



## **SECTION I INTRODUCTION**

### **A. MITIGATION**

Mitigation is defined as "sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards and their effects" (FEMA, National Mitigation Strategy, 1996). This definition distinguishes actions that have a long-term impact from those that are more closely associated with preparedness for, immediate response to, and short-term recovery from, a specific event, recognizing that the boundaries are not absolute. The intent is to focus on actions that produce repetitive benefits over time, not on those actions that might be considered emergency planning or emergency services (these are planned actions). The primary purpose of hazard mitigation is to ensure that fewer citizens and their communities are victims of various disasters. However, another important benefit is that current dollars spent on mitigation will significantly reduce human suffering and the demand for large amounts of future dollars when disasters strike. Current mitigation expenditures will also reduce the economic disaster that often accompanies the hazard event through destruction of property, loss or interruption of jobs, and closing or disabling of businesses. This process describes the ongoing effort at the Federal, State, local, and individual levels to lessen the impact of disasters upon families, homes, communities and economy (Federal Emergency Management Agency, Strategic Plan, 1996).

Mitigation should be viewed as the means to decrease demands for disaster-response resources. It reduces the principal causes of injuries and deaths; it enables a quicker lifesaving response and economic recovery because the community infrastructure remains intact; and it reduces the societal impacts of disaster because it results in less disruption of the social environment. In essence, mitigation is the foundation of sustainable community development.

Through the application of mitigation technologies and practices, society can ensure that fewer homes and businesses become victims of various disasters. For example, mitigation measures can be applied to strengthen homes so that belongings are better protected from floods, hurricanes, and other hazards. They can be used to help business and industry avoid damages to their facilities and remain operational in the face of catastrophe. Mitigation technologies can be used to strengthen hospitals, fire stations, and other critical service facilities so that they can remain operational or reopen more quickly after an event. In addition, mitigation measures can help reduce disaster losses and suffering so that there is less demand for money and resources in the aftermath.

In practice, mitigation can take many forms. Actions that can be made are as follows:

1. Promoting sound land-use planning based on known hazards,
2. Working closely with the Insurance industry,
3. Retrofitting to withstand disasters where an increased risk is present,
4. Providing opportunities to have hurricane straps installed to more securely attach a structure's roof to its walls and foundation,
5. Developing, adopting, and enforcing effective standards in high risk areas,
6. Engineering roads and bridges to withstand earth subsidence/sink holes,

7. Developing and implementing a hazard mitigation plan to illustrate avenues to reduce susceptibility to hazards.

Reducing the risk to people and our society is the basic goal of emergency management. In a national program of emergency management centered on people helping people, mitigation is the principal foundation because it helps reduce the number of victims, property loss, and environmental damage.

## **B. THE LOCAL MITIGATION STRATEGY**

The Local Mitigation Strategy offers innovative approaches for combining funds and coordinating government leadership with the private sector. It is an opportunity for each sector of our community to plan for a safer future. Through these efforts, it is the only avenue to reduce risks from disasters. Mitigation has become a cornerstone to emergency management. It is the ongoing effort to lessen impacts disasters have on people and property. In response to the unacceptable loss of life and property from recent disasters, and the prospect of even greater catastrophic loss in the future, the Local Mitigation Strategy is being developed to provide a conceptual framework to reduce these losses by breaking the cycle of “disaster event-rebuild-disaster.”

Hillsborough County and its municipalities developed a unified Local Mitigation Strategy during the late nineties. This 2004 update to the Local Mitigation Strategy has been prompted by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. By developing the Local Mitigation Strategy, Hillsborough County can increase the resiliency of the community to the disruption and hardship of disaster and attempt to reduce the potential and actual costs of their impact. The cost of recovery and rebuilding due to the devastation caused by a disaster is much greater than the cost of planning and preparing before disaster strikes.

The purpose of the Local Mitigation Strategy is to establish an ongoing process that will make hazard mitigation part of the daily functioning of the entire community. The LMS process assessed vulnerabilities of the community to different types of hazards, identified a comprehensive list of plans, programs and projects to decrease the magnitude of those vulnerabilities and prioritized the implementation of these initiatives. The “all-hazards” mitigation strategy will continue to be implemented through the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), the local government comprehensive plans, land development regulations and floodplain management plans.

## **C. THE PLANNING PROCESS**

At the core of the multi-jurisdictional mitigation planning process for Hillsborough County is coordination and partnership among the governmental units involved in the planning effort – the (unincorporated) County and the cities of Plant City, Temple Terrace and Tampa. In addition, the planning process relies upon the close involvement of public and private sector organizations. State and federal agencies including federal agencies such as the National Weather Service and SBA Small Business Development Center, the Florida Department of Community Affairs and Department of Transportation were invited to participate. The University of South Florida (USF) provided analysis and review of drafts. Neighboring jurisdictions were invited to meetings and sent drafts for review. Also participating were environmental organizations such as the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD); community organizations such as homeowners associations, the Citizen Corps Council (CCC)

and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) organizations. Private organizations such as representatives from the insurance industry, power utility (Tampa Electric) participated and relief organizations such as the American Red Cross serve on the committee.

