

# 1 INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING PROCESS

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## 1.1 Purpose

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Vanderburgh County and three participating jurisdictions have prepared this update to the local hazard mitigation plan to better protect the people and property of the County from the effects of natural hazard events. This plan demonstrates the community's commitment to reducing risks from hazards and serves as a tool to help decision makers direct mitigation activities and resources.

The three goals of the Vanderburgh County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan are the following:

- Implement a comprehensive Public Education campaign regarding the hazards posing significant risk to Evansville and Vanderburgh County.
- Reduce exposure to hazard related losses, before and after disaster strikes
- Utilize latest technology and data in hazard mitigation activities

This plan was also updated to make Vanderburgh County and participating jurisdictions eligible for certain federal disaster assistance, specifically, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, and Flood Mitigation Assistance program.

## 1.2 Background and Scope

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Each year in the United States, natural disasters take the lives of hundreds of people and injure thousands more. Nationwide, taxpayers pay billions of dollars annually to help communities, organizations, businesses, and individuals recover from disasters. These monies only partially reflect the true cost of disasters, because additional expenses to insurance companies and non-governmental organizations are not reimbursed by tax dollars. Many natural disasters are predictable, and much of the damage caused by these events can be alleviated or even eliminated.

Hazard mitigation is defined by FEMA as "any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to human life and property from a hazard event." The results of a three-year, congressionally mandated independent study to assess future savings from mitigation activities provides evidence that mitigation activities are highly cost-effective. On average, each dollar spent on mitigation saves society an average of \$4 in avoided future losses in addition to saving lives and preventing injuries (National Institute of Building Science Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council 2005).

Hazard mitigation planning is the process through which hazards that threaten communities are identified, likely impacts of those hazards are determined, mitigation goals are set, and appropriate strategies to lessen impacts are determined, prioritized, and implemented. This plan documents Vanderburgh County's hazard mitigation planning process and identifies relevant hazards and vulnerabilities and strategies the County will use to decrease vulnerability and increase resiliency and sustainability.

The Vanderburgh County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan is a multi-jurisdictional plan that geographically covers everything within the County's jurisdictional boundaries (hereinafter referred to as the planning area). Unincorporated Vanderburgh County and the following communities participated in the planning process:

- City of Evansville,
- Town of Darmstadt, and
- Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation.

This plan was updated pursuant to the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-390) and the implementing regulations set forth by the Interim Final Rule published in the *Federal Register* on February 26, 2002, (44 CFR §201.6) and finalized on October 31, 2007. (Hereafter, these requirements and regulations will be referred to collectively as the Disaster Mitigation Act.) While the act emphasized the need for mitigation plans and more coordinated mitigation planning and implementation efforts, the regulations established the requirements that local hazard mitigation plans must meet in order for a local jurisdiction to be eligible for certain federal disaster assistance and hazard mitigation funding under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Act (Public Law 93-288). Because the planning area is subject to many kinds of hazards, access to these programs is vital.

Information in this plan will be used to help guide and coordinate mitigation activities and decisions for local land use policy in the future. Proactive mitigation planning will help reduce the cost of disaster response and recovery to communities and their residents by protecting critical community facilities, reducing liability exposure, and minimizing overall community impacts and disruptions. The Vanderburgh County planning area has been affected by hazards in the past and is thus committed to reducing future impacts from hazard events and becoming eligible for mitigation-related federal funding.

## 1.3 The 10-Step Planning Process

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**Requirements §201.6(b) and §201.6(c)(1): An open public involvement process is essential to the development of an effective plan. In order to develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the effects of natural disasters, the planning process shall include:**

- 1) An opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval;**
- 2) An opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia, and other private and nonprofit interests to be involved in the planning process; and**
- 3) Review and incorporation, if appropriate, of existing plans, studies, reports, and technical information.**

**[The plan shall 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.**

Vanderburgh County recognized the need and importance of a local hazard mitigation plan and initiated its development. The City of Evansville-Vanderburgh County Emergency Management Agency contracted with AMEC Environment & Infrastructure (AMEC) to facilitate and develop the plan. AMEC's role was to:

- Assist in establishing the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (HMPC) as defined by the Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA);
- Meet the DMA requirements as established by federal regulations and following FEMA's planning guidance;
- Support objectives under the National Flood Insurance Program's Community Rating System and the Flood Mitigation Assistance program,
- Facilitate the entire planning process;
- Identify the data requirements that HMPC participants could provide and conduct the research and documentation necessary to augment that data;
- Assist in facilitating the public input process;
- Produce the draft and final plan documents; and
- Coordinate the plans reviews with the Mitigation and Recovery Branch, Indiana Department of Homeland Security and FEMA Region V.

AMEC established the planning process for the Vanderburgh County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan using the DMA planning requirements and FEMA's associated guidance. This guidance is structured around a four-phase process:

- 1) Planning Process,
- 2) Risk Assessment,

- 3) Mitigation Strategy, and
- 4) Plan Maintenance.

