

DRAFT Mitigation Framework Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Resilience and Sustainability

Resilience refers to the ability to readily recover from adversity. Communities show resilience by reducing harmful consequences of disasters. Communities that identify hazards and assess their threats and vulnerabilities increase their ability to rapidly recover from disasters. The planned and prioritized economic, social, and environmental decisions taken by the community, as a whole, ensure its resiliency is maintained.

Sustainability refers to the ability to withstand, endure, and maintain present circumstances for an extended period of time. Achieving community sustainability requires coordinated, multi-disciplinary efforts to recognize, communicate and plan for risks. Whole community sustainability happens when risk and vulnerabilities are assessed periodically to account for changes within the community.

Successful community resilience and sustainability begins with an individual's personal responsibility and relationship to the environment and how the individual ties into the overall community. All levels of public and private establishments have a role in community resilience and sustainability by supporting, promoting, aligning, and enforcing policies and activities which lead to maintaining and strengthening community and economic vitality following a disaster. Sound economic choices for the private sector include consideration of the impact of a disaster on their business continuity, to include their facility, their employee base and their homes, and their day to day operations, and their unique context in the overall community.

Leadership and Locally Focused Implementation

Mitigation empowers local leaders (traditional leaders, emerging leaders, local champions, and/or advocates) to embrace ownership of building resilient and sustainable communities. For example, leaders may take steps to manage risk through locally focused implementation of actions to protect new infrastructure and buildings within a community, such as by improving and enforcing local building regulations. Effective, ongoing mitigation is led by the local community working together to identify, plan for, and reduce vulnerabilities and promote long-term personal and community resiliency and sustainability. Mitigation is successful when all stakeholders come together and are empowered to take action. Local, elected and non-elected, private and non-profit leadership frame the future of the community through daily decisions on projects and initiatives that can increase or decrease a community's susceptibility to threats and hazards. Locally-focused implementation is an essential and fundamental strategy for informed, coordinated, and relevant mitigation actions within the whole community. Leaders at state and national level can aid mitigation by setting a vision, aligning programs, and supporting local efforts as needed.

Partnerships and Inclusiveness

True partnerships involves the local community utilizing all resources available to them by identifying, developing, fostering and strengthening new and existing coordinating structures to create a unity of effort with a common objective. Establishing trusted relationships among leaders and communities prior to a disaster is essential to community resilience and sustainability. These relationships enhance and strengthen day-to-day mitigation efforts, and are critical for timely and effective response and recovery activities during and after a disaster event. To encourage partnerships, it is essential to include the greatest number of people, programs, and ideas that share responsibility and values across the whole community. This inclusiveness will encourage the growth of positive community processes and generate public approval to reach the common objective of mitigating risk and promoting resilience for the whole community.

Inclusiveness in mitigation includes promoting partnerships among diverse individuals within the community: neighbors; community associations; all levels of government; applicable professionals and experts; and public, private, and non-profit, entities and institutions. Diversity of these partnerships must include advocates for the unique needs of those with disabilities, others with access and functional needs, children, seniors, and members of underserved populations.

Risk-Based Culture

Mitigation is risk-driven and focused less on particular incidents or events. In other words, mitigation is proactive and only reactive during disasters as the threat unfolds and the implications become clear. Mitigation efforts are just as important prior to a disaster as they are during and after the event. In fact, effective mitigation activities put in place prior to a disaster will reduce or eliminate impacts to the community caused by the event.

A climate of vigilance systematically assesses risk from disasters using a multi-disciplinary approach and informs the public of those risks to influence all levels of decision-making. Nurturing a risk-based culture of preparedness enables community leaders to evaluate a wide variety of threats and hazards and then prioritize preparedness efforts using a common approach across the whole community. A comprehensive approach best prioritizes and leverages scarce resources as mitigation efforts are implemented based upon risk, rather than a short-sighted view of the latest catastrophic event. A risk-based culture involves providing clear, meaningful, consistent, and culturally-appropriate/multi-disciplinary messaging so that the community thoroughly embraces mitigation. Risk-based culture is grown within the whole community, and includes a long-term vision of continuous mitigation within the community framework using meaningful multi-disciplinary indicators to evaluate progress.

