

KNOX COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

III. PLANNING PROCESS

In compliance with §201.4(b) and §201.4(c)(1) Knox County held all its planning meetings as open forums. Press releases and status reports were utilized to advertise and explain the mitigation planning process to the public. The Team included opportunities for the public and our neighboring counties to comment on the plan at all stages of its formation. The Planning Team reviewed the existing county and municipal emergency plans and incorporated information as appropriate. The following describes our documentation of the planning process, including how the plan was prepared, who was involved in the process and how the public was involved.

DOCUMENTATION OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

IFR Requirement §201.6(c)(1):	[The plan must 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.
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Knox County has developed a local comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Knox County Emergency Management Agency was assigned the responsibility for hosting the development of the mitigation plan by the Knox County Commissioners. The County EMA formed a mitigation planning team comprised of representatives from county government and local municipal governments (see page 9 for a list of the Team members). This Team met on 11 occasions over the course of 16 months.

An effort was made to solicit public input during the planning process. A general public meeting was held at the beginning of the formulation of the Planning Team in the County EMA offices. A public meeting was held at the County EMA office after a completed draft of the plan was provided. These meetings were advertised by sending out letters to the municipalities and by posting meeting notices on bulletin boards in municipal offices.

A press release was published in the Courier Gazette, the local weekly county-wide newspaper to advertise and explain the mitigation planning process to the county residents. The press release included the phone number, postal address and e-mail address of the County EMA office, so that those who could not attend public forums would have a chance to voice concerns or provide input during the planning process.

Notices were e-mailed periodically to the municipal offices in order to keep the towns up to date on the progress of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. These notices did initiate several municipal officers to contact the County EMA office with questions and comments regarding the mitigation plan and their involvement in the plan.

The Hazard Mitigation Planning Team was assisted in the development of the plan by hiring an engineering and planning consultant to facilitate the meetings, assist in research and outreach programs, to coordinate the GIS mapping, complete the loss estimates and to consolidate the information and comments provided by the planning team and the public.

We must admit that there was very little participation from the general public, non-profits and local businesses, who expressed that they had no interest in the project. We did have a lot of participation from a nearby college (Unity College), which provided the GIS mapping work.

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The final version of the Knox County Hazard Mitigation Plan was presented in public forum at each municipality to seek adoption of the plan on behalf of each of the 18 communities.

PRESS RELEASE

(Rockland, Maine) -- The Knox County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) has initiated an effort to complete a Comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan using the guidelines as provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA.

The purpose of a Hazard Mitigation Plan is to assess the County's risk to likely disasters, inventory critical infrastructure and special need populations, and develop goals and strategies to lessen the impacts of a potential disaster. Examples of disaster mitigation include floodplain management, whereby new construction in floodplains is limited, and the cutting back of tree limbs from electric power lines to prevent the trees from damaging the lines in a storm.

"One of the most important aspects of the Hazard Mitigation Planning process is the involvement of the public in the development of the County Plan," stressed Sylvia Birmingham, Director of the Knox County EMA program. "Inputs from all municipalities and all interested citizens are vital in order to make this plan work."

County residents, businesses, non-profit groups, and municipalities with knowledge of past disaster events, repetitive areas of repair after storms and floods, and locations of critical facilities and utilities and special needs populations that could be impacted by a disaster are strongly encouraged to provide that information to the Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee hosted by the Knox County EMA office.

For more information, contact Sylvia Birmingham at 594-5155.