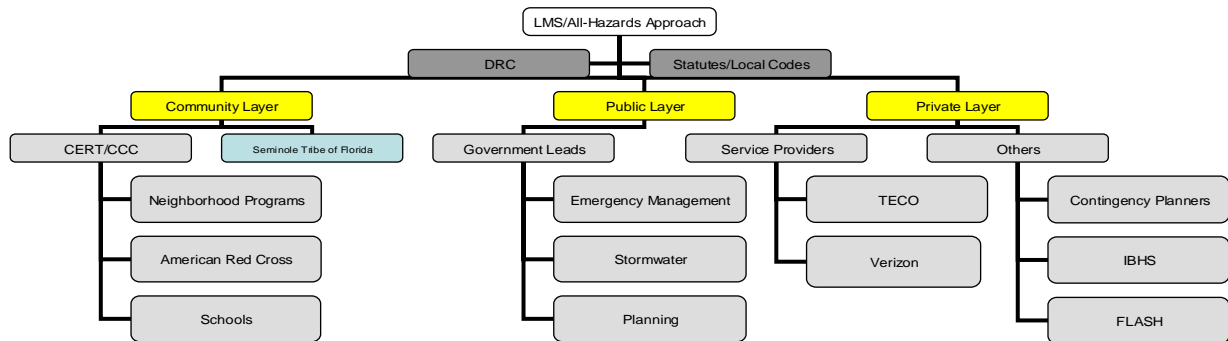
The creation of the organizational structure was the first step in the development of the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) and it is one that has evolved as programs have been developed and implemented in the communities. The second step was to ensure that the citizens of Hillsborough County were informed and educated about the LMS. The results were the establishment of effective and productive committees who oversaw the development and update of the LMS, with the public being given the opportunity to participate and contribute to its finalization.

The development of a mitigation strategy requires the involvement of representatives from the public, private, and governmental sectors. Therefore, every attempt has been made to include the following entities in the Workgroup membership: interested local municipalities, private organizations, civic organizations, Native American Tribes or authorized tribal organizations, water management districts, independent special districts, and non-profit organizations. Through the involvement of the members of the Local Mitigation Strategy Workgroup, the LMS was developed in coordination with neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, agencies that have development review authority, businesses, academia and other private and non-private interests. All representatives are brought together to form the Hillsborough County Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group.

The State of Florida contracted with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council (TBRPC) to provide assistance to the county in the revision of the Local Mitigation Strategy. TBRPC staff worked with county staff to pull together the document, update components, and address deficiencies noted with the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. TBRPC provided four drafts to the committee for review and both County and TBRPC staff met with DCA and FEMA representatives in Tallahassee April 27, 2004, to review the document and address any recommendations for approval.

Figure 1

The Three Layers of the Local Mitigation Strategy Working Group (LMSWG)  
 -- Community, Public, and Private



Abbreviations:

DRC: Disaster Recovery Committee  
 CERT: Community Emergency Response Team  
 CCC: Citizen Corps Council  
 FLASH: Federal Alliance for Safe Homes  
 IBHS: Institute for Business and Home Safety  
 TECO: Tampa Electric Company

1. LMS Working Group

- The LMS Committee consists of the County Hazard Mitigation Section, Emergency Management and emergency management/hazard mitigation representatives from Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace. The LMS Committee assesses risks within the county and maintains an updated list of potential mitigation initiatives that will reduce risks associated with hazards that are most likely to occur in respective communities.
- The LMS Workgroup voted that the group should meet at least every quarter with additional meetings to be scheduled as the workload dictates. All business conducted by the LMS Workgroup is submitted for approval to the voting members and is passed or defeated by majority vote.
- The meeting calendar is provided in Appendix M and reflects the committee work through the development and the revision of the LMS.
- Participation –The representatives’ acceptance of the invitation and agreement to become committee members initiated their commitment to the effort. The representatives committed their time and available resources to develop a mitigation strategy that would protect life, property, and the environment as well as contribute to the economic well being of the county. The implication of the Hazard Mitigation Planning and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program Final Rule is that each of the jurisdictions and representatives

on the committee must show participation in the planning process to qualify for HMGP, Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDM) and Flood Mitigation Assistance Program (FMA) funding.

