

Oswego County Multi-Jurisdictional, Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Through a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Oswego County Emergency Management is leading the creation of a comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional hazards-mitigation plan for the County and its municipalities. Barton & Loguidice, P.C., has been retained as the consultant to develop the plan.

The creation of this plan will allow the County and participating municipalities to be eligible for future mitigation funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This is an opportunity for the County to create a detailed plan that will address a variety of potential hazards that could affect some or all of our county's residents.

The goal of the plan is to identify projects that can reduce damages from future natural hazards. The plan will include a risk assessment and a hazard-mitigation strategy. Potential hazards to be analyzed include severe storms, severe winter storms, ice storms, flooding, and others.

The study focused on existing and future buildings, and infrastructure and critical facilities that might be impacted during a disaster. Infrastructure includes power-generation facilities, water utilities, roadways, railroads and communication systems. Critical facilities include shelters and hospitals.

Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) is federal legislation that establishes a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program and new requirements for the national post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). DMA 2000 encourages and rewards local and state pre-disaster planning, promotes sustainability, and seeks to integrate state and local planning with an overall goal of strengthening statewide hazard mitigation planning. This enhanced planning approach enables local, tribal, and state governments to articulate accurate and specific needs for hazard mitigation, which results in faster, more efficient allocation of funding and more effective risk reduction projects.

What is Hazard Mitigation?

Hazard Mitigation is any action taken to reduce the loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters (natural, technological and man-made). It is often considered the first of the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Mitigation measures fall into the following six general categories:

Prevention: Achieved through planning and zoning, open space preservation, and development regulations, building codes, storm water management, fire fuel reduction, soil erosion, and sediment control.

Property Protection: Achieved through acquisition, relocation, storm shutters, rebuilding, barriers, flood proofing, insurance, and structural retrofits for high winds and earthquake hazards.

Public Education and Awareness: Achieved through outreach projects, real estate disclosure, hazard information centers, technical assistance, and school age and adult education programs.

Natural Resource Protection: Achieved through erosion and sediment control, stream corridor protection, vegetative management, and wetlands preservation.

Emergency Services: Achieved through hazard threat recognition, hazard warning systems, emergency response, protection of critical facilities, and health and safety maintenance.

Structural Projects: Achieved through dams, levees, seawalls, bulkheads, revetments, high flow diversions, spillways, buttresses, debris basins, retaining walls, channel modifications, storm sewers, and retrofitted buildings and elevated roadways (seismic protection).

What is a Hazard Mitigation Plan?

FEMA defines a Hazard Mitigation Plan as the documentation of a state or local government's evaluation of natural hazards and the strategies to mitigate such hazards.

Hazard mitigation planning is the process of determining how to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and property damage resulting from natural hazards. Section 322 of the DMA 2000 specifically addresses mitigation planning at the state and local levels. FEMA has promulgated hazard mitigation planning regulations pursuant to the DMA 2000. These regulations identify four essential phases to mitigation planning: 1) organize resources, 2) assess risks, 3) develop mitigation plan, and 4) implement mitigation plan and monitor progress.

Oswego County is finalizing a Multi-Jurisdictional All-Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan demonstrates the County's and participating jurisdictions' commitment to reducing risk and serve as a guide for decision makers as they commit resources to minimize the effects of natural hazards. It includes a number of mitigation strategies for the County and participating municipalities.

How will a Hazard Mitigation Plan benefit the county?

A hazard mitigation plan will assist Oswego County with the following:

- An increased understanding of natural hazards the County faces.
- Development of more sustainable and disaster-resistant communities.
- Eligibility for federal funds for pre-disaster mitigation planning (DMA 2000).
- Partnerships that support planning and mitigation efforts and may offer potential financial savings:

- Flood Insurance premium reductions
- Broader resources for funding of mitigation projects
- Enhanced benefit-cost ratios for Army Corps of Engineers projects.
- Reduced long-term impacts and damages to human health and structures, and reduced repair costs.

Proactive mitigation leads to sustainable, more cost-effective projects. By contrast, reactive mitigation tends to lead to the "quick fix" alternatives; it simply costs too much to address the effects of disasters only after they happen. A surprising amount of damage can be prevented if the County anticipates where and how disasters will occur, and takes steps to mitigate those damages.

Information on Hazard Mitigation is available on the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov/government/mitigation.shtm>.

Role of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee includes Patricia Egan, Director, and Terry Bennett, Emergency Services Program Coordinator, Oswego County Emergency Management Office; County Legislator Linda Lockwood, Chairman of the Public Safety and Emergency Services Legislative Committee; former legislator Paul Santore, Dave Turner, Director of Community Development, Planning and Tourism; Kelly Jordal, Public Information Officer; Ronald Raymond, NYSEMO Region IV; and John Condino, Project Manager, Barton & Loguidice.

The Executive Committee has provided guidance and direction to the planning effort and ensure the resulting document will be embraced by each participating jurisdiction. The Executive Committee will provide leadership, oversee the planning process, and act as the point of contact for all participating communities and the various interest groups in the planning area.

Planning Team

The Oswego County Hazard Mitigation Planning Team consists of members of the Executive Committee along with representatives from each participating jurisdiction. Other members of the Planning Team represent county departments such as Highway, Real Property, Sheriff, and Fire Coordinator, and agencies such as SUNY Oswego, Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, fire departments, and members of the public.

Public participation

The public is encouraged to participate in the development of a hazard mitigation plan for Oswego County. The draft plan as well as the Planning Team's progress can be viewed on the Oswego County website, www.oswegocounty.com/emo/hazard.html. More information is available by contacting Terry Bennett at the Emergency Management Office, 315/591-9150 or terryb@oswegocounty.com.