

GADSDEN COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN



MITIGATION ELEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

Hazard mitigation is any action taken to permanently reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and their property from the effects of hazards. Some examples of hazard mitigation include land use planning techniques that limit infrastructure in high hazard areas and programs for retrofitting existing structures to meet new building codes and standards. Ideally, a community can minimize the effects of future hazards through a mix of code enforcement, planning, and responsible development. Every community is exposed to some level of risk from hazards. Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, hazardous material spills, fires, and sinkholes are some of the hazards experienced by Florida communities.

II. GENERAL

Hazards cannot be eliminated, but it is possible to determine those which may impact a community, the potential severity of the hazard and local actions that can be taken to reduce that severity. For example, we know hurricanes are frequent in Florida, that flooding and wind damage are most severe along the coast, that low intensity storms occur more frequently than high intensity storms and that the level of coastal flooding is fairly predictable for a given magnitude of storm. Given this knowledge, local as well as state and federal laws exist to limit the type and amount of development along the coast in areas that have been identified as high risk to coastal storms (Coastal High Hazard Areas and Velocity Zones are examples). Furthermore, there are incentives to live in lower risk areas. Insurance rates and taxes are usually higher in coastal and riverine areas and lower in inland areas.

A. Costs to Communities

Hazards have real costs to businesses and residents. Businesses in high hazard areas can suffer when damaged or isolated by storms. Residents who build in flood prone areas are subject to evacuation, damage to their homes, lower home values, and higher insurance premiums. Critical facilities such as hospitals, schools, airports, utilities and major government buildings should not be placed in high hazard areas because the function these facilities provide are too valuable to be placed in jeopardy, especially during times of disaster. And of course, community health and safety are beyond price.

B. Costs to Local Government

Community infrastructure such as roads, drainage structures, sewer lines, electric lines, telephone lines that are built in high hazard areas are subject to frequent damage and extremely costly repair. Also, if a local government belongs to the National Flood Insurance Program and allows development in the floodplain without proper elevation and construction techniques, the federal government can withdraw the community's access to federal flood insurance for both public and private structures. Furthermore, a local government is responsible for as much as 12.5 percent of their local public cost of a

federally declared disaster and 100 percent of any damage from smaller events that are not declared disasters. These costs can put a significant strain on the local government budget.

C. Lead Agency for Pre-Disaster and Post-Disaster Mitigation Operations

The Gadsden County Emergency Management Department is the lead agency for coordinating mitigation activities in the county. The EM Director or his or her designee has responsibility for coordinating all pre- and post-disaster mitigation activities in Gadsden County and for coordinating mitigation activities with Chattahoochee, Greensboro, Gretna, Havana, Midway, and Quincy.

D. Support Agencies for Pre-Disaster and Post-Disaster Mitigation Operations

The Gadsden County Emergency Management Department is responsible for coordinating mitigation planning with operational assistance from a number of supporting agencies. Lead and support agencies for mitigation activities are described in Exhibit 1.1.

Exhibit 1.1: Agency Responsibilities for Hazard Mitigation

	Pre-Disaster Mitigation	Post-Disaster Mitigation
American Red Cross	S	S
Florida Power	S	S
Gadsden Animal Control	S	S
Gadsden Clerk of the Court	S	S
Gadsden Emergency Mngt.	P	P
Gadsden County Planning Dept.	S	S
Gadsden EMS	S	S
Gadsden Public Health Dept.	S	S
Gadsden Public Works Dept.	S	S
Gadsden School Board	S	S
Gadsden Sheriff's Office	S	S
Gadsden Community Hospital	S	S
GT Com	S	S
Municipal Police Departments	S	S
Municipal Road Departments	S	S
Municipal Water and Sewer Depts.	S	S
National Guard	S	S
Salvation Army	S	S
Talquin Electric	S	S
Volunteer Fire Departments	S	S

P = Primary Agency
 S = Support Agency

E. Concept of Operations

This section of the plan provides an overview of the management of pre- and post-disaster mitigation activities in Gadsden County. The purpose is to provide guidance for the

activities necessary for Gadsden County to reduce the potential for damage and loss from future disasters affecting the county.

1. Notification and Coordination of Agency Participation in Mitigation Operations

a. Pre-Disaster Operations

Mitigation activities in the pre-disaster environment are the responsibility of the Gadsden County Emergency Management Department. Coordination of pre-disaster mitigation activities is achieved through the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) process. The Gadsden LMS identifies the hazards to which Gadsden County is vulnerable; assesses the facilities and structures that are most vulnerable to hazards; offers a prioritized list of mitigation projects to take advantage of available funding; and links mitigation projects to these sources of funding.

