

# INTRODUCTION

## *Background*

Natural hazards, such as floods, tornadoes and severe winter storms, are a part of the world around us. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little we can do to control their force and intensity. In today's world we must also consider human-caused hazards, such as technological accidents or deliberate acts of terrorism, as legitimate and significant threats to life, safety and property. The Houston-Galveston Area Council's (H-GAC) region is vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards, including flooding, tornadoes, tropical storms and hurricanes. It is also vulnerable to a variety of human-caused hazards, including chemical releases, terrorist attacks, and spills or explosions associated with the fixed storage or mobile transport of hazardous materials. These hazards threaten the safety of residents and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property, disrupt the local economy and impact the overall quality of life of individuals who live, work and play in the H-GAC region.

While we cannot eliminate natural and human-caused hazards, there is much we can do to lessen their potential impact upon our community and our citizens. The effective reduction of a hazard's impact can decrease the likelihood that such events will result in a disaster. The concept and practice of reducing risks to people and property from known hazards is generally referred to as *hazard mitigation*.

Hazard mitigation techniques include both structural measures, such as strengthening or protecting buildings and infrastructure from the destructive forces of potential hazards, and non-structural measures, such as the adoption of sound land use policies or the creation of public awareness programs. Some of the most effective mitigation measures are implemented at the local government level where decisions on the regulation and control of development are made. A comprehensive mitigation strategy addresses hazard vulnerabilities that exist today and in the foreseeable future. Therefore it is essential that projected patterns of development are evaluated and considered in terms of how that growth will increase or decrease a community's overall hazard vulnerability.

One of the most effective tools a community can use to reduce hazard vulnerability is to develop, adopt, and update as needed, a local *hazard mitigation plan*. A hazard mitigation plan establishes the broad community vision and guiding principles for reducing hazard risk, including the development of specific mitigation actions designed to eliminate or reduce identified vulnerabilities.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (hereinafter "Hazard Mitigation Plan" or "Plan") is a logical first step toward incorporating hazard mitigation principles and practices into the routine government activities and functions of the eight county planning area (including participating municipalities). The mitigation actions noted in this Plan go beyond recommending structural solutions to reduce existing vulnerability. Local policies addressing community growth, incentives to protect natural resources, and public awareness and outreach campaigns are examples of other measures that can be used to reduce the future vulnerability of the H-GAC region to identified hazards. The Plan has been designed to be a living document, with implementation and evaluation procedures included to help achieve meaningful objectives and successful outcomes.



### ***Hazard Mitigation:***

*Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards.*

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## **Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000**

In an effort to reduce the Nation's mounting natural disaster losses, the United States Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000). Section 322 of the Act emphasizes the need for state and local governments to coordinate mitigation planning activities. In addition, the Disaster Mitigation Act requires that states and local governments develop and adopt a hazard mitigation plan in order to be eligible for federal mitigation grant funding. These funds include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, both of which are administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The Plan has been prepared in coordination with FEMA and the Texas Division of Emergency Management to ensure that the Plan meets all applicable DMA 2000 and state Annex P<sup>1</sup> requirements. A Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk, found in Appendix B, provides a summary of federal and state minimum standards and notes the location where each requirement is met within the Plan.

## *Purpose*

The purpose of this Hazard Mitigation Plan is essentially to:

- ? Protect life, safety and property by reducing the potential for future damages and economic losses that result from natural and human-caused hazards;
- ? Qualify for grant funding in both the pre-disaster and post-disaster environment;
- ? Speed recovery and redevelopment following future disaster events;
- ? Demonstrate a firm local commitment to hazard mitigation principles; and
- ? Comply with state and federal legislative requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.

## *Scope*

The Plan will focus on those hazards determined to be “high and moderate risk” as determined from a hazard risk assessment conducted in the eight county area.<sup>2</sup> This enables those counties and cities participating in the Plan to prioritize mitigation actions based on a greater understanding of hazard risk and vulnerability.

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<sup>1</sup> Annex P requirements are hazard mitigation planning requirements established by the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

<sup>2</sup> See Section 4: *Risk Assessment*, for a description of hazards, including a comparative ranking of their relative risk.

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The geographic scope of the Plan includes the eight counties and 74 participating municipalities listed in **Table 1.1**. The Houston-Galveston Area Council is also a participant in the planning process and is included in the plan. The Houston-Galveston Area Council will also officially adopt the plan.

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Table 1.1

## Participating Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	
<b>Austin County</b>	City of La Marque
City of Bellville	Village of Tiki Island
City of Brazos Country	<b>Liberty County</b>
City of Industry	City of Ames
Town of San Felipe	City of Cleveland
City of Sealy	City of Daisetta
City of Wallis	City of Dayton
<b>Brazoria County</b>	City of Dayton Lakes
City of Alvin	City of Devers
City of Angleton	City of Hardin
City of Bailey's Prairie	Town of Kenefick
City of Bonney	City of Liberty
City of Brazoria	City of North Cleveland
City of Brookside Village	City of Plum Grove
City of Clute	<b>Montgomery County</b>
City of Danbury	City of Conroe
City of Freeport	Town of Cut and Shoot
City of Hillcrest Village	City of Magnolia
City of Holiday Lakes	City of Montgomery
City of Iowa Colony	City of Oak Ridge North
City of Jones Creek	City of Panorama Village
City of Lake Jackson	City of Patton Village
City of Liverpool	Town of Roman Forest
City of Manvel	City of Shenandoah
City of Oyster Creek	City of Splendora
City of Quintana	City of Stagecoach
City of Richwood	City of Woodloch
Village of Surfside Beach	City of Woodbranch
City of Sweeny	The Woodlands
<b>Chambers County</b>	City of Willis
City of Anahuac	<b>Walker County</b>
City of Beach City	City of Huntsville
City of Cove	City of New Waverly
City of Old River-Winfree	City of Riverside
City of Mont Belvieu	<b>Waller County</b>
<b>Galveston County</b>	City of Brookshire
City of Bayou Vista	City of Hempstead
City of Clear Lake Shores	City of Pattison
City of Dickinson	City of Pine Island
City of Galveston	City of Prairie View
City of Hitchcock	City of Waller
City of Jamaica Beach	<b>Houston-Galveston Area Council</b>
City of Kemah	

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## *Authority*

The Plan, developed in accordance with current state and federal rules and regulations governing local hazard mitigation plans, has been adopted by the eight counties and 70 participating municipalities. The Plan shall be routinely monitored and revised to maintain compliance with the following provisions, rules and legislation:

- ? Section 322, Mitigation Planning, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as enacted by Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-390);
- ? FEMA's Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201; and
- ? Texas Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management; the State of Texas Hazard Analysis document; Annex P; and Checklist P.