

CITY OF SAINT MICHAEL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

March 2013

Newsletter 2

This newsletter discusses the preparation of the City of Saint Michael Hazard Mitigation Plan. It has been prepared to inform interested agencies, stakeholders, and the public about the project and to solicit comments. This newsletter can also be viewed on the State of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management Website at <http://www.ready.alaska.gov/plans/localhazmitplans.htm>.

The City of Saint Michael was one of fifteen communities selected by the State of Alaska, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) for a Hazard Mitigation Planning (HMP) development project. The plan identifies natural hazards that affect the community including earthquake, erosion, flood, ground failure, severe weather, and wildland (tundra) fire. The HMP also identifies the people and facilities potentially at risk and ways to mitigate hazards. The public participation and planning process has been documented as part of the project.

What is Hazard Mitigation?

Across the United States, natural disasters have increasingly caused injury, death, property damage, and business and government service interruptions. The toll on individuals, families, and businesses can be very high. The time, money, and emotional effort required to respond to and recover from these disasters take public resources and attention away from other important programs and problems.

The people and property in the State of Alaska are at risk from a variety of hazards that have the potential for causing human injury, property damage, or environmental harm.

The purpose of hazard mitigation is to implement projects that eliminate the risk or reduce the severity of hazards on people and property. Mitigation programs may include short-term and long-term activities to reduce the hazards, reduce exposure to hazards, or reduce the effects of hazards. Mitigation could include education, and construction projects. Hazard mitigation activity examples include relocating buildings, developing or strengthening building codes, and educating residents and building owners.

Why Do We Need A Hazard Mitigation Plan?

A community is only eligible to receive grant money for mitigation programs by preparing and adopting a hazard mitigation plan. Communities must have an approved mitigation plan to receive grant funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for eligible mitigation projects.

The Planning Process

There are very specific federal requirements that must be met when preparing a hazard mitigation plan. These requirements are commonly referred to as the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, or DMA2000 criteria. Information about the criteria may be found on the Internet at: <http://www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/guidance.shtm>

The DMA2000 requires the plan to document the following topics:

- Planning process
- Hazard identification
- Risk assessment
- Goals
- Mitigation programs, actions, and projects
- A resolution from the community adopting the plan

FEMA has prepared Planning Guidance which is available at: <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4225>; and “How to” Guides that explain in detail how each of the DMA2000 requirements is met. These guides are available at <http://www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/resources.shtm>.

The Saint Michael Hazard Mitigation Plan will follow those guidelines.

The planning process kicked-off in April 2012 by establishing a local planning committee and holding a public meeting. The planning committee examined the full spectrum of hazards listed in the State Hazard Mitigation Plan and identified six hazards the HMP would address.

After the first public meeting, City staff and URS began identifying critical facilities, compiling the hazard profiles, assessing capabilities, and conducting the risk assessment for the identified hazards. Critical facilities are facilities that are critical to the recovery of a community in the event of a disaster. After collection of this information, URS helped to determine which critical facilities and estimated populations are vulnerable to the identified hazards in Saint Michael.

A mitigation strategy was the next component of the plan to be developed. Understanding the community’s local capabilities and using information gathered from the public and the local planning committee and the expertise of the consultants and agency staff, a mitigation strategy was

developed. The mitigation strategy is based on an evaluation of the hazards, and the assets at risk from those hazards. Mitigation goals and a list of potential actions/projects were developed as the foundation of the mitigation strategy. Mitigation goals are defined as general guidelines that explain what a community wants to achieve in terms of hazard and loss prevention. Goals are positively stated future situations that are typically long-range, policy-oriented statements representing community-wide visions. Mitigation actions/projects are undertaken in order to achieve your stated objectives. On March 7, 2013, the local planning committee identified projects/actions for each hazard that focus on six categories: prevention, property protection, public education and awareness, natural resource protection, emergency services, and structural projects. The mitigation actions identified as a “high” priority by the planning team are listed below, and explained in more detail in the plan.

The selected projects/actions will potentially be implemented over the next five years as funding becomes available. A maintenance plan has also been developed for the hazard mitigation plan. It outlines how the community will monitor progress on achieving the projects/actions that

will help meet the stated goals and objectives, as well as an outline for continued public involvement.

The draft plan is available in the City and Tribal offices for public review and comment. Comments should be made via email, fax, or phone to the contact person below and be received no later than March 15, 2013. The plan will be provided to DHS&EM and FEMA for their approval prior to formal adoption by Saint Michael’s City Council and approval from the Tribal Councils to enable both entities to apply for their respective funding grants.

The Planning Committee

The plan was developed with the assistance from a planning committee consisting of a cross section of the community. Planning committee members who helped with development of the plan include Mayor Bobbi Andrews, Dolores Otten, Team Leader, with assistance from Helen Laws, Alberta Steve, Elsie Cheemuk, and James Niksik, Sr. URS Corporation was providing assistance to the planning committee.

Sample of the City of Saint Michael’s Mitigation Actions. Review the draft HMP for a complete list.		
Identify and pursue funding opportunities to implement mitigation actions.	Increase culvert sizes to increase their drainage capacity or efficiency.	Promote permafrost sensitive construction practices in permafrost areas.
Disseminate FEMA pamphlets to educate and encourage homeowners concerning structural and non-structural retrofit benefits.	Harden utility headers located along river or coastal embankments to mitigate potential flood, debris, and/or erosion damages.	Install wastewater treatment system flood protection to prevent erosion and flood damage e.g. sewage lagoon out-wash.
Identify evacuation routes away from high hazard areas and develop outreach program to educate the public concerning warnings and evacuation procedures.	Harden culvert entrance bottoms with asphalt, concrete, rock, or similar material to reduce erosion or scour.	Develop, implement, and enforce a property development “ground failure” risk assessment for any structure that may be sited in potentially vulnerable locations.
Develop outreach program to educate and encourage seismic, weather resistant, fire-safe, or other hazard pertinent construction practices for existing and new construction in high-risk areas.	Install debris cribs at the end of a drainage structure to prevent debris blockage at its entrance or outlet, This will prevent subsequent high-water flow erosion or overtopping.	Identify and seasonally restrict recreational and construction activities in high avalanche and landslide areas.
Acquire (buy-out), demolish, or relocate structures from hazard prone area (erosion, flood, ground failure, etc.) Property deeds “must be” restricted for open space uses for perpetuity to keep people from rebuilding in known hazard areas.	Develop mitigation initiatives such as: Rip-rap (large rocks), sheet piling, gabion baskets, articulated matting, concrete, asphalt, vegetation, or other armoring or protective materials to provide river bank protection.	Identify and map existing ground failure areas with associated damage to assist in new critical facility, residential buildings, infrastructure and other buildings’ and existing facility relocation siting.

We encourage you to learn more about the City of Saint Michael’s Hazard Mitigation Plan. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed and to allow you every opportunity to voice your opinion regarding this important project. If you have any questions, comments, or requests for more information, please contact:

Scott Simmons, Hazard Mitigation, Emergency Management, and Climate Change Planner
 URS Corporation
 700 G Street, Suite 500
 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
 907.261.9706 or 800.909.6787
 scott_simmons@urscorp.com

Scott Nelsen, Emergency Management Specialist
 DHS&EM
 P.O. Box 5750
 Fort Richardson, Alaska 99506
 907.428.7010 or 800.478.2337
 Scott.Nelsen@alaska.gov