

PLANNING PROCESS

This section describes the *Planning Process* undertaken by the jurisdictions participating in the H-GAC regional planning effort. Specific topics include:

- ? Overview of hazard mitigation planning;
- ? Introduction of the planning team;
- ? Explanation of how the Plan was prepared;
- ? Discussion of how the public was involved; and
- ? Documentation of multi-jurisdictional participation.

Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning

Hazard mitigation planning is the process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks, and determining how to minimize or manage those risks. Mitigation planning can be described as the means to break the repetitive cycle of disaster loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation is that pre-disaster investments will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery and reconstruction. The primary objective of the planning process is the identification of specific mitigation actions, which when viewed as a whole, represents a comprehensive strategy to reduce the impact of hazards. Responsibility for each mitigation action is assigned to a specific individual, department or agency along with a schedule for its implementation. *Plan Maintenance Procedures* (located in Section 7 of this Plan) are established to monitor progress, including the regular evaluation and enhancement of the Plan. The maintenance procedures ensure that the Plan remains a dynamic and functional document over time.

Mitigation planning offers many benefits, including:

- ? Saving lives and property;
- ? Saving money;
- ? Speeding recovery following disasters;
- ? Reducing future vulnerability through wise development and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction;
- ? Expediting the receipt of pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding; and
- ? Demonstrating a firm commitment to improving community health and safety.

The Planning Team

The planning team consisted of participating counties and municipalities, staff members from the Houston-Galveston Area Council, the consulting firms PBS&J and H2O Partners, and the public. The H-GAC mitigation planning effort included the following eight counties: Austin, Brazoria,

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Chambers, Galveston, Liberty, Montgomery, Waller and Walker.¹ Within each county, municipalities were encouraged to participate. Of the total municipalities located in the eight counties, seventy-four participated in the mitigation planning process.

Many small cities and towns have limited resources and rely heavily upon County Emergency Management Coordinators to address hazard mitigation issues. While County representatives are listed in **Table 2.1** Primary Planning Team Members, a substantial number of city and municipality representatives participated in the planning and development of the plan by attending meetings, completing capability and vulnerability assessments, and assisting in the identification of individual mitigation action items.² A partial listing of the municipal officials from the participating jurisdictions is shown in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.1: Primary Planning Team Members

Representative Name	Organization/Company
Gavin Smith	PBS&J
Nathan Slaughter	PBS&J
Darrin Punchard	PBS&J
Laurel Lacy	H2O Planners, Inc
Cathy Meek	H2O Planners, Inc
JoAnn Howard	H2O Planners, Inc
Carl Masterson	H-GAC
Chuck Wemple	H-GAC
Jacinta Hammersly	H-GAC
Chris McGowan	H-GAC
Christy Durham	H-GAC
Carolyn Bilski	Austin County
Penny Goode	Brazoria County
Mark Hainley	Chambers County
Tesa Duffey	Galveston County
Leroy Hanel	Liberty County
Jim Strong	Montgomery County
Jean L. Sanders	Walker County
Brian Nichols	Waller County

¹ The H-GAC planning area also includes Harris, Fort Bend, Colorado, Wharton, and Matagorda counties. Harris County chose to develop a county-level mitigation plan, while Colorado, Wharton and Matagorda counties chose to participate in the Lower Colorado River Authority Mitigation Plan. Fort Bend County has chosen to develop a county-level mitigation plan.

² Sign-in sheets from all meetings indicating the county and municipal participants in the planning process can be found in Appendix D.

