

**WEST PIEDMONT
REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN - 2006
Frequently Asked Questions**

Q. Why do we need this plan?

- A. Hazard mitigation plans, which are required by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K), help local governments to determine their risks and vulnerabilities and identify mitigation projects that will reduce these risks. The law requires that local governments adopt jurisdiction-wide hazard mitigation plans as a condition of receiving Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) project grants and other forms of non-emergency disaster assistance (e.g., Pre-Disaster Mitigation grants). Local governments must review and, if necessary, update the mitigation plan every five years from the original date of the plan to continue their eligibility for these grant programs.

Q. What is the most important part of this plan?

- A. The most important part of the plan is the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA). The HIRA provides a detailed assessment of the hazards that could affect our area, as well as their potential impacts. The mitigation strategy section outlines actions we need to take to reduce the impacts outlined in the HIRA. Finally, implementation of the projects listed in this plan is crucial to the success of mitigation efforts in our area.

Q. What are the top risk areas or hazards?

- A. According to the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, winter storms, flooding and high winds are likely to cause the most impact on the West Piedmont region. Ice storms generally have greater impact than snow storms, and ice is more likely in the northwest portions of the region than in the southeastern part.

Riverine flooding is most likely to occur along the Roanoke River and the Roanoke River Basin's tributaries such as the Banister River, Dan River, South Mayo River, and Magoddee Creek. Localized flooding may occur in the narrow mountain valleys and in urbanized areas due to drainage issues.

Wind damages are more likely to result from tornadoes or from thunderstorm winds than from hurricanes, though the extent of damages due to hurricanes likely would be more widespread.

Q. Where is the greatest potential for loss of life?

- A. Although loss of life is a major consequence of disasters, this hazard mitigation plan does not address it. It is not addressed because of the complexity of, and data that would be required for, such an analysis. Where possible, however, historical data on deaths from previous disasters has been included in the plan. For instance, one person was killed and another seriously injured during heavy rains in November 1985. There also was a fatality due to flooding during September 1996. Nationally, floods are the most deadly natural disaster.

Q. Where is the greatest potential for loss of property? From what?

- A. When considering loss of property, loss estimates can be measured in two ways: total estimated losses and losses per capita.

From both the total losses perspective and the per capita perspective, Pittsylvania County has the highest estimated losses from flood. The county is the most populous in the study area and has relatively higher property values, which contribute to proportionately higher damage costs. The Town of Boones Mill had the second highest per capita losses while Henry County had the second highest total estimated losses due to flooding.

The City of Danville and Pittsylvania County were estimated to have the highest total losses from wind damages due to hurricanes while the Cities of Danville and Martinsville were estimated to have the highest per capita losses.

Q. What is the most important strategy in the plan? What will have the biggest impact?

- A. The Mitigation Advisory Committee, through meetings with officials from the local jurisdictions, identified high priority strategies for each jurisdiction and for the region that should be the focus of our implementation efforts. Implementation of the projects listed in this plan is crucial to the success of mitigation efforts in the West Piedmont region.

Regional actions:

- Provide training opportunities to local zoning and building code enforcement staff. Educate them re: damage assessment, mitigation techniques, and other related topics.
- Work with local home improvement stores to provide workshops to residents on mitigation techniques.
- Identify training opportunities for staff to enhance their ability to use GIS for emergency management needs.
- Work with the Roanoke office of the National Weather Service to promote the "Turn Around, Don't Drown" public education campaign.
- Work with local media outlets to increase awareness of natural hazards. Implement seasonal hazard awareness weeks or days (e.g., hurricane preparedness week, winter weather awareness day).
- Distribute information packets to raise awareness regarding the risks present in the West Piedmont region and provide disaster preparedness information.
- Coordinate with the state to update and digitize community Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).
- In the next update of hazard mitigation plan, include more detailed vulnerability assessments for manmade hazards based on FEMA and VDEM guidance.
- Investigate providing technical assistance for property owners to implement mitigation measures (i.e., strengthening building frame connections; elevating appliances, constructing a wind shelter).

City of Danville

- Investigate all public utility lines to evaluate their resistance to flood, wind, and winter storm hazards.
- Evaluate existing stormwater system to determine if it is adequate for existing (or future) flood hazards.
- Investigate need for regional stormwater management plan.
- Identify funding opportunities to replace vulnerable or undersized culvert stream crossings with bridges or larger culverts to reduce flood hazards.