Into this process, a more detailed 10-step planning process used for FEMA’s Community Rating System (CRS) and Flood Mitigation Assistance programs was integrated. Thus, the modified 10-step process used for this plan meets the requirements of six major programs: FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, Community Rating System, Flood Mitigation Assistance Program, Severe Repetitive Loss program, and new flood control projects authorized by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Table 1.1 shows how the CRS 10-step process fits into FEMA’s four-phase process.

**Table 1.1. Mitigation Planning Processes Used to Develop the Vanderburgh County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan**

<b>DMA Process</b>	<b>Modified CRS Process</b>
1) Planning Process	
201.6(c)(1)	1) Organize the Planning Effort
201.6(b)(1)	2) Involve the Public
201.6(b)(2) and (3)	3) Coordinate with Other Departments and Agencies
2) Risk Assessment	
201.6(c)(2)(i)	4) Identify the Hazards
201.6(c)(2)(ii)	5) Assess the Risks
3) Mitigation Strategy	
201.6(c)(3)(i)	6) Set Goals
201.6(c)(3)(ii)	7) Review Possible Activities
201.6(c)(3)(iii)	8) Draft an Action Plan
4) Plan Maintenance	
201.6(c)(5)	9) Adopt the Plan
201.6(c)(4)	10) Implement, Evaluate, and Revise the Plan

### 1.3.1 Phase 1: Planning Process

#### Planning Step 1: Organize the Planning Effort

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires that each jurisdiction participate in the planning process and officially adopt the multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan. A Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee (HMPC) was reconvened for Vanderburgh County and included representatives from each participating jurisdiction, departments of the County and City of Evansville, and other local, state, and federal organizations responsible for making decisions in the plan and agreeing upon the final contents. The agencies or organizations listed in Table 1.2 participated on the HMPC.

**Table 1.2. Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee – Participating agencies and organizations**

<b>Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee Members</b>
City of Evansville-Vanderburgh County Emergency Management Agency
City of Evansville Engineering Department
City of Evansville Urban Forestry Department
City of Evansville Department of Transportation and Services
Legal Aid Society of Evansville, Inc.
Evansville Police Department
Evansville Fire Department
Evansville-Vanderburgh County Area Plan Commission
Evansville-Vanderburgh County Building Commission
Evansville-Vanderburgh Levee Authority District
Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation
Vanderburgh County Engineer
Vanderburgh County Health Department
Vanderburgh County Solid Waste District
United Neighborhoods of Evansville
American Red Cross – Southwestern Indiana Chapter
Deaconess Hospital
St. Mary's Hospital

The DMA planning regulations and guidance stress that each local government seeking FEMA approval of their mitigation plan must participate in the planning effort in the following ways:

- Participate in the process as part of the HMPC;
- Detail areas within the planning area where the risk differs from that facing the entire area;
- Identify potential mitigation actions; and
- Formally adopt the plan.

For Vanderburgh County’s planning area’s HMPC, “participation” meant the following:

- Attending and participating in the HMPC meetings;
- Providing requested data (as available);
- Reviewing and providing comments on plan drafts;
- Advertising, coordinating, and participating in the public input process; and
- Coordinating the formal adoption of the plan by the governing boards.

The planning process update officially began with a kick-off meeting in Evansville, IN, on February 2, 2011. The meeting covered the scope of work and an introduction to the DMA requirements.

The HMPC continued to communicate during the planning process with a combination of face-to-face meetings, phone interviews and email correspondence. The meeting schedule and topics are listed in Table 1.3. The sign-in sheets and meeting minutes for each of the meetings are included in Appendix B.

**Table 1.3. Schedule of HMPC Meetings**

Meeting	Topic	Date
HMPC #1	Kickoff meeting: Review of the hazard mitigation planning process and hazard identification	February 2, 2011
HMPC #2	Review of risk assessment; Review of plan goals and objectives	June 15, 2011
HMPC #3	Update mitigation actions and prioritization; discussion of process to monitor, evaluate, and update plan	August 24, 2011

## Planning Step 2: Involve the Public

At the kick-off meeting, the HMPC discussed options for public involvement and agreed to an approach using established public information mechanisms and resources within the community. Public involvement activities included press releases, website postings, a public meeting, and the collection of public comments on the draft plan.

The public meeting was held during the draft-plan development and prior to finalizing the plan as further described in Table 1.4. Where appropriate, stakeholder and public comments were incorporated into the final plan, including the sections that address mitigation goals and strategies. All press releases and website postings are on file with the City of Evansville-Vanderburgh County Emergency Management Agency. The draft plan is available online at <http://www.evansvillegov.org/ema>. The public outreach activities described here were conducted with participation from and on behalf of all jurisdictions participating in this plan.

