

Le Sueur County



All-Hazard Mitigation Plan

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Part One: The Planning Process

Le Sueur County, Minnesota is subject to natural and human-caused hazards that threaten life, health, and property. Disasters due to flooding, severe winter storms, snowmelt, high winds, rain and ice were declared in 1997, and disasters caused by severe thunderstorms and tornadoes were declared again in 1998. Currently, law enforcement agencies are dealing with the theft of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer used for the production of the illegal drug methamphetamine.

Completely eliminating the risk of future hazards and disasters is neither technologically possible nor economically feasible. However, substantially reducing the negative impacts of future disasters is achievable through the development and implementation of a pragmatic hazard mitigation plan.

Hazard mitigation planning is the process of determining how to reduce or eliminate the loss of life and property damage resulting from natural and human-caused hazards.

The Purpose of Our Program

The purpose of hazard mitigation in Le Sueur County is two-fold. The primary purpose of the program is to reduce loss of life and property due to natural disasters by encouraging the implementation of mitigation measures. Secondly, it is our goal to fully satisfy the requirements set forth in Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (42 USC 5165.) Under the aforementioned act, it is the responsibility of counties such as ours to compile an effective and approved hazard mitigation plan should we desire to access post-disaster mitigation funds through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Upon receiving a passing score from FEMA, this plan can be adopted by Le Sueur County and cities within the county. Additionally, townships may also adopt this hazard mitigation plan if they wish. Supporting documentation (i.e. resolutions) for each jurisdiction adopting this plan will be included in the appendices after such adoption has taken place.

Planning for Disaster: Key Concepts and Definitions

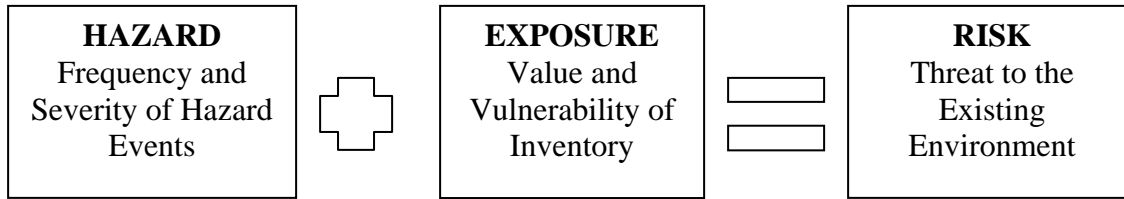
Careful planning is an important aspect of a successful mitigation program. Hazard mitigation planning is a collaborative process whereby hazards affecting the community are identified, vulnerability to the hazards is assessed, and consensus is reached on how to minimize or eliminate the effects of these hazards.

The key concept of mitigation planning is that mitigation reduces risk, and risk is defined as potential threat to the existing environment posed by all of the hazards being considered. The potential for damages, losses, and casualties must all be taken into consideration when assessing risk.

The mitigation planning approach used in this plan is based upon quantitative assessment of risk. Rational prioritization and implementation of mitigation measures can be achieved only by evaluating the level of risk for both pre-mitigation conditions and post-mitigation conditions.

That is, the effectiveness of mitigation measures in reducing risk must be evaluated. The extent of the risk depends on the combination of hazard and exposure:

Use of Key Concepts in Hazard Mitigation Planning



Definitions of Key Concepts in Hazard Mitigation Planning

TERM	DEFINITION
HAZARD	A natural or technological event that may cause damage, losses, or casualties. Included in the definition are floods, winter storms, tornadoes, hazardous material spills, etc. Hazards are characterized by their frequency and severity as well as by the geographical area affected.
EXPOSURE	The quantity, value, and vulnerability of the built environment (inventory of buildings and infrastructure) in a particular location subject to one or more hazards. Inventory is determined by the number, size, shape, type, use, and occupancy of buildings, and by the infrastructure present.
RISK	The threat to the built environment- the potential for damages, losses, and casualties arising from hazards. When a hazard and exposure are combined, risk is the result.
MITIGATION	An action designed to reduce the risk due to hazards. Mitigation projects may be “hard” projects, or construction that physically reduces risk, or “soft” projects, namely planning activities that reduce the negative impacts of hazard events.

