



Section I: Introduction



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1) Overview

Hazard mitigation planning is the first of the four “phases of emergency management,” followed by preparedness, response, and recovery. This prevention-related concept of emergency management often gets the least attention, yet it is one of the most important steps in creating a disaster-resistant community.



Figure 1: Phases of Emergency Management

Hazard mitigation is any action that reduces the effects of future disasters. It has been demonstrated time after time that hazard mitigation is most effective when based on an inclusive, comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed before a disaster actually occurs. It is impossible to predict exactly when and where disasters will occur or the extent to which they will impact New York City. However, with careful planning and collaboration among public agencies, stakeholders, and citizens, it is possible to minimize losses that can occur from disasters.

The New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) led the development of the 2009 New York City Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) in an effort to assess natural hazard vulnerabilities, identify mitigation opportunities, and secure funding for the benefit of the City. This document is the culmination of a cooperative partnership between more than 30 city, state, and federal government agencies, authorities, and organizations, with input from the private sector, academic institutions, community organizations, and citizens. This plan meets all requirements for hazard mitigation plans under the Stafford Act. It is a living document and will be refined and updated every five years.

a) **Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000**

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) amended the Stafford Act to reinforce the importance of mitigation planning and emphasize planning for disasters before they occur. As such, DMA 2000 established a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program and modified the requirements for the national post-disaster Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). States and communities must have an approved mitigation plan to be eligible to apply for and receive hazard mitigation funds. Mitigation plans must

demonstrate the proposed mitigation actions are based on a sound planning process that accounts for the risk to and the capabilities of the community. To facilitate the plan development, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has issued guidelines for HMPs under DMA 2000 regulations. As the State representative for the Hazard Mitigation Program, the New York State Emergency Management Office (NYSEMO) supports development of HMPs for jurisdictions within the state through various planning initiatives.

b) **Benefits of Mitigation Planning**

Natural hazard mitigation plans help communities reduce their risk from natural hazards by identifying vulnerabilities and developing strategies to lessen and sometimes even eliminate the effects of the hazard. Some of the benefits of mitigation planning to New York City agencies and other stakeholders are as follows:

- **Leads to judicious selection of risk reduction actions.** Hazard mitigation planning is a systematic process of learning about the hazards that can affect New York City; setting clear goals; and identifying and implementing policies, programs, and actions that reduce losses from disasters.
- **Builds partnerships.** Hazard mitigation planning enhances collaboration among a broad range of stakeholders to achieve a common vision for the City. Increased collaboration also reduces duplication of efforts among organizations with similar or overlapping goals.
- **Creates a more sustainable and disaster-resistant city.** There is an intrinsic link between the concept of sustainability and natural hazard risk reduction. An essential characteristic of a sustainable city is its resilience to disasters.
- **Establishes funding priorities.** A mitigation plan allows New York City to better identify and articulate its needs to state and federal officials when funding becomes available, particularly after a disaster. With its HMP in place, New York City can propose projects as an integral part of an overall, agreed-upon strategy, rather than as projects that exist in isolation. Mitigation planning coordinates existing and potential mitigation actions into a unified mitigation strategy. Only those states and communities with approved plans that meet the DMA 2000 criteria are eligible to receive HMGP funds for mitigation projects.
- **Increases public awareness of natural hazards.** Mitigation planning serves to help residents better understand the threat to public health, safety, and welfare, economic vitality, and the operational capability of critical infrastructure.

c) **Planning Phases**

New York City engaged in a four-phase planning process, as recommended by FEMA guidance.

Phase 1 – Organize Resources: The first phase included coordinating with agencies and organizations, integrating hazard mitigation with other planning efforts, and involving community groups and other stakeholders in the planning process.

Phase 2 – Assess Risks: The second phase included identifying and profiling hazards, assessing vulnerability, and estimating potential losses. This phase helped establish the scientific and technical foundations for the mitigation strategy.

Phase 3 – Develop the Plan: The third phase included developing hazard mitigation goals and objectives, conducting a capability assessment, working with planning participants to identify and analyze mitigation actions, and documenting the planning process.

Phase 4 – Implement and Monitor Progress: New York City is currently in the fourth phase of mitigation planning. This phase involves adopting, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the HMP to ensure the plan’s goals and objectives are met.

2) Plan Organization

The New York City HMP represents the City's approach to mitigating the adverse impacts of natural disasters. The HMP is organized into the following sections:

Section I: Introduction

The Introduction provides a brief overview of the HMP's background and purpose.

Section II: Planning Process

The Planning Process section outlines the manner in which New York City created the Plan. It identifies which agencies and organizations were involved in the process, how they were involved, and the methods of public participation that were employed. It also provides a detailed description of the decision-making and prioritization processes.

Section III: Risk Assessment

The Risk Assessment section includes an analysis of the hazards and risks facing New York City. It contains detailed hazard profiles and loss estimates. The Risk Assessment section provides a scientific and technical basis to guide the Mitigation Strategy.

Section IV: Mitigation Strategy

The Mitigation Strategy section describes how New York City intends to reduce losses identified in the Risk Assessment. It includes goals and objectives to guide the selection of activities to mitigate and reduce potential losses. The section contains a prioritized list of cost-effective, environmentally sound, and technically feasible mitigation actions. It identifies current and potential sources of funding and other resources needed to implement the mitigation actions. Finally, it includes a discussion of New York City's policies and programs that will serve to help administer many of the identified actions.

Section V: Plan Adoption

The Plan Adoption section establishes that New York City will formally adopt the Plan by Executive Order. This ensures comprehensive mitigation planning citywide, strong program management, and a Citywide commitment to mitigation planning.

Section VI: Plan Maintenance

The Plan Maintenance section describes how New York City will monitor, evaluate, and update its mitigation plan. It establishes review process and method for measuring progress. FEMA requires mitigation plan updates every five years.

3) Plan Status and Contact

The Planning Team incorporated comments submitted by the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team, Mitigation Planning Council, the public, and other stakeholders during the 30-public comment period as well as comments from NYSEMO, FEMA during the formal review process. The City formally adopted the final plan by an Executive Order in March 2009.

If you have any questions or comments on the New York City HMP or require additional information, please contact:

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