The Gadsden County Emergency Management Department is responsible for maintaining the Gadsden LMS. The LMS will be updated at least annually, after each major disaster, or on an as needed basis. Participation by local agencies will be coordinated by the Gadsden County EM Department and will involve the supporting agencies listed in Exhibit 1.1.

b. Post-Disaster Operations

The Gadsden County Emergency Management Department is also responsible for coordinating local agency participation in post-disaster mitigation activities. Local agencies involved in these operations will vary according to the specifics of each event. Gadsden County EM Department staff will contact all agencies for post-disaster mitigation activities and notify them as to their role in these operations. Given the rural nature of the counties and the closeness with which the local county agencies work, notifications can be made quickly via telephone using the Gadsden County EM Notification Directory.

c. Emergency Management Organization System Used During Emergencies

The County operates under the ICS system during emergency operations. This system is especially effective for managing response and recovery operations that involve multiple agencies each working on different though inter-related tasks. The organization system employed during mitigation activities is streamlined in large part because the Gadsden County Emergency Management Department has the primary responsibility for many aspects of pre- and post-disaster mitigation. Although there are times when the EM Department receives assistance from supporting agencies, the vast majority of mitigation activities are carried out directly by EM staff. Exhibit 1.1 shows the relationship between the Gadsden County Emergency Management Department and supporting agencies involved in mitigation operations.

2. Coordination of Mitigation Activities with Municipalities and the State

The EM Director or designee will be responsible for coordinating mitigation activities with the Cities of Chattahoochee, Greensboro, Gretna, Havana, Midway and Quincy and the Florida Division of Emergency Management. The EM Director or designee will coordinate on an as needed basis with the Bureau of Recovery and Mitigation at the Florida Division of Emergency Management.

3. Mitigation Memoranda of Understanding, Mutual Aid Agreements, or Inter-local Agreements

The Gadsden EM Department does not have any formal agreements with agencies to assist in post-disaster mitigation activities. Local agencies within the county have historically worked together as needed in the aftermath of disasters.

4. Local Government Status in the National Flood Insurance Program

Gadsden County and several of its municipalities participate in the National Flood Insurance Program. As of April 2008, there are a total of 88 policies in effect in Gadsden County, including those in the towns and municipalities listed below:

Gadsden County Towns/Municipalities	Policies in Effect
City of Chattahoochee	8
Town of Greensboro	0
City of Gretna	0
Town of Havana	1
City of Midway	0
City of Quincy	17

5. Process for Identifying Mitigation Opportunities in the Post-Disaster Environment

The Gadsden County Emergency Management Department is the lead agency in post-disaster mitigation and the Property Appraiser's Office is the lead agency for damage assessment. Through damage assessment, vulnerabilities resulting from the disaster are assessed and mitigation opportunities identified. Mitigation opportunities are then matched with the prioritized list of mitigation initiatives and funding sources in the Gadsden LMS. The LMS serves as the overall guide on pre-identified mitigation initiatives.

Individual damage assessments and public damage assessments during post-disaster recovery operations provide the starting point for identifying various opportunities for mitigation (See Damage Assessment SOP for complete procedures). The Property Appraiser's Office, the American Red Cross and local volunteers conduct damage

assessment for individuals and businesses. Public damage assessments are coordinated by the Gadsden County EM Department, and performed by municipal and county public works agencies. The EM Department uses the information gathered for assessing mitigation opportunities, as well as for updating the Hazard Identification and Vulnerability Assessment and the list of prioritized mitigation initiatives in the LMS.

6. Process to Manage Mitigation Assistance Funds

Mitigation and recovery grants are applied for and administered by the Gadsden County EM Department. The EM Department has managed Hazard Mitigation Program Grants, which have been used to reinforce vulnerable critical facilities and acquire floodprone residences. Funds are managed based on the current grant guidance available. Matching opportunities are identified as these situations occurs in cooperation with the Gadsden County BOCC through the County Administrator's Office.

III. PRE-DISASTER HAZARD MITIGATION ACTIVITIES

Pre-disaster hazard mitigation activities are described in detail in the Gadsden County Local Mitigation Strategy. The Local Mitigation Strategy is a community-based plan to make the county and local communities safer and more resistant to natural and technological hazards. The Gadsden LMS describes hazard mitigation procedures and a series of initiatives that will reduce the county's vulnerability to natural and manmade hazards. The LMS also identifies the hazards to which Gadsden County is susceptible, and the areas that are most vulnerable to these hazards. The LMS also includes an analysis of local policies, programs, and plans that involve mitigation and identifies local, state, and federal programs and funding sources that support mitigation.

