



A Framework for Hazard Mitigation

Position Statement #2012-03

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1. The term “Hazard Mitigation” has multiple definitions and can include a wide range of activities, depending on divergent perspectives or particular hazards. However, the non-profit Natural Hazard Mitigation Association (NHMA) holds that there is no one right definition as all definitions revolve around a central objective: *to reduce the risks to life and property caused by natural hazards, while also lessening threats to beneficial natural processes.* NHMA supports including different approaches and disciplines under the broad definitional umbrella of “hazard mitigation.”
2. Hazard mitigation covers a broad range of actions. In some cases, focusing on the natural processes can be effective while, in other cases, it is more productive to focus on the people, property and infrastructure exposed to the hazards. A successful mitigation program will look at all possible approaches and select those that are most effective and sustainable over the long-term given the hazard and the resources available. NHMA supports this broad view of mitigation actions, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Hazard identification, mapping, and risk assessment,
 - b. Education and public information,
 - c. Community planning, land use and building controls on future development,
 - d. Alterations and modifications to existing development,
 - e. Emergency warning and response systems, and
 - f. Projects that alter the forces of nature and support beneficial natural processes.
3. Mitigation actions can be implemented at a number of levels: governmental, organizational, corporate, neighborhood, household and individual level. It is the policy of NHMA to encourage all agencies, organizations, companies, communities, and people to be involved in hazard mitigation, including sustainable and resilient livelihood development, and to coordinate efforts with other groups. Hazard mitigation does not succeed in a stovepiped atmosphere.

4. Government involvement in hazard mitigation must pay attention to both taxpayer costs and other public policy objectives, such as assistance to those most in need and protection of the environment. The focus for determining appropriate and effective local and regional governments' mitigation actions should be a formal hazard mitigation plan. That plan should be prepared and implemented following proven planning procedures that include:
 - a. Active involvement of representatives of all parties affected by the hazards or the programs to be implemented including the general public;
 - b. Identification and description of all hazards that affect the area of interest;
 - c. An assessment of how those hazards can impact people, livelihood, property, infrastructure, and natural beneficial processes;
 - d. An assessment of local capabilities to implement hazard mitigation measures;
 - e. Establishment of broad goals and specific, measureable objectives to mitigate the impacts of hazards;
 - f. A review of the full range of alternative ways to achieve those goals and objectives;
 - g. Selection of policy measures, actions, and projects which are effective, affordable, long-term, and consistent with other goals and programs of the participants; and
 - h. Adoption of plan implementation, evaluation and maintenance procedures to ensure the document remains a viable document over time.
5. When pursued as described above, implementation of sound hazard mitigation processes serves as a foundation for improving resilience to natural hazards. Hazard mitigation provides a long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses to humans and nature and breaks the cycle of disaster damages, reconstruction, and repeated damage. NHMA was formed to bring together individuals and organizations working in the many related areas of hazard mitigation. We work to improve coordination on sustained efforts to reduce risk to life, livelihood, property, and infrastructure from natural hazards. This effort includes reducing threats to those natural processes proven to decrease risks to our nation over the long-term.