

# Hazard Mitigation Planning for Local Communities

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This fact sheet provides a mitigation planning overview for local governments.

## Hazard Mitigation Planning for Resilient Communities

Disasters can cause loss of life, damage buildings and infrastructure, and lead to devastating consequences for a community's economic, social and environmental well-being. Hazard mitigation reduces loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Having a hazard mitigation plan increases awareness of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities; identifies actions for risk reduction; and focuses local resources on the greatest risks while communicating priorities to state and federal officials.

## The Local Mitigation Planning Process

The mitigation planning process encourages communities to integrate mitigation into their day-to-day decision making about land use planning, floodplain management, site design and other functions. Mitigation planning has four steps:

1. **Organize the Planning Process and Resources:** Assemble the resources needed for a successful mitigation planning process. This includes reaching out to technical experts, defining the planning area, and identifying individuals, agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, businesses and other partners to participate in the process.
2. **Assess Risks:** Identify the characteristics and potential consequences of hazards. This includes understanding where the hazard may occur and what people, property or community assets may be in harm's way.
3. **Develop a Mitigation Strategy:** Set priorities and develop long-term strategies for avoiding or minimizing the undesired effects of disasters. Communities base their strategy on an assessment of their unique regulatory, administrative and financial capabilities that can support mitigation.
4. **Adopt and Implement the Plan:** Bring the plan to life by adopting it and implementing the mitigation actions outlined in the strategy.

## Benefits of Hazard Mitigation

Mitigation is an investment in your community's future safety and sustainability. Mitigation planning helps you take action now, before a disaster, to reduce losses when a disaster occurs. The planning process helps you think through how to plan, design and develop your community while building partnerships for risk reduction.

Other benefits of mitigation planning include:

- Protecting public safety and preventing loss of life and injury.
- Reducing damage to existing and future development.



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- Maintaining community continuity and strengthening the social connections that are essential for recovery.
- Preventing damage to your community's unique economic, cultural and environmental assets.
- Minimizing downtime, accelerating recovery and reducing the costs of disaster response.
- Helping accomplish other community objectives, such as capital improvements, infrastructure protection, open space preservation and economic resiliency.

Mitigation plans are also a [prerequisite](#) for certain kinds of non-emergency disaster assistance, such as Hazard Mitigation Assistance projects, including those funded by the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program.

## Mitigation Actions for Risk Reduction

Mitigation actions or projects can significantly reduce the physical, financial and emotional losses caused by disasters. The four types of mitigation actions are:

- **Plans and Regulations:** Government authorities, policies or codes that influence the way land and buildings are developed and built.
- **Structure and Infrastructure Projects:** Modifying existing public buildings, private buildings, and infrastructure or constructing new structures to protect against hazards.
- **Education and Awareness Programs:** Informing and educating citizens, elected officials and property owners about hazards and potential ways to mitigate them.
- **Natural Systems Protection:** Minimizing damage and losses while also preserving or restoring the functions of natural systems.

## Mitigation Plan Implementation and Monitoring

Communities can put their plan into action by completing mitigation projects and integrating mitigation strategies into other community plans and programs. Monitoring the plan's implementation ensures it remains relevant as community priorities and development patterns change. Mitigation plans must be updated every five years.

### **FEMA provides a variety of guidance, tools and resources to help communities develop their hazard mitigation plans.**

- [Hazard mitigation planning regulations and guidance](#) direct the development of state, local, tribal and territorial hazard mitigation plans.
- The [Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide](#) (October 2011) / [Guía de Revisión del Plan Local de Mitigación](#) (Octubre 2011) is the official guide local governments can use to develop, update and implement their plans. It includes tools and examples. Another useful reference is the [Local Mitigation Planning Handbook](#).
- [Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards](#) provides ideas for choosing mitigation actions.
- Visit the [Create a Plan](#) page for mitigation planning resources and information on virtual and in-person mitigation planning training.