

Quick Start Guide

Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2013

Welcome to the Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan Version 2013. You are currently viewing the 5 year update of the Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan which was originally approved by FEMA in June of 2008. Please use this Quick Start Guide to find information such as:

- I. What is Hazard Mitigation?
- II. What is the purpose of a Hazard Mitigation Plan?
- III. Why do we have to do a Hazard Mitigation Plan?
- IV. Who benefits from the Hazard Mitigation Plan?
- V. Who is involved in the Hazard Mitigation Planning process?
- VI. How much does the Hazard Mitigation Plan cost?
- VII. What are the components of the Hazard Mitigation Plan?

County Overview: First of all, let's take a look at Oneida County. If you are one of the 234,000 people who live and/or work here, you know that Oneida County is a beautiful place. From Pixley Falls to Oriskany Falls, from Western to Sylvan Beach, Oneida County is home to sweeping views, vibrant farms, clean, abundant water, higher learning, classic architecture and good people. Oneida County holds the headwaters of the Mohawk Valley but nearly half of our County actually drains to the Great Lakes.

The idyllic existence here in Central New York has not been without challenges from Mother Nature. The communities outlying the Utica area struggle with the effects of stormwater and flooding. Steep, unstable slopes in the southern portion of the county create prominent erosion and landslide concerns. Ice jams on Oneida Lake pose a threat to shoreline communities as well as seasonal and year-round residents. Neighbors on the Tug Hill experience more snowfall than any other locale east of the Rockies. Ice storms and severe winter weather can cause damages throughout the county. The impacts of these natural hazards as well as a comprehensive list of projects to combat those hazards is the crux of the Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).

I] What is Hazard Mitigation?

Hazard mitigation describes long-term, sustainable actions that reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people, property and natural resources from natural, technological and human-caused hazards. At a minimum, mitigation measures must be technically feasible, cost-effective and environmentally sound. Hazard Mitigation is meant to focus on pre-planning efforts that increase a community's disaster resistance.

A natural event is a **hazard** if it has the potential to harm lives, property or natural resources. Please see **Table 1.1** for a ranked list of **Hazards of Concern** in Oneida County. This list was developed by an interdisciplinary team of state, local and federal officials, and non-profit organizations as well as representatives from Codes, Public Works and Planning Boards from local municipalities. The list also reflects concerns from residents of the County.



Flooding in the Town of Deerfield



Before and After of a streambank erosion project in the Town of Marshall following Hurricane Irene.

II] **What is the purpose of the Hazard Mitigation Plan?** The HMP has two main objectives. First we identified and profiled hazards of concern. This entails not only identifying which hazards are likely to occur but also trying to predict how much damage those hazards will cause, ie, credible worst-case scenarios. The second objective of the HMP is the development of a comprehensive list of projects that will contribute to disaster resistance in each community relative to the hazards of concern. Please read on to find out more information on the development and function of the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

III] **Why is the Hazard Mitigation Plan necessary?** There are practical, legal and financial reasons for keeping the Hazard Mitigation Plan current. In practical terms, an up to date Hazard Mitigation Plan enables local officials and the general public to keep abreast of needs for projects that will improve disaster preparedness. Communities who maintain a current project list are in a better position to apply for and receive Federal and State grants when funding opportunities emerge. For every dollar spent on mitigation actions, approximately \$4 is saved in post disaster response. So, maintaining a comprehensive list of mitigation actions establishes a solid foundation for disaster preparedness funding.

There are also legal reasons to maintain a Hazard Mitigation Plan. These stem from the Stafford Act & Disaster Mitigation Act as well as the National Flood Insurance Program. Per the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, State, tribal, and local governments are required to develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. The [Stafford Act](#) (Public Law 93-288), as amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, provides the legal basis for State, local, and Tribal governments to undertake a risk-based approach to reducing risks from natural hazards through mitigation planning.

