

Hazard Mitigation Planning

What do we consider when we create a Hazard Mitigation Plan?

What are the hazards that affects our jurisdiction? For each hazard: What is the worst that can happen? What do we stand to lose if that occurs? What can we do to minimize or eliminate the loss from that hazard? Typically the mitigation actions are prioritized by feasibility which may or may not be limited by cost. Mitigations can include physical actions – building levees, installing culverts, thinning forests, clearing brush to create defensible space, etc. They can also include educating the public about the hazards, evacuation planning, preventing wildfires, etc.

Purpose:

The Arizona State Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan covers all jurisdictions in the state (cities and counties) for recovery from the hazards listed in the plan. Most of the hazards are natural hazards related to weather and climate, but earthquakes and subsidence are generally included as well. Typically disaster recovery is on the order of 10% or 10 cents on the dollar or less. So, avoiding the disaster is much more important than having the disaster and getting recovery funds. The plans are all updated every 5 years.

County Hazard Mitigations Plans (which generally include all the cities and towns in the county that want to be included) are necessary to qualify the jurisdictions to apply for hazard mitigation grants. Having a plan allows jurisdictions to apply for grants from FEMA and/or through the State Division of Emergency and Military Affairs. For many jurisdictions – especially the smaller cities, towns, and counties - this is the only way they can afford to do mitigations to reduce or eliminate certain hazards.

Arizona's Natural Hazards: Dam Failure, Drought, Earthquake, Extreme Heat, Fissure, Flooding, Hazardous Materials Incidents, infectious Disease, Landslide, Levee Failure, Severe Wind, Subsidence, Terrorism, and Wildfire. Individual county plans identified some subset of these hazards that affect their county jurisdictions.

Link to the current (2018) State of Arizona Hazard Mitigation Plan:

https://dema.az.gov/sites/default/files/publications/EM-PLN_State_Mit_Plan_2018.pdf

Most county plans can be accessed by searching “???? County Hazard Mitigation Plan”

Most overlooked aspect of Natural Hazards for Mitigation Planners: Many of the natural hazards have cascading effects that lead to other of the hazards. For example, drought can lead to wildfires and wildfires can lead to flooding, dam or levee failure, and landslides during the wet seasons.

Most important part of Hazard Mitigation Planning is to have the proper people participate in the plan. That includes knowledgeable staff who know the jurisdiction and are familiar with the hazards and how they affect the jurisdiction in a holistic sense. For example, not just how many acres burned or how many days the fire burned or how many structures were destroyed, but if there were evacuations how long were people gone, did they ever return and rebuild, ,what economic impact did the fire have on the community in the short and long-term. So the planning group must include not only the Fire community, but also the social services, finance director, Chamber of Commerce, etc.