Frequently Asked Questions
Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning

Question: What is the Disaster mitigation Act of 2000?

Answer: *The federal Disaster Mitigation Act (DMA) of 2000 (Public Law 106-390), commonly known as the 2000 Stafford Act amendments, was approved by Congress on October 10, 2000. This act required state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans as a condition for federal grant assistance. Among other things, this legislation reinforces the importance of pre-disaster infrastructure mitigation planning to reduce disaster losses nationwide. DMA 2000 is aimed primarily at the control and streamlining of the administration of federal disaster relief and programs to promote mitigation activities. Prior to 2000, federal legislation provided funding for disaster relief, recovery, and some hazard mitigation planning. The DMA improves upon the planning process by emphasizing the importance of communities planning for disasters before they occur.*

Question: What is a Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

Answer: *A Local Hazard mitigation Plan is prepared by local governments in response to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-390). These plans act as a keyway to federal funding afforded under the Robert T. Stafford Act. These plans meet statutory requirements that include:*

- *Organizing resources*
- *Assessing Risk*
- *Engaging the public*
- *Identifying Goals and Objectives*
- *Identifying actions*
- *Developing plan maintenance and implementation strategies*

Question: What is meant by "mitigation"?

Answer: *Hazard mitigation is any sustained action taken to permanently eliminate or reduce long-term risks to human life and property from natural hazards. Sustained action means an action that is long term in its impact. This is an essential component of emergency management, along with preparedness, response and recovery. Disasters can have significant impacts on communities. They can destroy or damage life, property and infrastructure, local economies, and the environment.*

Question: Who is involved?

Answer: *The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 has defined a "local government" as:*

Any county, municipality, city, town, public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments (regardless of whether the council of governments is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under State law), regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government; any

Indian tribe or authorized tribal organization, or Alaska Native village or organization; and any rural community, unincorporated town or village, or other public entity

Any local government wishing to pursue funding afforded under FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs must have an approved hazard mitigation plan in order to be eligible to apply for these funds. The following Local Governments will be covered by this plan:

Cities

- *Town of Colton*
- *Town of Endicott*
- *Town of Farmington*
- *Town of Garfield*
- *Town of Lacrosse*
- *Town of Malden*
- *Town of Oakesdale*
- *City of Palouse*
- *City of Pullman*
- *Town of St. John*
- *Whitman County*

Districts

- *Whitman County Fire Protection District #7*
- *Whitman County Fire Protection District #11*
- *Pullman Regional Hospital*
- *Whitman Hospital and Medical center*

Question: What is the Steering Committee?

Answer*: A committee made up of 15 stakeholder representatives from within the planning area will oversee this plan update process. This committee makeup includes the following representation:*

- *Citizens*
- *Academia*
- *State Emergency Management*
- *County Emergency Management*
- Municipal planning partners
- Special District planning partners
- Business interests

The Steering Committee will meet monthly throughout this process and provide direction and guidance to the planning team on implementation of the scope of work for this process. The Steering Committee will determine the goals and objectives for the plan, the public involvement strategy, review the risk assessment and provide input to the planning team on the assembly of the plan. All Steering Committee meetings are open to the public and the dates and times of these meeting are posted on the Hazard Mitigation Plan website.

Question: What hazards does it address?

Answer*: This plan will address 7 natural hazards of concern that could impact the Whitman County planning area. These hazards are identified as:*

- *Dam Failure*
- *Drought*

- *Earthquake*
- *Flood*
- *Severe Weather*
- *Volcano (Ash Fall)*
- *Wildfire*

This plan will not address non-natural or human caused hazards. It should also be noted that there are many secondary hazards that are directly attributable to these primary hazards that will be addressed by the plan as part of the analysis of the primary hazard of concern.

Question: Will Global Warming/Climate Change be addressed in the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan?

Answer: Yes. Climate change will not be viewed as a stand alone hazard in this plan. But there will be detailed discussion of the potential impact of climate change on all 6 hazards of concern.

Question: Does the State of Washington have a State Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan?

Answer*: Yes. The State of Washington is also required to respond to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. In fact, if the state does not have a plan, no local governments within the state are eligible for any of the programs these plan's act as the keyway to. By law, the local plans are to be consistent with the recommendations of the state plan. The State plan can be viewed on-line at:*

http://www.emd.wa.gov/plans/washington_state_hazard_mitigation_plan.shtml

Question: How does it affect me?

Answer*: As a citizen within a participating jurisdiction, you will be able to reap the benefits of the risk reduction actions identified by your local government. Sometimes these can be a direct impact to your property in the form of reduced insurance premiums and reduced risk if you live in a high hazard area. Most of the time, these benefits are secondary. By reducing risk exposure, your local government does not have to expend as many resources on preparedness, response or recovery from the impacts of natural hazards.*

Question: How will it affect my community?

