Appendix IV-6 Hazard Mitigation Brochure

Region 2000 Regional Commission Hazard Mitigation Plan

What is Hazard Mitigation?

Hazard mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long term risk to life and property from a hazard event. In the past, federal legislation has provided funding for disaster relief, recovery, and some hazard mitigation planning. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K) is the latest legislation to improve this planning process. DMA2K was enacted on October 10, 2000, when the President signed the Act (Public Law 106-390).

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Authorized under Section 404 of the Stafford Act, the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides grants to states and local governments to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the program is to reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters and to enable mitigation measures to be implemented during the immediate recovery from a disaster.

The new legislation reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur. As such, this Act establishes a pre-disaster hazard mitigation program and new requirements for the national Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). States and local governments are required to adopt hazard mitigation plans in order to qualify for pre and post disaster federal hazard mitigation funding.

The Virginia Tech Center for Geospatial Information Technology (CGIT) is in the beginning stages of developing the hazard mitigation plan with the Region 2000 Regional Commission. The completed plan will fulfill the standard state mitigation planning that is required under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

Why take part in planning efforts?

There are many reasons why you and your community should take an active role in the development of Region 2000 Regional Commission's hazard mitigation plan. The *number one* reason to be involved is for your community to have continued assurance that it is eligible for FEMA funding programs in the likelihood that your community is involved in a disaster. The *second reason* to participate is to design and develop mitigation projects to be completed within your community. Hazard damage amounts substantially decrease when communities have mitigation projects and strategies in place. By becoming involved in the process it allows your community to focus its efforts on specific hazard areas by incorporating and setting priorities for mitigation planning efforts.

What is involved in completing the Hazard Mitigation Plan?

There are six main steps in completing the hazard mitigation plan. The DMA2K establishes the criteria by which the plans should be developed. These major steps help to fulfill FEMA requirements for communities to remain eligible for federal funding.

Major Steps

1. Planning Process
2. Risk Assessment
3. **Mitigation Actions**
4. Plan Maintenance
5. Plan Adoption
6. Virginia State Requirements

The planning process helps to set the stage for developing hazard mitigation plans. Organizing a steering committee of community stakeholders is one of the first steps towards developing the plan. Once the steering committee has been established, risks to the community can be identified by the characteristics and potential consequences from the hazard. Region 2000 Regional Commission has assembled an initial steering committee, if you or someone in your community is interested in becoming apart of the process contact information is provided at the end of the article.

The risk assessment step involves identifying the hazards, profiling significant historic hazard events, compiling an inventory of community assets and lastly estimating potential losses from hazards. The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) is the process in which the potential loss of life, personal injury, economic loss and property loss is analyzed and quantified. This step provides the foundation for the rest of the mitigation planning process.

The **third step** in developing the mitigation plan is to develop projects or "actions" and strategies. Each community must develop mitigation goals and strategies to reduce or avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards

from the HIRA. Communities will need to determine what their priorities should be and then look at possible ways (projects) to avoid or minimize the undesired effects. The result is a natural hazard mitigation plan and strategy for implementation.

Steps four and five are the implementation of the plan and monitoring progress. Communities can bring the plan to life in a variety of ways. Some of the options range from implementing specific mitigation projects to changes in the day-to-day operation of the local government. To ensure the success of an ongoing program, it is critical that the plan remains effective. To make sure the plan remains effective, it is important to conduct periodic evaluations and revisions. For more information on mitigation planning go to the FEMA website at: http://www.fema.gov/fima/planhowto.shtm

Timeline of events

The steering committee will take the lead role in developing, reviewing, and approving the plan. FEMA suggests that committee members include representatives from all jurisdictions covered by the plan, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, agencies with authority to regulate development and planning, academia, and other private and non-profit interests.

Open public involvement is required in the planning process. This includes opportunities for the public to comment on the plan at all stages of its formation, and the involvement of any neighboring communities, interested agencies, or private and non-profit organizations. This should also include a review of any existing plans or studies and incorporation of these plans, if appropriate. Documentation on how the plan was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved is also essential. The Region 2000 Hazard Mitigation website (http://www.cgit.vt.edu/region2000/index.asp) can be used to receive additional information and updates on the region's planning efforts and provides a forum for questions and comments.

Timeline of Events	
December 2004	Focus Group Meeting Steering Committee Meeting
February 2005	Steering Committee Meeting on HIRA results
March 2005	Public Meeting(s) on HIRA results HIRA submitted to VDEM for review
May – June 2005	Mitigation Strategy Meeting(s)
July 2005	Final documents to steering committee and public for review
Summer 2005	Steering committee meeting for plan endorsement Final documents to VDEM and FEMA
Fall 2005	Plan adoption following VDEM and FEMA approval

The Region 2000 Regional Commission hazard mitigation plan will be complete and ready for implementation in the Fall of 2005.

Contact Information

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The **Virginia Tech Center for Geospatial Information Technology (CGIT)** is an institutional focal point for Virginia Tech faculty and staff who specialize in, or use geospatial information technology as an integral component of their research, teaching, and outreach mission. CGIT coordinates efforts to increase geospatially-related research activities and provides technical expertise in the areas of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) applications research. The Center is currently working on multiple local hazard mitigation plans for Virginia and has partnered with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to complete the Virginia Standard Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Virginia State plan recently received approval from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).