

## Hillsborough Township Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

Natural hazards have the potential to cause property loss, loss of life, economic hardship, and threats to public health and safety. While an important aspect of emergency management deals with disaster recovery (the actions that a community takes to repair damages), an equally important aspect of emergency management involves hazard mitigation - sustained actions taken to reduce long-term risk to life and property. They are things we do today to be more protected in the future. For example, elevating or acquiring buildings in flood hazard areas, relocating critical facilities out of hazard areas, using fire-resistant construction materials in wildfire hazard areas, etc. Hazard mitigation actions are essential to breaking the typical disaster cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. With careful selection, they can be long-term, cost-effective means of reducing risk and helping to create a more sustainable and disaster-resilient community.

A hazard mitigation plan describes an area's vulnerability to the various natural hazards that are typically present, along with an array of actions and projects for reducing key risks. This project list is known as a "mitigation strategy." While natural disasters cannot be prevented from occurring, the continued implementation of mitigation strategies identified in the plan will gradually, but steadily, make our communities more sustainable and disaster-resilient.

The Multi-Jurisdictional Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan for Somerset County was prepared to meet the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (OMA 2000), which requires all states and local governments to have a hazard mitigation plan in order to be eligible to apply for certain types of federal hazard mitigation project grants. FEMA grant monies were received to offset the costs of the plan's development. Somerset County used a 'multi-jurisdictional' approach, inviting all of the municipalities within the County to participate in the plan. The initial plan was approved by FEMA in 2008. At the time of the first plan update in 2014, all 21 of the County's jurisdictions opted to participate. This opened the door for the County and each of its 21 participating jurisdictions to apply to FEMA for hazard mitigation project funding, including monies which became available under recent Federal disaster declarations such as Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Plan participants have been working since the last plan update was approved by FEMA in 2014 to implement the projects that were listed in their mitigation strategies. All 21 municipalities have adopted resolutions agreeing to participate in the current update process which began in July 2017.

Hazard mitigation plans must be: (a) implemented on an ongoing basis, and (b) updated every five years to ensure that they remain applicable representations of local risk and locally-preferred risk reduction strategies. . The updated plan is expected to be reapproved by FEMA and adopted by participating communities between late 2018 and early 2019. Each participating jurisdiction is attending meetings, providing feedback in a series of topic areas, reaching out to the public and other key stakeholders in the community, and developing an updated mitigation strategy. Successful participation in the plan update process is required to maintain eligibility to apply for mitigation project grants.

For questions or other feedback, or to find out how you can become involved, please contact Hillsborough Township Engineering or Emergency Management at 908-369-4313. At the County level, please feel free to contact the County Planning Division- phone: (908) 231-7021, e-mail: [kratina@co.somerset.nj.us](mailto:kratina@co.somerset.nj.us) or the County Office of Emergency Management- phone: (908) 725-5051, email [werner@co.somerset.nj.us](mailto:werner@co.somerset.nj.us). More information about the project is maintained on the County web site at: <http://www.co.somerset.nj.us/government/public-health-safety/hazardmitigation>. Interested individuals may also join the County's Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan E-Bulletin available at the following link: <https://www.co.somerset.nj.us/about/email-subscriptions>