Credibility and Relevance

Establishing credibility in a community begins by collecting, analyzing, and distributing accurate, timely, and relevant risk information. Community leaders maintain credibility by making sound mitigation decisions based on this information. To reduce risk and build resilient communities, leaders must take mitigation actions that reflect comprehensive and accurate risk information, credible science and technology, and a sound approach to risk assessment. Mitigation actions must also account for integration between community development, emergency management, and homeland security efforts. Mitigation decision-making and actions occur as a continuous analysis of science and technology, community investment, planning, and capacity-building, as well as post-emergency information. The credibility of mitigation relies on an open, reliable integration between analysis and decisions.

Credibility is dependent on integrity established through transparent, accountable, and targeted implementation, as well as through educating the whole community. Mitigation must demonstrate clear and measurable returns on investment to be considered effective. Clear and consistent guidance, policies, and hazard and forecast data are all essential to a reliable understanding of risk that drives risk informed decision making. The desired results of mitigation are: greater resource efficiency and risk management; reduced loss of life; reduced damages; communities that are economically and socially resilient; and communities that can sustain and increase vitality between, and following, disasters.

Risk

The safety, security, and resilience of the whole community are threatened by an array of hazards, including natural disaster, acts of terrorism, malicious activity in cyberspace, pandemics, manmade accidents, and transnational crime. The broad and diverse array of preparedness activities that fall under the National Mitigation Framework are fundamentally oriented around the identification and the greatest reduction of risks (particularly the reduction of vulnerabilities) as they pertain to the individual, community, and nation. To support coordination of efforts across the mitigation mission area, this framework provides a common approach to risk management that can be applied across a wide variety of disciplines and across the whole community.

Resilient systems, communities, and institutions that are robust, adaptable and have the capacity for rapid recovery contribute to overall public safety and security. Resilience and risk management are mutually reinforcing concepts. Risk management contributes to the achievement of resilience by identifying opportunities to build resilience into planning and resourcing to achieve risk reduction in advance of a hazard, as well as enabling the mitigation of consequences of any disasters that do occur.

While many different methodologies are used to holistically assess risk, most define the risk of a particular threat or hazard event based on the likelihood of that event occurring and the event's anticipated consequences. Threat and Hazard Identification efforts promote the refinement, sharing, and usage of best-available "ground truth" data on hazard likelihood, impacts, and vulnerabilities, as well as the ability to localize this information for use at all levels. Risk and Disaster Resilience Assessment activities put into practice broadly compatible approaches to prioritizing vulnerabilities. Finally, building Long-term Vulnerability Reduction capability lessens the likelihood, severity, and duration of the adverse consequences related to natural, technological, and human caused incidents.

Neither deliberate nor crisis risk management will preclude adverse events from occurring; however, it enables whole community efforts to focus on those things that are likely to bring the greatest harm, and employ approaches that are likely to mitigate or prevent those incidents. Furthermore, the American people, resources, economy, and way of life are bolstered and made more resilient by anticipating, communicating, and preparing for hazards, both internal and external, through comprehensive and deliberate risk management.

Risk management is not an end in and of itself, but rather part of sound organizational practices that include planning, preparedness, operational coordination, program evaluation, process improvement, and budget priority development. The value of a risk management approach or strategy to decision makers is not in the promotion of a particular course of action, but rather in the ability to distinguish between various choices within the larger context.

The core capabilities aligned to Mitigation in the National Preparedness Goal reflect the means to identify and inform risk, while complementing efforts described in the other four frameworks to reduce the likelihood of adverse events or minimize its consequences. Consistent, two-way communication throughout the process helps ensure that the decision maker, analysts, and ultimately those charged to implement any decision share a common understanding of what the risk is and what factors may contribute to managing it.