Plan Participants

Le Sueur County and the following cities passed resolutions to participate in developing this mitigation plan:

Cleveland	Elysian	Heidelberg	Kasota
Kilkenny	Le Center	Le Sueur	Montgomery
New Prague	Waterville		

A portion of the city of Le Sueur is located in Sibley County is not covered in this plan. The county has the responsibility for planning for all un-incorporated townships

Organizing Resources

The first step in creating a mitigation plan is to understand what resources are available and from what authorities to draw information. In Le Sueur County, our first step was to assign the project to the Region Nine Development Commission. In this manner, the information from each county could be compared with information provided in as many as eight other counties, allowing interplay of thoughts and ideas across neighborhoods throughout South Central Minnesota. It also created the possibility of centralized communication and organization through a third party.

Another resource of value was the existing handbook, *State and Local Mitigation Planning*, published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in September of 2002. Many local jurisdictions commented on their own unique Emergency Response Plans, effectively providing a gauge indicating which hazards are currently being monitored and prioritized by localities within the county.

The public was also of value in the initial phase of the plan's creation. Individuals capable of gathering information about their own constituencies were involved and encouraged to read drafts of the plan and submit information about hazards that have occurred in the past in Le Sueur County, whether in written or anecdotal form. As was mentioned in the opening of this plan, citizens of Le Sueur County have been involved in emergency situations and have unique perspectives to offer on hazard mitigation. Many of these experiences surfaced during a Hazard Mitigation meeting held in Le Center for members of the public and officials across Le Sueur County.

Official Contributors to the Le Sueur County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Name	Title	Function
Vosejka, Mark	Chief of Police	City Level: New Prague
Nusbaum, Patricia	City Administrator	City of Elysian
Ploog, Gwyn	City Clerk	City Level: Cleveland
Collins, Chris	City Clerk	City Level: Le Center
Almisch, Richard	City Administrator	City Level: Le Sueur
Sickler, Rosie	City Clerk	City Level: Kasota
Jones, Roberta	City Clerk	City Level: Kilkenny
Germscheid, Ron	Emergency Manager	County Level
Odenthal, Millie	City Clerk	City Level: Heidelberg
Hayes, Terry	City Official	City Level: Montgomery
Sery, Bonnie	Deputy Clerk	City Level: Montgomery
Edwards, Reggie	Executive Director of Region Nine	Staff: Plan Coordinator
Hughes, Lisa	Former Region Nine Employee	Staff: Plan Organizer
Noerenberg, Jon	Region Nine	Staff: Final Plan Organizer
Havely, Ryan	Minnesota State University	Staff: Editor

To begin communication with jurisdictions in Le Sueur County, each city clerk was sent a questionnaire to complete. The document asked each jurisdiction to answer the following questions:

- Has your city adopted the Minnesota State Building Code?
- What hazards are of most concern to your community and why?
- What equipment does your city have that can be used in the event of a disaster?
- How many full and part-time police officers does your city employ?
- How many homes and businesses are located in the 100-year floodplain?
- What bridges and/ or streets are vulnerable to flooding?
- What public education and outreach programs dealing with disaster awareness, safety, and preparedness are available to your city residents? What departments and/ or agencies are responsible for the organization of these programs?
- What types or acts of terrorism most concern your city and why?

Information gathered using this questionnaire has been utilized as a part of assessing the overall risks of each different possible hazard event that could happen throughout Le Sueur County. This information, gathered from individual Le Sueur County communities, is presented when appropriate and applicable throughout the narrative of this paper, particularly in the “Vulnerability” sections discussed under each potential hazard. The full questionnaire results are also presented in the appendices section as well.

Beyond the questionnaire several steps were taken to develop the plan, which included process events outlined in the chart below.