- The definition of participation as determined by the committee is the mandatory attendance of two meetings during the year. Each member signed in at each meeting. This data was used to document participation. A CDROM is provided with the document which includes the meeting notice, agenda, sign-in sheet, and minutes of all meetings. Refer to Appendix M for the list of committee members and their jurisdiction/ association.
- Requirements - The Florida Department of Community Affairs and the Federal Emergency Management Agency define the local mitigation strategy requirements. The State requires that the Local Mitigation Strategy will provide the processes for application, project selection, and distribution of funds under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Under new Administrative Rule 9G-22, the Local Mitigation Strategy Workgroup must meet several new conditions to maintain compliance. These requirements are:
  - No later than the last working weekday of each January, the Chairperson of the Board of County Commissioners shall submit to the Florida State Division of Emergency Management, a list of the members of the Local Mitigation Strategy Workgroup and its designated chairperson and vice-chairperson.
  - The Workgroup shall include, at a minimum, representatives from various agencies of county government, representatives from all interested municipalities in the county, and representatives from interested private and civic organizations, Native American tribes or organizations, trade and commercial support groups, property owners associations, water management districts, regional planning councils, independent special districts, and non-profit groups.
  - The county shall submit documentation that indicates that, within the preceding year, it has issued a written invitation to each group as specified above in the previous bullet.
  - The Local Mitigation Strategy Workgroup shall be charged with the responsibilities of designating a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson; developing and revising the Local Mitigation Strategy as necessary; coordinating all mitigation activities within the County; setting an order of priority for local mitigation projects, and submitting an annual LMS update to the Florida Division of Emergency Management by the last working weekday in January of each year. The update shall include changes to the hazard assessment, project priority list, critical facilities list, repetitive loss list, and revisions to all maps.
  - As required under State Statute, all meetings are open to the public. They are noticed on the County web site events calendar.

## **2. The Disaster Recovery Committee (DRC)**

The LMS Committee acts under the direction Disaster Recovery Committee. The Disaster Recovery Committee (DRC) is comprised of all agencies which have Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) in the County as defined in the Hillsborough County CEMP. The County Disaster Recovery Committee will be a major forum for providing training on the latest county, state and federal disaster policies and procedures. Representatives from county, municipalities, state and federal agencies in the local area, as well as volunteer agencies (e.g. Red Cross, Salvation Army, United Way, etc.) participate and share information on respective roles and responsibilities during disasters.

The local emergency planning process is coordinated through various subcommittees of the Disaster Recovery Committee: the Shelter Committee, the Emergency Transportation Committee, the Hospital Disaster Planning Committee, the Nursing Home/ALF Committee, the Special Needs/Home Health Care Committee, the Power Committee and other various ad hoc committees and working groups.

## **3. Public-Private Participants**

An important component of the LMS and the success of the hazard mitigation initiatives in general, is the participation of both the public and the private sector in the planning process. It is recognized that this participation is crucial to the economic recovery of a community following a disaster. The government entities need the input of the private sector in order to gain the prospective and insight necessary to adequately address the needs of business and industry. In turn, business and industry gain an increased awareness of the importance of preparedness and mitigation, technical assistance for business continuity planning, and invaluable support and contact information. The LMS committee encourages participation from the chambers of commerce, economic development agencies, private utilities and communications companies, and large employers. These companies in turn, provide service, technical assistance and outreach to their commercial accounts.

## **4. Public Outreach and Participation**

Hillsborough County is required to solicit public participation in the LMS planning process. In addition to noticing the LMS meetings, the section and its partners on the LMS Committee actively seek public input as well as provide the public with opportunities to learn more about mitigation for their families, business and community. Below is a list of selected events and successful outreach activities during 2003.

- Participation in two "Home Shows," held at the Tampa Convention Center and the Florida State Fair Grounds;
- Work with the Emergency Operations Center to provide an informational and educational booth at the annual Expo in Ruskin (or other Community sites as scheduled);
- Provided educational information through such media avenues as the County's Newsletter and utility-bill notifications, and power bills from Tampa Electric Company (TECO), the City of Tampa and the City of Temple Terrace (The City of Plant City is researching capability);
- Provided educational information through jurisdictional Internet "Web" sites that also provide links to FEMA ([www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)) and the State of Florida ([www.floridadisaster.org](http://www.floridadisaster.org));

- Working to develop an interactive web site for residents to locate floodplain information once digital FIRMS are available;
- Continued to publish the annual Hurricane Guide (400,000 copies in Spanish and English) distributed in a local major newspaper, public buildings, post offices, etc.;
- Continued to provide evacuation maps and emergency preparedness information within the local telephone books;
- Continued to provide informational and educational training courses associated hazard mitigation (includes flooding) program through USF's Small Business Development Center;
- The Business Continuity Planning (BCP) Manager conducted numerous seminars and training sessions for businesses in the community as well as provided one-on-one technical assistance in BCP development;
- Mailed notices to repetitive loss property owners;
- Performed an annual review of structures identified as being a repetitive-flood loss structure by the Federal Emergency Management Agency;
- Placed additional NFIP materials within local permitting offices and libraries;
- Provided the main branch of the County Library with a complete copy of FIRM maps after each FIRM update or as required to maintain a full set of maps.

In addition the draft LMS will be available to download (pdf format) from a new web site, [www.hillsboroughcountyLMS.org](http://www.hillsboroughcountyLMS.org). Users will be provided an overview of the mitigation concept, an Executive Summary of the LMS, a calendar of meetings, and an interactive survey to solicit their comments and suggestions.