**Table 1.4. Schedule of Public Meetings**

Meeting Topic	Meeting Date	Meeting Location
Plan overview and public comments	September 7, 2011 1pm and 6pm	Ivy Tech Community College

### **Planning Step 3: Coordinate with Other Departments and Agencies**

Early in the planning process, the HMPC determined that data collection, mitigation strategy development, and plan approval would be greatly enhanced by inviting state and federal agencies and organizations to participate in the process. Based on their involvement in hazard mitigation planning, their landowner status in the City, representatives from the following agencies were invited to participate on the HMPC:

- Mitigation and Recovery Branch, Indiana Department of Homeland Security,
- National Weather Service,
- American Red Cross, and
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The HMPC also used technical data, reports, and studies from the following agencies and groups:

- City of Evansville-Vanderburgh County Emergency Management Agency,
- City of Evansville Engineering Department,
- Evansville-Vanderburgh County Area Plan Commission,
- Evansville-Vanderburgh County Building Commission,
- Evansville-Vanderburgh Levee Authority District,
- Vanderburgh County Engineer,
- Vanderburgh County Health Department,
- National Drought Mitigation Center,
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Climatic Data Center,
- National Register of Historic Places,
- Natural Resource Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service),
- National Weather Service,
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and
- U.S. Geological Survey.

### ***Other Community Planning Efforts and Hazard Mitigation Activities***

Coordination with other community planning efforts is also paramount to the success of this plan. Hazard mitigation planning involves identifying existing policies, tools, and actions that will reduce a community's risk and vulnerability to hazards. Vanderburgh County uses a variety of comprehensive planning mechanisms, such as general plans and ordinances, to guide growth and development. Integrating existing planning efforts and mitigation policies and action strategies into this plan establishes a credible and comprehensive plan that ties into and supports other community programs. The development of this plan incorporated information from the following existing plans, studies, reports, and initiatives as well as other relevant data from neighboring communities and other jurisdictions.

- Evansville-Vanderburgh County Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2004
- Annual Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Progress Report,
- Comprehensive Plan of Evansville and Vanderburgh County,
- City of Evansville-Vanderburgh County Community Comprehensive Hazard Analysis,
- Vanderburgh County, IN Flood Insurance Study, 2011 and
- State of Indiana Standard Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Other documents were reviewed and considered, as appropriate, during the collection of data to support Planning Steps 4 and 5, which include the hazard identification, vulnerability assessment, and capability assessment.

### **1.3.2 Phase 2: Risk Assessment**

#### **Planning Steps 4 and 5: Identify the Hazards and Assess the Risks**

AMEC led the HMPC in an exhaustive research effort to identify and document all the hazards that have, or could, impact the planning area. Geographic information systems (GIS) were used to display, analyze, and quantify hazards and vulnerabilities. The HMPC also conducted a capability assessment to review and document the planning area's current capabilities to mitigate risk and vulnerability from hazards. By collecting information about existing government programs, policies, regulations, ordinances, and emergency plans, the HMPC could assess those activities and measures already in place that contribute to mitigating some of the risks and vulnerabilities identified. A more detailed description of the risk assessment process and the results are included in Chapter 3 Risk Assessment.

### **1.3.3 Phase 3: Mitigation Strategy**

#### **Planning Steps 6 and 7: Set Goals and Review Possible Activities**

AMEC facilitated brainstorming and discussion sessions with the HMPC that described the purpose and the process of developing planning goals and objectives, a comprehensive range of mitigation alternatives, and a method of selecting and defending recommended mitigation actions using a series of selection criteria. This information is included in Chapter 4 Mitigation Strategy. Additional documentation on the process the HMPC used to develop the goals and strategy is in Appendix C: Mitigation Alternatives and Prioritization.

#### **Planning Step 8: Draft an Action Plan**

Based on input from the HMPC regarding the draft risk assessment and the goals and activities identified in Planning Steps 6 and 7, AMEC produced a complete first draft of the plan. This complete draft was distributed for HMPC review and comment. Other agencies were invited to comment on this draft as well. HMPC and agency comments were integrated into the second draft, which was advertised and distributed to collect public input and comments. AMEC

integrated comments and issues from the public, as appropriate, along with additional internal review comments and produced a final draft for the Mitigation and Recovery Branch, Indiana Department of Homeland Security and FEMA Region V to review and approve, contingent upon final adoption by the governing boards of each participating jurisdiction.

### **1.3.4 Phase 4: Plan Maintenance**

#### **Planning Step 9: Adopt the Plan**

In order to secure buy-in and officially implement the plan, the plan was adopted by the governing boards of each participating jurisdiction on the dates included in the adoption resolutions in Appendix A: Adoption Resolutions.

#### **Planning Step 10: Implement, Evaluate, and Revise the Plan**

The true worth of any mitigation plan is in the effectiveness of its implementation. Up to this point in the planning process, all of the HMPC's efforts have been directed at researching data, coordinating input from participating entities, and developing appropriate mitigation actions. Each recommended action includes key descriptors, such as a lead manager and possible funding sources, to help initiate implementation. An overall implementation strategy is described in Chapter 5 Plan Implementation and Maintenance. A plan update and maintenance schedule and a strategy for continued public involvement are also included in Chapter 5.

Finally, there are numerous organizations within the Vanderburgh County planning area whose goals and interests interface with hazard mitigation. Coordination with these other planning efforts, as addressed in Planning Step 3, is paramount to the ongoing success of this plan and mitigation in Vanderburgh County and is addressed further in Chapter 5.