Process Event	Timeline	Location	Comments
Informational Meetings County Staff	Dec. 2004 Jan. 2004		This was a countywide meeting to inform all jurisdictions.
Public Information Session	July, 2003	City of Henderson	
Discussion EMS Coordinator	Jan. 2004		The purpose of this meeting coordinates and communicates planning efforts.
Established Web Log	Feb. 2004		This allowed officials and citizens opportunity to view plans and comments.
Established Web links	Feb. 2004		Links were established to help searchers find other appropriate information. A data matrix and hazard profiles were created.
Training Session	Aug. 2003	Mankato	Education of Epic Planner Training offered by state employees.
Discussed Planning with Higher Education Planning Ctr.	Oct. 2003	Mankato	Regional expertise was sought and interns given an opportunity to participate in the process.
Board	April, 2003		Jurisdictions discussed the planning

Presentations			process and passed resolutions to participate. These were meetings were open to the public giving an opportunity for public comments.
Literature	Aug. 2003		Developed and disseminated brochures on hazard mitigation and planning
Planning Meetings			Internal staff discussed planning activities.
Created Community Profile	July 2004		This background information was gathered and presented for plan development.
Memorandum to Cities	Sept. 2004		Jurisdictions were communicated with in order seek community specific information and to provide information to jurisdictions regarding the process.
Informational Meetings	June 2003		This was a countywide meeting to inform all jurisdictions.
Draft Plans and Updates	Sept. 2003, March 2005		Draft plans were developed and shared with counties for review.
Multi-county Meeting	June 2003		These were information meetings for all counties, which allow neighboring counties to know what was happening in the abutting county.
Mailed Information Surveys	Varied depending on jurisdiction	Jurisdiction specific	This instrument was sent to further gather community specific information and input. Not applicable to all communities.
Phone Interviews	Varied depending on jurisdiction	Jurisdiction specific	This instrument was conducted to further gather community specific information and input. Not applicable to all communities.
Information Meeting	Dec. 2004		This was a countywide meeting to inform all jurisdictions.
State Plan Review	July 2005		State reviewed plan and provided feedback on plan.
Federal Plan Review	July 2005		FEMA reviewed plan and provided feedback on plan.
Local Plan Review	July 2005 June 2005		Counties received draft of plans for review and subsequently after comments by State and FEMA
County Plan Approval	Projected Spring-Summer 2007		Final comments and approval of plan sought.

Assessing Risks

To assess risks in Le Sueur County, each city clerk was asked to collaborate with city officials and respond to a more in-depth set of questions. Both natural and human-made hazards were identified. Discussions included implications of flooding, tornadoes, rail lines, building conditions, and chemical facilities. City officials and staff were asked to think about hazards facing their community and generate a list of potential hazards most in need of mitigation. Once identified, the hazards were prioritized based on the following process:

Risk Assessment Steps

Step	Detailed Description
Hazard Assessment	For each hazard listed, describe the event and determine the probability that the hazard event will impact your community. Has the hazard event occurred in the past? What geographic areas will it impact? Would you categorize the hazard as having a human impact? Environmental? Physical? How many buildings or lives might be affected?
Risk Assessment	For each hazard, indicate, using numbers one through three, how vulnerable the community is to each hazard. Using the same system, indicate how severely the community would be impacted. (One equals highest risk and impact; three equals lowest risk and impact.)
Prioritization	According to the quantified risk assessment, which hazards have the highest combination of probability and impact? Which hazards represent an acceptable risk? Which should be further researched?
Mitigation	Of the hazards in your community found to impose an unacceptable amount of risk, what steps should be taken to prevent the hazard or reduce the impact it has on your community?

Once each of the surveys were completed, they were compiled and researched to find any patterns that may indicate what the county as a whole should address and what gaps and deficiencies Le Sueur County currently faces. This allowed us to generate and classify a very accurate list of priority hazards for the county. Any hazards unique to individual jurisdictions were classified as such and separated for consideration on a smaller scale, thereby eliminating unnecessary research and space within the plan.

County groups and individual jurisdictions discussed potential action steps to mitigate identified hazards. Various actions/strategies were identified for the top prioritized hazards based upon estimated effectiveness of those actions/strategies. Effectiveness was based upon local knowledge of resources, capability and practical ness of the strategy. Historical actions or mitigation steps already in place were also considered as variables when identifying actions. For example, existing sirens used for tornado warning were identified, although shelter would need to be identified for citizens living in trailer courts. Therefore, actions to include a shelter could become more of priority because another portion of an overall strategy to tornado was in place, henceforth the jurisdiction's ability to more fully mitigate that hazard would be realized.