IV] **Who benefits from the Hazard Mitigation Plan?** Residents, business owners, municipalities, the general public, vulnerable residents, farmers...the list goes on. For example, if an undersized culvert is repeatedly flooded, then everyone who uses that road - from the ambulance to the school bus to the general public - will benefit if the culvert is right-sized. Outreach projects are also widely beneficial. For example, in order to facilitate evacuations, emergency officials are creating provisions to care for household pets. Also, if we plan properly pre-disaster, then we reduce the amount of post-disaster cleanup needed. Therefore, the goal is to prevent future generations from inheriting problems by properly planning today.

In Oneida County, the Hazard Mitigation Plan has taken on an even larger role. Many of the County's residents and municipalities experienced unprecedented damages in the wake of the storms in late June and early July of 2013. These damages resulted in a host of new mitigation projects that were documented and prioritized on the Hazard Mitigation Plan. These projects became the foundation for a \$500,000 grant from the County to local communities. Local

communities contribute 50% matching services toward the completion of the prioritized projects county-wide. This project is in the beginning stages at this writing of the Plan. All proposed projects will be documented and prioritized in the Hazard Mitigation Plan.

V] Who is involved in the Hazard Mitigation Planning process? The interdisciplinary Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee includes a broad spectrum of expertise. We were fortunate to have representation from all 48 municipalities in the County. These community representatives include officials from Codes, Public Works, Planning, Zoning and Emergency Response. We also have representatives from County, State and Federal Agencies as well as local not-for-profit entities and faith based organizations.

VI] How much does it cost to maintain the Hazard Mitigation Plan? The Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Planning efforts are paid for by a combination of Federal grant dollars and local in-kind service. FEMA funding was used to pay for the time and materials needed by the Soil and Water Conservation District staff to complete the Plan. Local community officials and local agency and not-for-profits donated staff time to the effort.

VII] What are the components of the Hazard Mitigation Plan?

The Hazard Mitigation Plan includes 4 major components. First, the planning committee had to **Organize Resources** by coordinating with other agencies, integrating with other planning activities, and involving the public. Second, the plan must include a **Risk Assessment**. This involves identifying the hazards of concern and determining how susceptible each community is to each hazard. Risk assessment also includes assessing vulnerabilities and estimating potential losses. The third phase is actually developing the **Mitigation Plan**. This involves establishing goals and objectives and creating the list of mitigation strategies. Finally, the fourth phase of the plan involves **Implementation** both by finding funding for and implementing the prioritized mitigation actions. The fourth phase also includes adoption of the plan by each municipality as well as conducting annual planning updates.

VIII] How are projects ranked?

Mitigation Strategies are basically projects that each community and agency needs to consider in order to become more disaster resistant for the next hazard. These projects are then put through the STAPLEE process to identify strengths and weaknesses with regard to Social, Technical, Administrative, Political, Legal, Environmental and Economic considerations. The STAPLEE ranking system is a valuable tool to prioritize projects in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. For example, a proposed project may be very popular but have an unfavorable cost:benefit ratio. Conversely, a proposed project may be a very necessary component for disaster resistance but may lack funding for implementation. Projects that ranked the highest were basically shovel-ready. As expected, projects that rank the lowest had many obstacles to endure prior to installation. The entire ranked list is shown in Part IV of the HMP.

IX] How is the Hazard Mitigation Plan Organized?

