An Interactive Website For Hazard Mitigation Planning

A DHS Science and Technology Center of Excellence Solution

Helping Communities Develop Hazard Mitigation Plans

Communities now have access to a suite of pioneering planning tools via a free, interactive website developed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology (S&T) **Coastal Resilience Center of Excellence** and the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University: *http://hrrc.arch.tamu.edu/*.

Available for the first time, this well-researched suite of tools is based on best practices identified during a systematic study of 175 local hazard mitigation plans from six states that focused on the quality, implementation, and performance of these plans. The study is the first national evaluation of plans completed since the passage of the 2000 Federal Disaster Mitigation Act, which requires local governments to develop and adopt a hazard mitigation plan to qualify for federal disaster funds.

Federal, state, and local officials can access these tools through the *Beyond the Basics* website, *http://mitigationguide.org/*, which is based on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Local Mitigation Planning Handbook. The website helps users to develop or update hazard mitigation plans that meet FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant program requirements.

Federal Government Incurs Majority of Costs Related to Hurricane Damage

As natural disasters have become more frequent and destructive, the associated costs of responding to and recovering from these events have risen exponentially. In turn, government agencies have made it a top priority to develop and implement hazard mitigation plans to limit property damage and save lives.

Disaster Mitigation Practitioners Leverage *Beyond the Basics* Website Resources

FEMA, the National Hazard Mitigation Association, and several local communities have tapped into the *Beyond the Basics* website to access its unique suite of tools.

The American Planning Association's Hazard Mitigation and Disaster Recovery Planning Division has posted research reports from *Beyond the Basics* on their website and encourages professional land use planners to use the information when developing hazard mitigation plans.
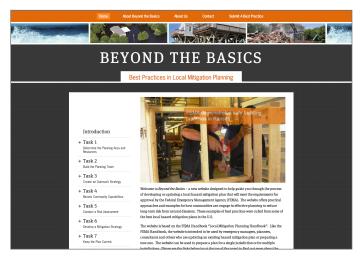
Website Tools and Resources

The *Beyond the Basics* website guides community planners through a series of nine modules to develop a hazard mitigation plan:

- Determine the Planning Area and Resources
- Build the Planning Team
- Create an Outreach Strategy
- Review Community Capabilities
- Conduct a Risk Assessment
- Develop a Mitigation Strategy
- Keep the Plan Current
- Review and Adopt the Plan
- Create a Safe and Resilient Community

In addition to the modules, the website provides:

- A plan quality self-assessment tool (Planning Process Worksheets) with a narrative that helps end users develop better plans
- A sample of actual community plans
- An opportunity to submit ideas for best practices in hazard mitigation planning
- Practical approaches and examples of how communities can engage in effective planning to reduce long-term risk from natural disasters

Next Steps

Researchers are updating the website to include best practices for hazard mitigation planning linked to climate change and social vulnerability.