

# VII. Hazard Mitigation Goals and Objectives

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This Hazard Mitigation Plan is specifically written to satisfy the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. By adopting the plan, St. Clair County will remain eligible for various federally funded hazard mitigation grant opportunities for five years.

## ***Mitigation Defined***

According to FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) Mitigation is defined as the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Mitigation is taking action now – before the next disaster – to reduce human and financial consequences later (analyzing risk, reducing risk, insuring against risk). Effective mitigation requires that we all understand local risks, address the hard choices, and invest in long – term community well – being. Without mitigation actions, we jeopardize our safety, financial security, and self – reliance. In the past, mitigation has been predominantly focused solely on natural hazards. However, the concept of mitigation has been expanded to be effective in reducing the risks associated with technological and societal hazards. Mitigation does not encompass other emergency management functions such as preparedness, response or recovery. Preparedness entails improving capabilities prior to a disaster occurring. Response is a disaster – onset activity to return the community, or a portion of the community, to a normal status.

Activities related to mitigation, reducing or eliminating long – term risks to people and property from hazards and their effects, are a critical component of emergency management. Disasters threaten life and property, but a shared commitment, from Federal to local to individual mitigation decisions, can significantly reduce damage and loss by strengthening resilience – the ability of communities to withstand disasters.

Through the *Mitigation Action Plan*, Federal agencies are expected to apply the best mitigation practices to their own facilities; complete a national natural hazards risk assessment; develop partnerships to advance research, standards development, and cost – effectiveness measures; provide incentives; and spearhead a national public awareness campaign. State and local governments develop sustained administrative structures and resources for mitigation programs, adopt and enforce building codes and land use measures, and conduct ongoing public information campaigns on natural hazard awareness and mitigation. Private industries accept responsibility for being aware of the natural hazards that threaten their facilities and investments and for reducing their vulnerability. Individual citizens accept responsibility for becoming aware of the natural hazards that affect them and their communities and for reducing their degree of vulnerability.

St. Clair County can directly benefit from hazard mitigation planning which is the best tool a community has to reduce death, injury, and property losses; to identify specific problems and appropriate solutions; to achieve multiple objectives in a sustainable and efficient manner; to reduce future risks and prioritize post – disaster planning efforts; to capitalize on Federal, state, and local funding opportunities; and to promote public awareness and participation.

There are 6 classifications of hazard mitigation strategies that can minimize loss of life and protect public health and safety during hazard events. They are prevention, property protection, natural resource protection, structural projects, emergency services, and public education and awareness.

- **Prevention** is the administrative or regulatory actions that influence the way land is developed and buildings are built. Examples include planning and zoning, building codes, open space, preservation, and floodplain regulations.
- **Promote** disaster-resistance and climate-adaptation strategies in future development.
- **Property Protection** is actions that involve the modification of existing buildings to protect them from a hazard or removal from the hazard area. Examples include acquisition, relocation, elevation, and structural retrofits.

- **Natural Resource Protection** is any action that, in addition to minimizing hazard losses also preserves or restores the functions of natural systems. Examples include floodplain protection, habitat preservation, slope stabilization, riparian buffers, and forest management.
- **Structural Projects** are actions intended to lessen the impact of a hazard by modifying the natural progression of the hazard. Examples include dams, levees, seawalls, detention/retention basins, channel modification, retaining walls and storm sewers.
- **Emergency Services** is any actions that protect people and property during and immediately after a hazard event. Examples include warning systems, evacuation planning, emergency response training, and protection of critical emergency facilities or systems.
- **Public Education and Awareness** is any actions to inform citizens about hazards and the techniques they can use to protect themselves and their property. Examples include outreach projects, school education programs, library materials and demonstration events.

### ***County Mitigation Goals and Objectives***

When the county embarks on any large-scale community planning effort, it is imperative that the planning process is driven by a clear set of goals and objectives. Goals and objectives are the foundation of an effective hazard mitigation plan. They address the key problems and opportunities of a community and help to establish a framework for identifying risks and developing strategies to mitigate those risks. St. Clair County’s hazard mitigation goals were derived from planning discussions of the Hazard Mitigation Plan Steering Committee, meetings with local officials, public input obtained during four Hazard Mitigation Plan open houses held in various parts of the county, input from numerous county departments, and the St. Clair County Master Plan.

In order to fully understand the hazard mitigation goals, objectives, and actions it is necessary to clearly define the terms **goal, objective, and action**.

- A **goal** is a broad – based statement of intent that establishes the direction for the St. Clair County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Goals can essentially be thought of as the desired “outcomes” of successful implementation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- An **objective** is the stated “means” of achieving each goal, or the tasks to be executed in the process of achieving goals.
- An **action** is a project – specific strategy to mitigate a particular hazard event within the context of overarching goals and objectives.

While specific mitigation actions for each individual hazard are listed in Chapter 8, it is important to note that the actions for each individual hazard were selected and evaluated in relation to the overarching hazard mitigation goals and objectives of this plan, which are as follows:

#### **Goal #1: Reduce the possibility of damage and losses to existing assets, including people, critical infrastructures, and public facilities.**

Objectives:

- Reduce injuries and loss of life from hazards.
- Increase and maintain appropriate emergency equipment.
- Improve warning systems to adequately warn the public in high – risk areas.
- Improve communication systems to better respond to disaster.
- Increase knowledge of safety measures among employers and the general public.
- Protect residential structures, large employment centers, and commercial facilities.

