

Milwaukee County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Executive Summary

Overview

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) local mitigation planning handbook (March 2013) provides a doctrinal foundation to understand the importance of mitigation activities and the mitigation planning process. FEMA description of hazard mitigation:

Disasters can cause loss of life; damage buildings and infrastructure; and have devastating consequences for a community's economic, social, and environmental well-being. Hazard mitigation reduces disaster damages and is defined as sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. Outreach programs that increase risk awareness, projects to protect critical facilities, and the removal of structures from flood hazard areas are all examples of mitigation actions. Local mitigation actions and concepts can also be incorporated into land use plans and building codes.

Stafford Act

The Stafford Act, amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000), is designed “to reduce the loss of life and property, human suffering, economic disruption, and disaster assistance costs resulting from natural disasters.” Section 322 of the Act, is focused on mitigation planning and the requirements of state and local governments to prepare multi-hazard mitigation plans as a requirement for receiving FEMA mitigation project grants.

A county mitigation plan must be updated at least once every five years in order to maintain eligibility for FEMA hazard mitigation project grant funding. Regulation at 44 CFR §201.6(d) (3) reads:

A local jurisdiction must review and revise its plan to reflect changes in development, progress in local mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities, and resubmit it for approval within five (5) years in order to continue to be eligible for mitigation project grant funding.

Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

In 2016 the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) started the five year mitigation review process; this process was finalized in early 2017. Milwaukee County OEM is committed to using the 2016 plan as a five year strategic plan anchoring a mitigation program. This mitigation strategic plan and programmatic process is designed to increase the effectiveness of the mitigation activities in Milwaukee County and enable a more efficient update process for 2021.

Review of the 2011 Milwaukee County Mitigation Plan

The 2011 Milwaukee County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan is a 197 page word document that was created by Milwaukee County Emergency Management in collaboration with the 18 Milwaukee suburbs. The City of Milwaukee was not included in the plan and created a separate plan for the city. The purpose of the plan was to analyze the hazards that affect Milwaukee County, to look at the areas that are historically the most vulnerable, and to engage municipal stakeholders in a dialogue to implement projects that will minimize these risks. The 2011 plan includes a brief summary of Milwaukee County: it's demographics, general land trends, weather data, and historical disasters. The plan has six planning sections followed by a list of tables, maps, and five appendices. Each of the 18 Milwaukee County municipalities filled out hazard assessments of their own areas, which were used in addition to historical hazard data to calculate the county's risk for all hazards. This information was used by each municipality to focus in on community projects that could help mitigate this risk.

Summary of the 2016 Milwaukee County Mitigation Plan

The 2016 Milwaukee County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan is the result of a collaboration between the Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management, appropriate county departments, and Milwaukee County municipalities. The plan uses Integrated Solutions Consulting's Knowledge Management System to house the new plan, a copy of the old plan, and administrative information for stakeholders. The first part of this plan gives a detailed community profile of Milwaukee County: features and GIS maps of its land, infrastructure, and population. The second piece of the plan includes separate sections for all hazards that could impact Milwaukee, including descriptions of these hazards and historical records of when and where they have hit the county. The last piece of the plan separates the 18 municipalities into separate sections, each containing specific hazard analyses, vulnerability information, and land use and floodplain maps pertaining to that jurisdiction. Most importantly, these sections contain lists of mitigation projects for each municipality, including what projects have been completed since the last plan and timelines for new projects. This format makes it easier for stakeholders to update their project lists, critical facilities, etc., before five years passes.

Updates to the 2011 Version Contained in the 2016 Milwaukee County Mitigation Plan

Because disasters know no borders, hazard mitigation plans are only effective when locals who know their area and it's history participate

in the county-wide plan. The 2016 Milwaukee County Pre-Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plan enhanced the participation and cooperation between county and local entities by increasing the usability and ease with which municipalities could review and edit the plan. The old word document format made it difficult for participants to find relevant sections and to track outdated versions. There were no changes to the plan since the 2011 update because of this process. **The 2016 plan prioritizes jurisdictional participation**, hence the last piece of the plan separates the 18 municipalities into sections, each containing a specific local hazards analysis and vulnerability information. This new process allows users to get directly to the section they want to edit, while also keeping track of changes and comments made on every section. The new planning system makes Milwaukee County's hazard mitigation plan a living document, encouraging continuous updating which helps fulfill the purpose of the plan: to be relevant and useful during a disaster, no matter when it hits on the FEMA update timeline. Other updates in the 2016 include:

- The addition to hazard list: rail transportation incident
- Specific GIS maps of every municipality
- Detailed demographic and NFIP information on every municipality
- Detailed record of historical severe weather events dating back 65 years
- Hazard analysis done by Milwaukee County experts and tweaked to fit specific jurisdictions

Milwaukee County Mitigation Project 2017-2021

The Milwaukee County Mitigation Plan and Program 2016-2021 is designed as a more proactive and consistent strategic and programmatic approach. The intent of the program is not to wait five years to update the 2016 plan for the directed 2021 plan update deadline.

- Milwaukee County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) forms and maintains a County/Municipal Mitigation Steering Committee
- Mitigation Steering Committee meets once a year for five years: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021. The focus on the 2021 meeting is to complete the review, modification, and update of the 2016 plan.
- County OEM coordinates and organizes five public meetings; at a minimum; one a year from 2017-2021.
- County OEM provides public information on the importance of mitigation planning and activities to private sector, non-profit, and community-based organizations.
- County OEM implements its Knowledge Management System (KMS) to make available for on-line continual review and comment the 2011 and 2016 mitigation plans and the 2021 plan under-development. The KMS Mitigation Steering Committee Workgroup organizes the administration of the committee and public meetings.

The combination of an active Mitigation Steering Committee, public meetings, and the KMS making the 2011, 2016, and 2021 (under development) available increases the effectiveness of the plan (and program) maintenance process. FEMA Mitigation Handbook describes plan maintenance:

“Plan maintenance is the process the planning team establishes to track the plan’s implementation progress and to inform the plan update. The plan must include a description of the method and schedule for monitoring, evaluating, and updating it within a 5-year cycle.

- Ensure that the mitigation strategy is implemented according to the plan.
- Provide the foundation for an ongoing mitigation program in your community.
- Standardize long-term monitoring of hazard-related activities.
- Integrate mitigation principles into community officials’ daily job responsibilities and department roles.
- Maintain momentum through continued engagement and accountability in the plan’s progress.

Plan updates provide the opportunity to consider how well the procedures established in the previously approved plan worked and revise them as needed.”

Conclusion

Milwaukee County OEM is the organization responsible for coordinating the mitigation planning process for County. County OEM requires active participation in the planning process from County and Municipal organizations; private and non-profit organizations; and the general public. Nationally, large-scale public, private, and non-profit participation in the mitigation planning process has been challenging. Milwaukee County OEM is going to coordinate a bi-annual effort, at a minimum, to promote mitigation planning and activities and strategically organize the County’s mitigation program. We look forward to your active participation.