- Increase flood warning capabilities, particularly as they relate to dam failure.
- Investigate, develop, or enhance Reverse 911 system or other public notification system. Investigate possible funding sources.
- Evaluate need for replacement of culverts that run beneath buildings in the downtown area.

Franklin County

- Encourage purchase of and training on the use of NOAA radios. Provide NOAA weather radios to public facilities.
- Consider participating in the *StormReady* program sponsored by the National Weather Service.
- Provide training opportunities to local zoning and building code enforcement staff. Educate them re: damage assessment, mitigation techniques, and other related topics.
- Staff Emergency Management Office, Public Works, Building Inspections Office and Zoning Office at adequate levels.
- Investigate, develop and/or implement a channel maintenance program consisting of routine inspections and subsequent debris removal to ensure free flow of water in local streams and watercourses. Identify funding opportunities including partnering with local non-governmental or volunteer organization.
- Identify need for backup generators, communications, and/or vehicles at critical public facilities. Develop means to address shortfall identified.
- Develop Continuity of Operations plan.
- Work with the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) to review local zoning and subdivision ordinances to identify areas to include wildfire mitigation principles.

Henry County

- Increase flood warning capabilities, particularly as they relate to dam failure.
- Link structure value data with tax parcel GIS database to increase accuracy of loss estimates.
- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction within the floodplain.
- Evaluate the floodplain manager's roles and responsibilities.
- Encourage purchase of NOAA radios. Provide NOAA weather radios to public facilities.
- Work with local media outlets to increase awareness of natural hazards. Implement seasonal hazard awareness weeks or days (e.g., hurricane preparedness week, winter weather awareness day).

City of Martinsville

- Protect City's facilities to ensure continued functionality after disaster.
- Address stormwater drainage issues. Consider increasing capacity of drainage pipes at Bridge Street.
- Develop debris management plan.
- Educate the public about "sheltering in place" and other preparedness issues.

Patrick County

- Establish flood level markers along bridges and other structures to indicate the rise of water levels along creeks and rivers in potential flood-prone areas. Work with VDOT and other jurisdictions as needed.
- Increase flood warning capabilities, particularly as they relate to dam failure.
- Identify need for backup generators, communications, and/or vehicles at critical public facilities. Develop means to address shortfall identified.
- Investigate, develop, or enhance Reverse 911 system or other public notification system. Investigate possible funding sources.
- Encourage purchase of NOAA radios. Provide NOAA weather radios to public facilities.

Pittsylvania County

- Obtain official recognition of the mitigation working group/Mitigation Advisory Committee (MAC) from the jurisdictions in the Planning District in order to help institutionalize and develop an ongoing mitigation program. Use the MAC to review mitigation projects and coordinate multi-jurisdictional grant applications.
- Link structure value data with tax parcel GIS database to increase accuracy of loss estimates.
- Identify means to coordinate, collect and store damage assessment data in GIS format for each natural hazard event that causes death, injury and or property damage.
- Incorporate (or continue to incorporate) mitigation principles into local emergency management and recovery plans.
- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction within the floodplain.
- Work with local media outlets to increase awareness of natural hazards. Implement seasonal hazard awareness weeks or days (e.g., hurricane preparedness week, winter weather awareness day).
- Encourage purchase of NOAA radios. Provide NOAA weather radios to public facilities.
- Consider participating in the *StormReady* program sponsored by the National Weather Service.
- Work on ways to reduce vulnerability of people with disabilities.

Town of Boones Mill

- Investigate, develop and/or implement a channel maintenance program consisting of routine inspections and subsequent debris removal to ensure free flow of water in local streams and watercourses. Identify funding opportunities including partnering with local non-governmental or volunteer organization.

Town of Chatham

- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction within the floodplain.

Town of Gretna

- Obtain official recognition of the mitigation working group/Mitigation Advisory Committee (MAC) from the jurisdictions in the Planning District in order to help institutionalize and develop an ongoing mitigation program. Use the MAC to review mitigation projects and coordinate multi-jurisdictional grant applications.
- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction within the floodplain.
- Identify need for backup generators, communications, and/or vehicles at critical public facilities. Develop means to address shortfall identified.
- Pursue upgrading of water systems to bring additional water sources on-line, to link community systems to provide redundancy, and to provide additional areas with non-well water.