- Better serve sensitive populations, such as the elderly and disabled and those persons with a limited ability to speak or understand the English language.

**Goal #2: Ensure uninterrupted government and emergency functions in a disaster.**

Objectives:

- Strengthen and maintain critical structures and infrastructures.
- Enhance multi – jurisdictional cooperation among emergency agencies.
- Improve public and private organizational response capabilities.
- Stimulate governmental entities to recognize and mitigate all potential hazards.
- Promote partnerships between the state, counties, and local to identify, prioritize, and implement mitigation actions.
- Improve public and private organizational preparedness.
- Incorporate mitigation goals, objectives, and measures into existing and future plans, regulations, programs and projects.
- Identify infrastructure, land use, and population vulnerabilities through both the public and private sector.

**Goal #3: Ensure continuity of private sector functions in a hazard event.**

Objectives:

- Improve public and private organizational response capabilities.
- Promote hazard mitigation in the business community and encourage employers to develop and implement mitigation measures.
- Develop public – private partnerships to implement mitigation activities.
- Increase knowledge of safety measures among employers and employees within St. Clair County.
- Work with business community to address infrastructure vulnerabilities and security deficiencies.

**Goal #4: Increase public understanding and support for effective hazard mitigation.**

Objectives:

- Educate the public to increase awareness of all hazards and opportunities for mitigation actions.
- Encourage people to assume some responsibility for their own protection.
- Involve local municipalities and general public in hazard mitigation planning.
- Inform and remind citizens, of all ages and walks of life, concerning the hazards they may face and suggest steps they can take to both protect themselves and their property.
- Develop partnerships and educational programs with schools and colleges within St. Clair County.
- Monitor and publicize the effectiveness of mitigation actions implemented countywide.

**Goal #5: Build and support local capacity and commitment to become less vulnerable to hazards.**

Objectives:

- Increase awareness and knowledge of hazard mitigation principles and practice among local officials.
- Utilize GIS mapping to illustrate potential hazardous areas.
- Develop hazard mitigation plan and provide technical assistance to implement plan.
- Review and update hazard mitigation plan every five years.

**Goal #6: Manage growth in St. Clair County through sustainable principles and practices to limit hazard areas.**

Objectives:

- Encourage and facilitate the continuous review and updating of master plans zoning ordinances to limit development in hazard areas.

- Encourage consistent enforcement of master plans, zoning ordinances, and building codes.
- Promote disaster resistant future development.
- Reduce and prevent degradation of natural resources.
- Protect floodplains, wetlands and other important natural areas.
- Institute or strengthen regulations to reduce storm water runoff.
- Encourage and facilitate the adoption of building codes and construction requirements that protect renovated existing assets and new development in hazard areas.
- Encourage local communities to employ the principles of smart growth.
- Resolve any existing environmental conflicts and take steps to prevent future conflicts.
- Encourage open space in new developments.
- Limit building in high-risk areas.
- Improve building design and construction.
- Maintain and protect essential public services, critical facilities and public infrastructure.

**Goal #7: Explore funding options for priority mitigation activities.**

Objectives:

- Leverage grants money by utilizing county/municipal funds to implement mitigation activities.
- Develop public – private partnerships to implement mitigation activities.
- Create and implement a prioritization process that includes monetary, environmental, and sociological considerations.
- Use a cost – benefit analysis of mitigation strategies to evaluate impact and feasibility.
- Develop and maintain an effective capital improvements program.

**Goal #8: Increase public awareness on being prepared before, during and after a disaster, when essential services may not be available.**

Objective:

- Basic protective measures for all hazards
- Disaster specific preparedness
- Health and Safety Guidelines
- Seeking disaster assistance

**Goal #9: Close existing capability gaps to closer meet citizen expectations.**

Objective:

- Educate the public that government may not be able to immediately deliver essential services
- Public education campaign initiated the County’s capabilities and the need for residents to prepare for 72 hour self-sustainment
- Increase the ability to provide warm meals within 8 hours of a large scale power outage
- Strengthen Continuity of Operations Planning for both private /public sectors

There were several open ended questions that were focused on the prioritized expectations of County, local and private sector. Although each of these groups provide have specific identified roles and responsibilities, it is clear that the public have 5 basic expectations. Those expectations remain basically unchanged from 2007 to 2013. They include food, water, shelter, utilities, and medical in which the community does not care who is responsible for providing the service as long as it is provided.

## **Goal #10: Improve mitigation measures to properly manage Repetitive Loss Properties**

### Objective:

- Properties should be prioritized for flood mitigation activities, if such actions are considered cost-effective and acceptable to the owners
- Examine options within specific jurisdictions to offer drainage improvements around structures that are frequently affected
- Assess Flood-proofing options for individual structures that are frequently impacted by flood waters
- Examine project effectiveness for options such as elevation increases or relocation efforts for those properties within the community that are frequently prone to flood waters

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the needs and objectives in St. Clair County, the following recommendations will be included in the Emergency Management strategy. These recommendations should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

- Promote hazard mitigation as a public value in recognition of its importance to the health, safety, and welfare of the population.
- Prepare citizens for various manmade and natural hazards through education and outreach.
- Improve systems that provide warning and emergency communications.
- Develop a comprehensive approach to the mitigation of hazards associated with all types of severe weather.
- Utilize St. Clair County Geographical Information System as an analytical tool to identify hazard areas and provide easily accessible information to the public to assist in avoiding hazards.
- Maintain a strong emergency management system including comprehensive planning with federal and state agencies, and local public safety officials.