A risk assessment table, which describes and ranks the hazards via the use of the aforementioned scoring system and the knowledge of Region Nine staff has also been created and included for each individual hazard. These tables are different from those that are included for individual jurisdictions in that they define risk factors for the entire county based rather than the different communities. These assessments provide a summary of each hazard by gathering and presenting information about each hazard, and

delineate areas of special concern among different Le Sueur County jurisdictions. The risk assessment takes different questions regarding the risk factors into consideration and attempts to quantify the level of risk by assigning numerical values to different levels of risk. This information allows the hazards to be compared to each other in order to determine which hazards carry the highest levels of risk to the county. It should be noted that the scale utilized by this tool is noticeable different from the one utilized in the previously discussed city questionnaires in that it uses a scale of 1 through 4, 1 being low-risk, low-impact, and 4 being high-risk, high-impact.

The risk assessment is determined by the following:

- 1) **The frequency of occurrence:** This asks how often the events will happen and how likely it is that the hazard will occur. The assigned values are:
 - a. Unlikely - 1
 - b. Occasional – 2
 - c. Likely – 3
 - d. Highly Likely – 4

- 2) **Warning Time:** This asks approximately the amount of warning time prior to an event.
 - a. More than 12 hours – 1
 - b. Between 6 and 12 hours – 2
 - c. Between 3 and 6 hours – 3
 - d. Minimal or No Warning – 4

- 3) **Potential Severity:** This asks how severe the overall effects of the event would be.
 - a. Limited – 1
 - b. Minor – 2
 - c. Major – 3
 - d. Substantial – 4

- 4) **Risk Level:** This asks how severe the impacts of an event would be for the differing categories of Citizens/People, Animals/Livestock, Housing, Critical Structures, and Infrastructure. The average of all these categories makes up the numerical value of the risk.

The priority level of the hazard is then determined by adding up all the numbers and dividing by 4 (which represents the criteria explained above) to get the average risk level for each hazard. The risk values are as follows:

Overall Risk Priority Levels

- 1 – Very Low
- 2 – Low
- 3 – Moderate
- 4 – High

The values for this prioritized risk assessment were determined by a variety of resources throughout Le Sueur County (as explained in the “Assessing Risks” section above). Meetings and discussions were held with representatives of various agencies in the county, and jurisdictions were asked to fill out questionnaires regarding their levels of concern for different

events. Other information from individual community profiles, such as available equipment and response personnel and facilities, was also taken into consideration.

Developing the Document

The Region Nine Development Commission created drafts of the hazard mitigation plan throughout each step of the planning process and circulated them back and forth among city and county officials. Representatives of the public made corrections and the plan was edited for content and grammatical errors by members of the graduate English program at Minnesota State University in Mankato. Scott Salsbury, a land-use planning consultant, generated maps while tables and Lisa Hughes and Angela Miller of Region Nine, the drafters of the plan, compiled figures. The objective when writing this plan was to include all of the necessary information while keeping the plan brief, concise, and easy to read and refer to.

Public Involvement and Participation

The public were engaged and communicated with in several ways. Some approaches provided and presented information to the public, while others made information available for review. The chart below identifies at least seven of nine methods used during the Le Sueur County planning process, which provided access for the general public during the planning process. Not only were these methods used during the planning process, but they will also be key to continuing public engagement in the process.

Strategy Number	Public Communication/Engagement Method	Comments
1.	County Website	Plans were used by some counties on their website. Le Sueur County did not have the plan on their site. However, all jurisdictions in the County will be able to have a plan on their website or link to the county or region website.
2.	Newspaper	Public notices or press releases were completed to inform the public of information sessions during the planning process.
3.	Information Meetings	Information meetings were conducted in order to provide an opportunity for the public to hear and comment on the plan/plan process.
4.	Task Force	A diverse group of professionals were coordinated in order to help develop, review and comment on the plan.
5.	Board Public Meetings	Elected officials passed resolutions to participate during meeting, which the public were invited to attend. This was another opportunity to provide information to those who might not use the website or unable to attend a specific meeting.
6.	Flyers	Informational pieces were developed and