Answer*: By participating in this planning effort and adopting the updated plan, your community will be eligible to pursue funding under any of the 5 FEMA hazard mitigation grant programs. These programs provide millions of dollars worth of grant funding annually for risk reduction measures identified in these plans. It should be noted that not all eligible local governments within the Whitman County planning area are participation in this planning effort. You are encouraged to contact your community officials to*

determine your community's eligibility under these programs. Additionally, if your community participates in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) program, this plan may have direct impact on reducing the cost of flood insurance within your community.

Question: What is the Community Rating System?

***Answer*:** *The National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum NFIP requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community actions meeting the three goals of the CRS:*

1. *Reduce flood losses;*
2. *Facilitate accurate insurance rating; and*
3. *Promote the awareness of flood insurance.*

For CRS participating communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted in increments of 5%; i.e., a Class 1 community would receive a 45% premium discount, while a Class 9 community would receive a 5% discount (a Class 10 is not participating in the CRS and receives no discount). The CRS classes for local communities are based on 18 creditable activities, organized under four categories:

1. *Public Information,*
2. *Mapping and Regulations,*
3. *Flood Damage Reduction, and*
4. *Flood Preparedness.*

Question: What if my city isn't a part of the Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation planning process?

Answer*: If your community is not covered by a local hazard mitigation plan, they have 2 options.*

- *Option #1- They can link to the Whitman County Hazard Mitigation Plan by following the "linkage" procedures included in this plan. It should be noted, that this linkage will have to occur once this initial plan update process is completed. The current planning partnership is locked in for this initial update. No new partners will be added at this time.*
- *Option #2- Prepare a single jurisdiction plan that meets the requirements for that jurisdiction..*

Question: Why should I get involved?

Answer*: The law specifies that this be an "open public process" where the public is given the opportunity to provide comment on all phases of the plan's development. The reason that this is important is that it is the average citizen that is most severely impacted by the impacts of natural hazards. When these events occur, homes are damaged, functionality of critical facilities is interrupted, services are interrupted, and*

the economy is impacted; all having a direct impact on the citizen. The principal goal of this plan is to reduce risk. The large majority of the risk exposure within the County is privately held property. It is not possible to identify and implement risk reduction strategies without the support of the property owners targeted by these strategies. Therefore, there must be public support for these initiatives in order for there to be any successful implementation of the recommendations of this plan.

Question: What can I do to support this process?

***Answer**: Participate! When you see a notice for a public meeting, make an attempt to attend at least one meeting. When you see an article in the paper about this plan, read it. If you get mailed a questionnaire, please complete it. Review the website periodically to obtain an update on the process. And most importantly, spread the word. Tell your friends, family, and neighbors about this process. This plan is very important to the health and welfare of the citizens of Whitman County. If you don't understand something, or want to provide input, contact Whitman County Emergency Management for more information.*

Question: Does it cost me or my city anything to produce this plan?

***Answer**: Seventy five percent of the cost associated with the preparation of this plan is being provided by a FEMA Hazard Mitigation Planning grant. The remaining 25% of the cost is an "in-kind" contribution from the Steering committee, planning team and the 20 planning partners this plan will cover. "In-kind" contribution means non-monetary contributions such as: staff time, facilities, printing cost, etc*.

Question: Where are the hazards in my area?

***Answer**: By law, this planning effort must map the extent and location of all hazards of concern utilizing the best available data and science. This planning effort has identified 7 natural hazards that have the potential to impact the planning area. These maps are currently being produced and/or updated as part of this planning process. As these maps become available they will be presented to the public via various mediums. The County has established a website where this information can be viewed as it becomes available. The website address is:*

http://www.whitmancounty.org/Page.aspx?pn=Emergency+Management

Question: Who can I contact for questions?

Answer: *Contact Whitman County Emergency Management*
Fran Martin
(509) 397-6280

Or:

Rob Flaner, CFM
Tetra Tech, Inc.
(208)939-4391

Or visit the Hazard Mitigation Plan website at:

http://www.whitmancounty.org/Page.aspx?pn=Emergency+Management

Question: Where can I get more information about public meeting dates?

Answer: *As public meeting dates are established they will be advertised to the public in two ways. First, all public meeting dates, including Steering Committee Dates, will be posted to the Hazard Mitigation Plan website at:*

http://www.whitmancounty.org/Page.aspx?pn=Emergency+Management

Second, the County will disseminate a press release to all meeting outlets discussing public meeting purposes and dates. Additionally, each planning partner will be asked to get the word out on these meetings utilizing whatever means they have available within their jurisdiction.

Question: When will the plan be finished? And… will it be available to the public?

Answer: *It is anticipated that this plan update process will take 8 to 12 months to complete up to submittal to the Washington Emergency management Division (WAEMD) and FEMA for their review and approval. The target time frame for this submittal is September 2012. This schedule is contingent upon many factors that can impact schedule and timeline. The timeline for submittal will be continuously updated throughout the process as planning milestones are completed*

Question: How can I get a copy of the Multi-Hazard Mitigation plan once it is finished?

Answer: *Once the draft plan is assembled and is considered to be ready for public review and comment, it will be posted to the Hazard Mitigation Plan website. There will also be an additional round of public meetings were the draft plan will be presented to the public as well as a round of press releases announcing that the plan is available for public review and comment.*