

City of Sebastopol Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

What is Hazard Mitigation?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines hazard mitigation as “any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from natural hazards.” Another way to understand hazard mitigation is as the prevention component of the emergency management process that has a long-term beneficial impact.

Hazard mitigation is the first step in the emergency management cycle, and it is followed by preparedness, response, and recovery.

- Preparedness activities include emergency plans, training, drills, and exercises that individuals, communities and first responders participate in on almost daily basis. These are things done to get ready for an emergency or disaster before it happens.
- Response is the short-term, emergency actions taken to address the immediate impacts of a hazard.
- Recovery is the longer-term process of restoring the community back to normal or pre-disaster conditions.
- Mitigation activities are cost-effective actions that will reduce or eliminate impacts, for anticipated future events. Mitigation can reduce or eliminate the need for an emergency response and greatly reduce the recovery period.



Emergency Management Cycle

Many types of mitigation actions are things done on a daily basis without much forethought such as purchasing insurance to protect a home investment or putting in gutters around a roof to better direct rain runoff. The same concepts apply to community level hazard mitigation planning. Mitigation planning is a process for county, city, special district, and local governments to identify community-level policies and actions that will reduce the impacts of natural hazards.

Why is Hazard Mitigation Important?

Most people who live or work in the City of Sebastopol have been affected by hazards in one way or another. Some of the hazards that can affect the City include flooding, wildfire, drought, severe weather, and earthquakes. The City of Sebastopol has a long history of persistent flooding, with numerous flood disaster declarations associated with flood damage along the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The City has indirectly experienced recent large-scale impacts during evacuation orders and heavy smoke associated with several recent wildfires. In addition to these major events, there are also smaller, isolated weather events that cause localized property damage and losses significant to the people affected. The planning process will evaluate the potential for future damaging events and work toward solutions to help mitigate their impacts

in the future. According to a report by the National Institute of Building Sciences, it is estimated that for every one dollar invested in hazard mitigation, an average of six dollars is saved on long-term disaster response and recovery. Hazard mitigation plans are also required by law in order for municipalities to be eligible to apply for and receive FEMA hazard mitigation funds. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) was signed into law in 1988 and provides the authority for federal disaster assistance activities, including preparedness and mitigation along with assistance for response and recovery.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) amended the Stafford Act to reinforce the importance mitigation planning and emphasize planning for natural disasters to reduce the impact and losses from natural hazards. DMA 2000 established provisions and requirements for state, local, and Indian Tribal entities to closely coordinate mitigation planning and implementation efforts. LHMPs involve a four-phase planning process that consists of 1) organizing resources and building a planning team, 2) conducting a risk assessment, 3) developing a mitigation strategy, and 4) implementing a monitoring and maintenance plan.

Plan Development Process

The City of Sebastopol is taking the lead on the preparation of a LHMP with the support of a planning team that will facilitate the planning process, collect necessary natural hazard data, conduct a risk assessment, develop a mitigation strategy, and prepare the LHMP document.

The planning team, known as a Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (HMPC) was established and will meet on a regular basis, working through varying levels of review in the preparation of the following elements of a tailored LHMP:

- Identify hazards that may impact or have impacted the City;
- Profiles of hazard events;
- Assessment of the vulnerability to those hazards;
- Assessment of the City's capabilities to mitigate the hazards;
- Mitigation goals;
- Specific mitigation actions and projects;
- Implementation strategy for the plan;
- Plan maintenance and update process;
- Plan approval and adoption.

The HMPC will include representatives from key City departments, such as the Fire Department, Planning Department, and Building Department. Stakeholders on the planning team will include representatives from federal and state agencies, and local municipalities, organizations, educational institutions, and businesses.

The planning process began with a kick-off for the first HMPC meeting in October 2020 and the first evening Public Workshop. The second HMPC meeting is scheduled for January 2021. The

LHMP will be developed in early 2021, with a draft for public review anticipated by spring 2021. The second evening Public Workshop will also be scheduled in spring 2021.

How Can you Get Involved?

Members of the public have a very important role in this process. The HMPC regards broad public participation in the planning process as an essential strategy for developing a plan that will be effective, supported by residents of the City, and ultimately implemented. The process will provide a range of opportunities for the City and its citizens, public officials, and stakeholder groups to participate and give input in the plan update. Interested stakeholders and community members should pay attention to the City of Sebastopol's LHMP Webpage for updates on the process.

For more information on the City of Sebastopol's LHMP or the planning process, please contact:

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