

# HANCOCK COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

## III. PLANNING PROCESS

In compliance with §201.4(b) and §201.4(c)(1) Hancock County held all its planning meetings as open forums. Press releases, public meetings and website postings were utilized to advertise and explain the mitigation planning process to the public and to municipal officials. The Planning Team included opportunities for the public and our neighboring counties to comment on the plan at all stages of its formation. The Planning Team reviewed the existing county and municipal emergency plans and incorporated information as appropriate. The following describes our documentation of the planning process, including how the plan was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved.

### DOCUMENTATION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

<b>IFR Requirement §201.6(c)(1):</b>	<b>The plan must document the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how the public was involved.</b>
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Hancock County has developed a local comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Hancock County Emergency Management Agency was assigned the responsibility for hosting the development of the mitigation plan by the Hancock County Commissioners. The County EMA formed a mitigation planning team comprised of representatives from state government, county government, local municipal governments, the regional planning commission and local organizations (see page 10 for a list of the Team members). This Team met on 8 occasions over the course of 15 months.

An effort was made to solicit public input during the planning process. Two public meetings were held at the beginning of the formulation of the Planning Team; one at the County Commissioner's Office and one at the County EMA offices. Several public meetings were held at municipal offices after the first draft was produced. Citizens could also access the Hazard Mitigation Plan Draft on the County EMA website to provide input.

A news article was published in the Ellsworth American, the local weekly county-wide newspaper to advertise and explain the mitigation planning process to the county residents. A press release was published which included the phone number, postal address and e-mail address of the County EMA office so that those who could not attend public forums would have a chance to voice concerns or provide input during the planning process.

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was assisted in the development of the plan by hiring a engineering and planning consultant to facilitate the meetings, assist in research and outreach programs, to coordinate the GIS mapping, complete the loss estimates and to consolidate the information and comments provided by the planning team and the public.

We must admit that there was very little participation from the general public, non-profits and local businesses, who expressed that they had no interest in the project. We did have a lot of participation from a nearby college (Unity College), which provided the GIS mapping work.

The final version of the Hancock County Hazard Mitigation Plan was presented to the County Commissioners at a meeting for all senior municipality official and local EMA Directors. In turn each Municipality presented the plan to seek adoption at a public town meeting.

# HANCOCK COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

## PRESS RELEASE

(Ellsworth, Maine) -- The Hancock County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) has initiated an effort to complete a Comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan using the guidelines as provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA.

The purpose of a Hazard Mitigation Plan is to assess the County's risk to likely disasters, inventory critical infrastructure and special need populations, and develop goals and strategies to lessen the impacts of a potential disaster. Examples of disaster mitigation include floodplain management, whereby new construction in floodplains is limited, and the cutting back of tree limbs from electric power lines to prevent the trees from damaging the lines in a storm.

"One of the most important aspects of the Hazard Mitigation Planning process is the involvement of the public in the development of the County Plan," stressed Ralph Pinkham, Director of the Hancock County EMA program. "Inputs from all municipalities and all interested citizens are vital in order to make this plan work."

County residents, businesses, non-profit groups, and municipalities with knowledge of past disaster events, repetitive areas of repair after storms and floods, and locations of critical facilities and utilities and special needs populations that could be impacted by a disaster are strongly encouraged to provide that information to the Hazard Mitigation Planning Team hosted by the Hancock County EMA office.

For more information, contact Linda Feury at 667-8126 or email: [ema@co.hancock.me.us](mailto:ema@co.hancock.me.us)

## HANCOCK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION NEWSLETTER HAZARD MITIGATION NEWS

A committee of Hancock County municipal officials under the leadership of the Hancock County Emergency Management Agency is working to draft a county-wide hazard mitigation plan. This plan will help the county as a whole respond to disasters such as fires, floods, major storms, large scale transportation accidents and chemical spills. Federal guidelines now require that towns participate in a county-wide mitigation plan in order to be eligible for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Hazard Mitigation Grants. In the past, Hancock County towns have received FEMA funds for projects such as culvert and bridge replacements, installation of rip-rap and other flood mitigation measures for public property. It is important that we not lose this important source of funding.

The committee is presently in the process of gathering data on hazards. If your community has not already been contacted by the committee, you should be contacted shortly. One way that you can help the committee is to complete and return the survey entitled *Hancock County Hazard Mitigation Planning Municipal Survey* that you should have received in the mail by the time you read this newsletter. Feel free to contact Ralph Pinkham at the County Emergency Management Agency (e-mail: [hcemadir@co.hancock.me.us](mailto:hcemadir@co.hancock.me.us)) or call 667-8126 if you have any questions.

# HANCOCK COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

Hancock County EMA Website posting

## Current News

### *Mitigation Planning*

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# Hazard plans required

by Laurie Schreiber

## SOUTHWEST HARBOR —

Towns must now draw up local hazardous mitigation plans before they can be eligible for Federal Emergency Management Administration grants.

FEMA's granting program has been in place since 1988 but recently began requiring municipalities to develop mitigation strategies that provides a blueprint on risk assessment that includes the jurisdiction's existing authorities, policies, programs and resources, and ability to expand on and improve existing tools.

The goal of the plan should be to avoid long-term vulnerabilities to identified hazards, Ralph Pinkham, program administrator with MEMA, told the Mount Desert Island League of Towns last week.

The risk assessment must include an overview of the location and extent of all natural hazards that can affect the jurisdiction. Required is a composite map for hazards that have a recognizable geographic extent, such as floods, coastal storms and wildfires; and an indication, if the hazard can't be geographically determined, of their expected intensity. A description of past hazards and an analysis of the

probability of occurrence and magnitude of future hazard events is required.

Also to be included are the types and numbers of existing and future buildings, infrastructure, and critical facilities — such as shelters, hospitals, roads, water, utilities and communication systems — located in the hazard area.

League members said the towns of Tremont, Southwest Harbor and Bar Harbor have all received FEMA funding, primarily for road work.

Up to recently, grants could be applied for without a mitigation plan, Mr. Pinkham said. But in 2000, a law went through requiring states to have the plans drawn up either on a regional or municipal basis.

Maine chose to do the plans regionally, he said, and MEMA planners are now making the rounds of communities to collect information on areas of concern and resources.

To help them identify hazards in Hancock County, said Linda Feury, planners are interviewing older residents, studying weather patterns, and researching the literature at libraries and historical societies.

The questions, she said, are "What are the hazards we're most

vulnerable to? Then identify the potential costs if a hazard occurs."

The league identified several potential hazards. Some were weather related, including storm surge and coastal erosion.

Southwest Harbor Town Manager Ken Minier said the lack of a second route through his town, especially during the summer, could pose a problem.

League members said the bridge to MDI is a major problem, posing a nightmare scenario if there's a disaster, particularly in July or August, when it comes to traffic, limited access, limited assets and distance to the nearest trauma center, in Bangor.

A mass casualty situation on MDI — a cruise ship disaster or even a bus rollover — would easily overwhelm the island's limited resources, said Mr. Pinkham.

"To say something like that could never happen is irresponsible," he said.

Both natural and human-made hazards — such as bioterrorism, hazardous materials and road conditions — are under review, said Mr. Pinkham.

Plans were originally scheduled to be completed by November 2003, but the timeline will likely be extended a year, said Ms. Feury. ■