NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Climate Smart Communities

PE7 Action: Hazard Mitigation Plan

4 Points

A. Why is this action important?

Hazard mitigation - the effort to reduce loss by lessening the impact of disasters - is what keeps natural hazards from becoming natural disasters. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), hazard mitigation is most effective when implemented under a long-term mitigation plan, which is why states and local governments are required to have hazard mitigation plans in order to receive FEMA mitigation funding. Throughout New York State (NYS), changing climate conditions are increasing the magnitude of natural hazards, such as flooding, coastal storms, drought, wildfire and extreme temperatures. To prepare, the Climate Smart Communities (CSC) program encourages local governments to integrate climate projections (e.g., changes in future precipitation, sea-level rise, and extreme weather) into their hazard mitigation plans and identify specific actions to reduce vulnerability.

B. How to implement this action

A local government must have a current FEMA approved multi-hazard mitigation plan (HMP) in order to receive FEMA funds for hazard mitigation projects. The NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) administers FEMA mitigation funds and coordinates state and local hazard mitigation planning. A jurisdiction with an HMP approved by DHSES (specifically Standard 9 - Plan for Climate Change) and FEMA already meets the requirements for CSC points under this action.

Jurisdictions that do not have a FEMA approved HMP should develop or update such a plan for approval by undertaking the process and adhering to the requirements outlined in the 44 CFR 201.6 and in the most current NYS Hazard Mitigation Planning Standards. These standards augment FEMA's requirements, include both process and content-related specifications, and require that jurisdictions include projected climate change in their hazard vulnerability assessment and mitigation strategy development.

The plan must document how climate change may affect a community's vulnerability to flooding, wildfire, drought, and extreme temperatures. Coastal communities must also include sea-level rise. The plan must assess and document potential impacts such as power outages during summer heat waves; increased home, street, and sewer flooding due to heavy precipitation or coastal flooding events; and increased structural damage and impaired operations of critical infrastructure. The plan must identify mitigation actions that reduce these risks and vulnerabilities. Communities may find it helpful to review the following documents:

- Responding to Climate Change in New York State (ClimAID) is an analysis of seven NYS regions. ClimAID provides adaptive strategies to protect critical infrastructure and reduce the potential for loss of services resulting from climate change impacts. The report also includes a Climate Adaptation Guidebook that can be used in local mitigation planning to assess the vulnerability of multiple sectors and identify mitigation actions.
- The New York Climate Change Science Clearinghouse is a gateway for policymakers, local planners, and the public to identify and access documents, data, websites, tools, and maps relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation across New York State.
- Regional sustainability plans are valuable resources that may address climate change projections, regional vulnerabilities, and suggested mitigation strategies to support a local hazard mitigation plan.

C. Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Updating a municipal or county multi-hazard mitigation plan can take anywhere between six months to one year, depending on the amount of time and resources available. DHSES and FEMA recognize that many jurisdictions have inherent constraints and routinely work to provide assistance and guidance throughout the process. While funding is available through FEMA mitigation grants, there are also steps counties and jurisdictions can take without grant funding to update and maintain an HMP. Contact DHSES at HazardMitigation@dhses.ny.gov for more information.

D. Which local governments implement this action? Which departments within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this action?

This action is applicable to all types of local governments. The department or staff members with the responsibility for leading emergency management (who have information on past occurrences and existing preparedness measures and have a direct line of communication with DHSES) often lead implementation for this action. This action can also be implemented or supported by those responsible for environmental issues or planning (who can help understand past, current, and future development trends, policies, or activities that affect development, how development affects vulnerability to hazards, and how hazard mitigation can be incorporated into various planning mechanisms).

Cross-department involvement and support is critical to successful mitigation planning, and should include those responsible for public works, transportation planning, and engineering (who can help identify current or projected infrastructure problems that can be addressed through capital improvements supported by the plan); floodplain management (who can provide information on local flood hazard maps, floodplain ordinances, repetitive and severe repetitive loss properties, and actions to continue compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program and reduce flood losses); and geographic information systems (who can analyze map data to support the planning process and communicate complex information, such as the locations of assets at risk in hazard-prone areas and estimates of damage for a particular disaster scenario). Elected and executive officials (who understand overall community needs and are able to communicate how the mitigation plan can support social, economic, or environmental conditions) should also be involved. Where gaps in expertise exist, FEMA recommends that local governments look for technical experts that live or work in their community, such as a climate change specialist at a local college or a retired planning professional who is willing to contribute. Municipal committees, such as CSC task forces, conservation advisory councils, environmental conservation committees, and watershed groups may also be able to contribute expertise.

The hazard mitigation plan may be developed and updated at a regional level, by the county or a regional organization, so long as the plan identifies the local government that is applying for credit under this CSC action as a participating jurisdiction. DHSES strongly recommends multi-jurisdictional plans as they produce better results in a more cost-effective manner. The same departments or representatives listed above should be involved in such a regional effort.

E. How to obtain points for this action

Four points are available for developing (or updating) a multi-hazard mitigation plan that meets the CSC requirements described above and adheres to the NYS Hazard Mitigation Planning Standards.

F. What to submit

Submit a copy or web address of a local hazard mitigation plan completed within the last five years. If the county government led the plan development process, the plan must identify the local government as a participating jurisdiction.

Also provide an explanation, including page references, of how the plan addresses climate change and includes climate science projections. In addition, submit proof that the plan has been formally adopted by the local government and approved by FEMA within five years prior to the application date. If you do not have a copy of the municipal adoption resolution or confirmation of FEMA approval, please contact HazardMitigation@dhses.ny.gov and that team can provide it.

All CSC action documentation is available for public viewing after an action is approved. Action submittals should not include any information or documents that are not intended to be viewed by the public.

G. Links to additional resources or examples

- 2019 NYS Hazard Mitigation Plan - MitigateNY
- DHSES, Hazard Mitigation Planning Standards and Guidance Documents
- FEMA, Multi-hazard Mitigation Planning

- FEMA, Local Mitigation Planning Handbook
- FEMA National Risk Index - online tool for identifying risks related to natural hazards by county or census track
- Responding to Climate Change in NYS (ClimAID)
- 427 report, “Assessing Exposure to Climate Change in U.S. Municipalities”
- Beyond the Basics: Best Practices in Local Mitigation Planning
- Natural Hazard Mitigation Association
- [DOH Public Health Live Webcast: Climate Smart Communities: Conducting a Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan](https://vimeo.com/showcase/5725728/video/333809118)

H. Recertification Requirements

The recertification requirements are the same as the initial certification requirements.