

Mitigation Planning Overview from the Windham Regional Commission

What is the purpose of a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is used to identify policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses in a community. A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is the foundational planning tool for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. The Plan is meant to address multiple natural hazards, which in Vermont may include flooding, fluvial erosion, winter storms, wildfire, and/or high winds, though a town can address anything they deem a hazard. The Plan also serves as a historic reference of hazard events.

What is the point of mitigation planning?

A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan should answer the question: What can we do now to lower our risk before disaster strikes? This is the basis of Hazard Mitigation Planning.

A disaster resilient town is designed, or retrofitted, to be in harmony with the the natural environment as much as possible, in a way that takes into account vulnerabilities and works to reduce or eliminate them. The goal of mitigation is to lessen or remove risk to human life, animal life, and the built environment, thus causing less disruption to social and economic facets of the community when disasters occur.

A Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is a planning tool for organizing ideas and developing implementation strategies for mitigation in your town. This results in less post-disaster loss, recovery time and expense for the town and its residents.



CLIMATE HAZARDS FACING VERMONT



Image source: [Vermont's Roadmap to Resilience Report](#) from the Institute for Sustainable Communities

MANAGING RISK, LOWERING COSTS

Why does my Town need a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

- It's smart planning!
- Less damage when disasters happen—a safer community
- Less expense and time spent in disaster recovery
- Necessary piece of Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund compliance for maximum Federal and State grants

What is the process to develop a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

The process begins with the Town forming a Mitigation Planning Committee. The Windham Regional Commission Emergency Planner, Alyssa Sabetto, will then meet with the Committee to kick off the Plan. Alyssa will review your current Plan and work with the Committee to prioritize and profile hazards facing the town, develop mitigation actions and draft an updated Plan.

Alyssa's role is to guide the Town through the planning process; do the writing and behind the scenes research to update the Plan; facilitate meetings; and work with Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) and FEMA to ensure the Plan meets or exceeds all compliance standards.

The Town's role is to provide input, and local and historic knowledge; organize, advertise and attend meetings (usually 2-3 meetings are held throughout the Plan development process); and document all public outreach/advertisement for input into the Plan (a FEMA compliance requirement).

When the draft Plan is ready, it will be submitted to VEM and FEMA for review and comment. Once any comments/revisions have been addressed, and FEMA has given Preliminary Approval of the Plan, it is ready to be adopted by the town. After adoption, the Plan will be submitted to FEMA for Final Approval. The five-year clock for the next update begins when FEMA gives Final Approval of the adopted Plan.

How can the public participate?

1. Stay connected to your community and aware of upcoming meetings in your town.
2. Review and comment on your town's draft Local Hazard Mitigation Plan when it's developed. **We want your local knowledge about:**
 - The hazards of greatest concern to you;
 - How natural hazards have affected you or your neighbors in the past—this includes sharing pictures to be included in the Plan; and
 - Ideas for mitigation actions that the town can take to reduce future damages in your town.

For more information on Hazard Mitigation Planning, and to find out what your town has done, please contact Alyssa Sabetto at (802) 257-4547 ext. 113 or asabetto@windhamregional.org.