IV. POST-DISASTER MITIGATION FUNCTIONS

A. Planning Assumptions

1. Given the rural nature of Gadsden County, personnel resources for daily operations are limited. In the aftermath of a disaster, the limited resources are stretched even further. As a result, the Gadsden County EM Department relies in large part on the information obtained from the damage assessment activities during the recovery operation to identify specific mitigation priorities following a disaster. The pre-identified project list from the Gadsden LMS also serves as a basis for potential mitigation opportunities after a disaster.
2. County, as well as municipal agencies, will participate in post-disaster mitigation functions with the Gadsden County EM Director or designee coordinating the specific functions for each agency.

3. Post-disaster mitigation assessment needs for buildings and infrastructure is provided by local public works departments and local building departments. Chattahoochee, Greensboro and Havana do not have their own building departments and contract with the County to provide this service.

B. Lead Agency with Responsibility for Providing Mitigation Assessment

The Gadsden County EM Department is the primary agency charged with post-disaster mitigation assessment. The EM Director or designee has the primary responsibility for assessing mitigation needs in the post-disaster environment.

C. Local Agencies with Supporting Roles in Mitigation Assessment

The Gadsden County Public Works Department, Gadsden County Volunteer Fire Departments, Gadsden County Planning Department, municipal building departments, municipal public works departments, and municipal water and sewer departments are the agencies supporting the Gadsden County Emergency Management Department in post-disaster mitigation assessment. There are, however, a number of other local agencies that may indirectly support mitigation in Gadsden County. These agencies are listed in Exhibit 1.1.

D. Roles and Responsibilities of Lead and Support Agencies

1. Gadsden County Emergency Management Department

The Gadsden County EM Department will serve as the coordinating organization for all post-disaster mitigation activities. The EM Coordinator or designee will: notify all supporting agencies required for mitigation assessment operations; coordinate all activities required to identify potential mitigation projects and initiatives; coordinate the application process for mitigation related grants; and serve as the grant administrator for mitigation-related grants, unless otherwise directed. The EM Department will also update the LMS and serve as the point of contact for providing information to residents of the county describing how they can minimize damage from future disasters.

2. Local Building Officials

The Property Appraiser's Office will assist the Gadsden EM Department by providing technical expertise regarding damages to properties as a result of a disaster.

3. Gadsden County Public Works Departments, Municipal Street Departments

The agencies identified above will assist the Gadsden EM Department in identifying potential road, bridge, and culvert mitigation projects.

4. Municipal Water and Sewer Departments

The municipal water and sewer departments will assist the Gadsden EM Department in identifying possible mitigation projects for water and sewer infrastructure.

5. Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross

The Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross will support the Gadsden County EM Department during post-disaster mitigation operations by providing community relations support and identifying unmet needs among all segments of the community.

6. Gadsden County Volunteer Fire Departments

The volunteer fire departments are located in various places throughout the county providing invaluable points of contact for segments of the community affected by the disaster, therefore, providing excellent sources of information regarding community needs countywide.

E. Coordination Amongst Lead and Support Agencies

The Gadsden EM Department will serve as the organization responsible for coordinating mitigation activities for lead and support agencies. The EM Director or designee is the person responsible for this task. The process of coordination is straightforward given the rural nature of the county and the small number of agencies actively involved in post-disaster mitigation activities.

In Gadsden County, much of the work involved in identifying opportunities for possible mitigation activities is carried out during the pre-disaster mitigation phase (e.g. during the mitigation project identification process carried out by the Gadsden LMS Workgroup). Opportunities for mitigation are also discovered during the initial and preliminary damage assessments and throughout the public assistance processes.

F. Equipment and Resources Necessary for Mitigation Assessment

1. The Gadsden County EM Department will be responsible for ensuring all equipment and resources necessary for mitigation assessment are available when needed.
2. Vehicles used for mitigation assessment include city and county government vehicles, volunteer fire department vehicles and personal vehicles. See the resource lists available from the Gadsden County EM Department.
3. The following equipment is provided by the EM Department and used for mitigation assessment: office supplies, maps and disposable cameras. Other resources may be requested on an as needed basis through the EM Department.

G. Training Procedures for Mitigation Personnel

Personnel involved in mitigation activities will receive on-going training according to their individual needs. The Gadsden County EM Department will work with all mitigation assessment team members to ensure that all training needs are met. The primary source for mitigation training is the Florida Division of Emergency Management.