plan. The plan must include specific elements and be prepared in conjunction with the process outlined in the NFIP and Community Rating System (CRS). The goal of FMA is to reduce or eliminate claims under the NFIP.
- **PDM:** To qualify for PDM funds, local jurisdictions must adopt a mitigation plan that is approved by FEMA. PDM assists states, territories, Indian tribal governments, and local governments in implementing a sustained pre-disaster hazard mitigation program.
- **NFIP CRS:** The CRS offers recognition to local governments that exceed minimum requirements of the NFIP (refer to *Section Four: Risk Assessment – Flooding*). Recognition comes in the form of discounts on flood insurance policies purchased by citizens. The CRS offers credit for mitigation plans that are prepared according to a multi-step process.

*Mitigation is the cornerstone of emergency management. Mitigation focuses on breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. Mitigation lessens the impact disasters have on people's lives and property through damage prevention, appropriate development standards, and affordable flood insurance. Through measures such as avoiding building in damage-prone areas, stringent building codes, and floodplain management regulations, the impact on lives and communities is lessened.*

- FEMA Mitigation Directorate

### ***Multi-Jurisdictional Approach***

According to FEMA, “A multi-jurisdictional HMP is a plan jointly prepared by more than one jurisdiction.” The term ‘jurisdiction’ means ‘local government’. Title 44 Part 201, Mitigation Planning in the CFR, defines a ‘local government’ as “any county, municipality, city, town, township, public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments, regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; any Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, any rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity”. For the purposes of this plan, any ‘taxing authority’ was also included.

FEMA recommends the multi-jurisdictional approach under the DMA 2000 for the following reasons:

- It provides a comprehensive approach to the mitigation of hazards that affect multiple jurisdictions;
- It allows economies of scale by leveraging individual capabilities and sharing cost and resources;
- It avoids duplication of efforts; and
- It imposes an external discipline on the process.

Both FEMA and NEMA recommend this multi-jurisdictional approach through a combination of counties and regional emergency management districts. The LPSNRD utilized the multi-jurisdiction planning process recommended by FEMA to develop this plan.

### ***Plan Financing and Preparation***

In regards to plan financing and preparation, in general, the local government (LPSNRD) is the “sub-applicant” that is the eligible entity that submits a sub-application for FEMA assistance to the “Applicant”. The “Applicant,” in this case is the State of Nebraska. If HMA funding is awarded, the sub-applicant becomes the “sub-grantee” and is responsible for managing the sub-grant and complying with program requirements and other applicable federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local laws and regulations.

The LPSNRD HMP Update was financed through the HMGP program after FEMA Disaster DR- 4013 (project DR4013-NE0002). HMGP grants are allocated from FEMA to NEMA using a ‘sliding scale’ formula based on the percentage of funds spent on public and individual assistance programs for each presidentially-declared disaster. For states with a standard state mitigation plan, the formula provides 15% of the first \$2 billion of estimated aggregate amounts of disaster assistance; 10% for the next portion of amounts between \$2 billion and \$10 billion; and 7.5% for the next portion of amounts between \$10 billion and \$35.333 billion.

The LPSNRD applied for an HMGP planning grant and received federal-cost share on April 27, 2012 to provide 75% assistance for the completion of a ‘multi-jurisdictional’ HMP update. A multi-jurisdictional plan includes any ‘taxing authority’ such as cities, villages, counties, school districts, or other special districts. In total, 37 jurisdictions participated in the LPSNRD Plan.