Town of Hurt

- Obtain official recognition of the mitigation working group/Mitigation Advisory Committee (MAC) from the jurisdictions in the Planning District in order to help institutionalize and develop an ongoing mitigation program. Use the MAC to review mitigation projects and coordinate multi-jurisdictional grant applications.
- Consider providing necessary electrical hook-up, wiring, and switches to allow readily accessible connections to emergency generators at key critical public facilities.
- Establish flood level markers along bridges and other structures to indicate the rise of water levels along creeks and rivers in potential flood-prone areas. Work with VDOT and other jurisdictions as needed.

- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction within the floodplain.
- Consider participating in the *StormReady* program sponsored by the National Weather Service.

Town of Ridgeway

- Work with VDOT, private utilities, and/or private homeowners to trim or remove trees that could down power lines and block roads.
- Work with mobile home parks to identify and publicize nearby shelters for residents.
- Continue to enforce zoning and building codes to prevent/control construction.
- Distribute information packets to raise awareness regarding the risks present in the West Piedmont region and to provide disaster preparedness information.
- Encourage purchase of and training on the use of NOAA radios. Provide NOAA weather radios to public facilities.
- Educate residents and business owners about reducing possible wind-borne debris.

Town of Rocky Mount

- Initiate (or encourage) road clearing efforts early in wind and winter storms. Develop plan for quick deployment of road clearing equipment.
- Investigate providing technical assistance for property owners to implement mitigation measures (i.e., strengthening building frame connections; elevating appliances, constructing a wind shelter).
- Pursue upgrading of water systems to bring additional water sources on-line, to link community systems to provide redundancy, and to provide additional areas with non-well water.
- Identify training opportunities for staff to enhance their ability to use GIS for emergency management needs.
- Provide training opportunities to local zoning and building code enforcement staff. Educate them re: damage assessment, mitigation techniques, and other related topics.

Town of Stuart

- Identify need for backup generators, communications, and/or vehicles at critical public facilities. Develop means to address shortfall identified.
- Identify existing flood-prone structures that may benefit from mitigation measures such as elevation or floodproofing techniques.
- Implement a program to seal and vent or raise sewer system components (i.e., manhole covers that are located in the 100-year flood plain or other areas identified as highly probable for flooding).
- Consider providing necessary electrical hook-up, wiring, and switches to allow readily accessible connections to emergency generators at key critical public facilities.

Q. Does the plan address evacuation?

- A. No, this plan does not address evacuation. This plan is focused on mitigation, which is defined as sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects.

Evacuation planning is crucial to a smooth and successful evacuation. It is typically addressed in a locality's emergency operations plan.

***Q. What is the future involvement of the city council/county board of supervisors?
The public?***

- A. Local governments must review and, if necessary, update the mitigation plan every five years from the original date of the plan to continue grant program eligibility. The plan must be re-adopted by the governing board at that time. If major changes are made to the plan in the interim, the plan should be re-adopted by the governing board at the time those changes are made.

Local governing boards also play a role in determining the availability of local funding for mitigation actions outlined in the plan. In addition, local governing boards can act as champions of the plan, publicizing it to the public and building partnerships with local organizations to ensure implementation of the plan.

The public will be kept informed of the implementation of the plan and their assistance will be sought as appropriate. In addition, the public will have an opportunity to participate in the five-year review of the hazard mitigation plan.

Q. What does “annualized loss” mean?

- A. Annualized loss is the average annual economic loss a specific hazard is expected to cause. Annualized loss does not predict what losses will occur in any particular year. Instead, it averages out the expected losses for years with severe hazard events with those expected in years with mild or no hazard occurrences. (From *Planning for the Unexpected: Land-Use Development and Risk*. American Planning Association and Public Entity Risk Institute. 2005.)

Q. Who paid for the development of this plan?

- A. The Planning District Commission received a grant through the Commonwealth of Virginia from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to pay for the development of this plan. The individual jurisdictions and the commission contributed staff time to the development of the plan.

Q. Who participated in the development of this plan?

- A. Representatives of the emergency management and community planning departments of the counties, cities and towns in the West Piedmont region participated in the development of the plan. In addition, the public and representatives from the business community, local nonprofit groups and academia were invited to public meetings regarding the plan. The plan also was made available for public review and comment in city and county offices.