The Hazard Mitigation Plan is a far-reaching document containing over 200 maps and a wealth of statistical and historical data from the US Census, the County Department of Finance, the State and Federal Governments and 48 local municipalities. You'll find information about floodzones, a history of severe storms, a multitude of photographs collected County-wide and a new section about Climate Change ramifications. The following is a brief synopsis of how this information is organized within the Updated Hazard Mitigation Plan:

Part I is the Executive Summary. This section provides an overview of the main elements of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and a summary of updates from the 2008 Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Part II is the Organization of Resources: This section documents the hazard mitigation planning process. You'll find information about Oneida County's history, physiography, natural resources and population. Here, you'll also find information about the Hazard Mitigation Planning

Committee as well as a detailed description of the outreach to and involvement of partnering organizations and agencies, municipal officials, and the public throughout the development of the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Goals and Objectives of the Hazard Mitigation Plan developed by the HMPC are also listed in Part II of the Oneida County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Section A: Oneida County's Natural Resources and History

Section B: Plan Preparation

Part 1: Public Involvement

Part 2: The Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee

Part 3: Input from Partners

Part 4: Existing Emergency Plans from cooperating agencies and organizations

Section C: Goals and Objectives for the Hazard Mitigation Plan

Part III is the Risk Assessment. This is the most extensive portion of the Plan and includes several sub-sections.

Section A: Hazard Identification and Profiles including an extensive list of the hazard descriptions and the process of prioritizing hazards for the County. This section also includes the National Flood Insurance Program information pertinent to the Plan. Section A also includes the **Climate Change** section for the Plan.

Section B: This section includes the Inventory of Assets and Vulnerability Analysis for the Hazard Mitigation Plan. This section describes how the property class data was incorporated to determine the potential losses that could be sustained in a disaster.

Section C: These are the Regional Profiles where each municipality in each of the 6 planning regions is described. These profiles include the following:

- A General Overview including 2010 Census data,
- A description of the Transportation network in the municipality including roads, rails and canalways,
- An overview of the land use in the community,
- An overview of the soil types in the community. Soils are often overlooked as an important feature when identifying hazards of concern. Soils information can be used to identify land that is plagued by wet conditions, steep slopes or land that is blessed with high productivity ratings.
- An overview of the Water Resources in the community including surface waters, groundwater, dams, wetlands and floodzone development.
- Historical losses that have occurred within the community.
- A list of the mitigation strategies that have been developed for the municipality.
- Mapping showing the topography, the aerial imagery, roads, floodzones, wetlands and faults (geologic features) for each community.

Part IV is the Mitigation Strategies which includes all of the projects that are proposed from every municipality and cooperating agency. The bulk of this section is a series of tables that describe the project and show the method of developing the prioritization score.

Part V describes the Plan Maintenance and Adoption processes for the Plan. The Adoption ordinances from each municipality are included for review. These are likely the last items to be added to the list.

Part VI is the list of **Appendices** which are labeled by the section in which the reference occurred.

X] How can the public participate in the review of the Hazard Mitigation Plan? Public input is vital to the development of the updated Hazard Mitigation Plan. Public input has been sought throughout the process via surveys, public presentations and participation in public events such as Farmers' Markets. At this point, we are asking you to please review the Hazard Mitigation Plan on our website at www.oneidaswcd.org. Please email comments or questions to Jo-Anne Humphreys at jo-anne-humphreys@oneidaswcd.org. There is no deadline for comments or questions to be submitted. We will try to respond within 1 week of receiving the comment/question.

*As you can surely recognize, **Hazard Mitigation** is an essential planning tool for every community in the Nation. In our modern and connected world, all of us need to be aware of the hazards that we're likely to encounter and have a plan to prepare and respond effectively.*

The key to mitigation is understanding where our weaknesses occur and developing comprehensive project plans to specifically address those weaknesses. Hazards that we're likely to encounter can be mitigated through educational initiatives or by putting shovels in the ground to improve infrastructure. Mitigation methods may vary but whichever methods are used, the point is to make our area safer when the next disaster occurs. Hazard Mitigation in Oneida County incorporates a wide variety of expertise - from anecdotal to public safety, from health and wellness to watershed management - from a dedicated core planning group. With the help of the public, we can continue to effectively work toward improving disaster resistance for Oneida County's residents, businesses and communities and giving our children a safer place to inherit.



Cleanup efforts after the June, 28, 2013 storm affected multiple commercial properties in the Town of New Hartford.