Table 2.2: Municipal Primary Planning Team Members

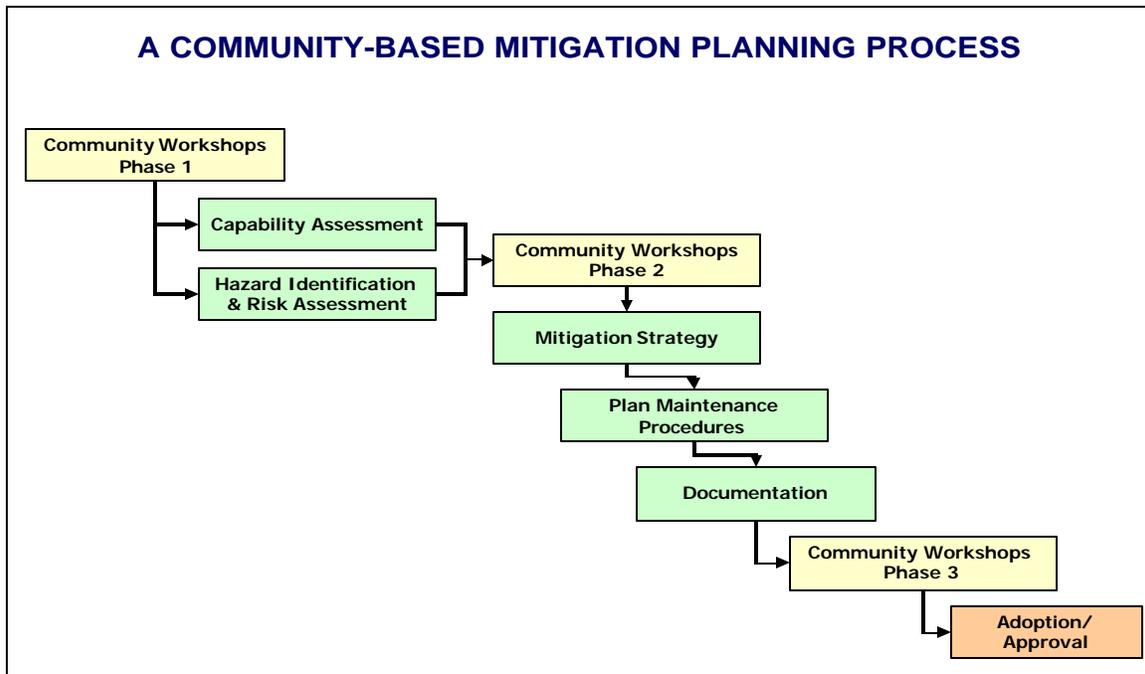
Representative Name	Municipality
Larry Mayberry	City of Sealy
James McCain	City of Wallis
Jimmy Thompson	City of Alvin
Michael Stoldt	City of Angleton
Dennis L. Smith	City of Clute
Ron Bottoms	City of Freeport
Modesto Mundo	City of Lake Jackson
Delores Martin	City of Manvel
Homer Toscano	City of Sweeny
Paula Eshelman	City of Bayou Vista
Katherine McIntyre	City of Clear Lake Shores
Eliot Jennings	City of Galveston
Brian LaBorde	City of Dayton
Jamie Galloway	City of Liberty
Steve Wheeler	City of Cleveland
Peggy Davis	City of Splendora
Bland Ellen	City of Conroe
Jerry Humphreys	City of Willis
Jim Woods	City of Huntsville
Brenda Bundick	City of Waller

Preparing the Plan

The planning process followed a widely recognized approach that meets the requirements of FEMA and the Texas Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management. A Local Mitigation Plan Crosswalk, found in Appendix C, provides a summary of federal and state standards of acceptability and notes where each requirement is met within the Plan.

The planning process included nine (9) major steps that were completed over the course of 10 months. The steps are displayed in **Figure 2.1** and discussed below. First, the primary components of the Plan will be discussed, followed by a description of the three community workshops.

Figure 2.1
A Community-Based Mitigation Planning Process



The *Community Profile*, located in Section 3, describes the makeup of participating counties and municipalities, including prevalent geographic, demographic and economic characteristics. In addition, building characteristics and land use patterns are discussed. This baseline information helps to provide a snapshot of the planning area and thereby assist HGAC and municipal officials in recognizing those factors that ultimately play a role in describing community vulnerability.

The *Risk Assessment*, found in Section 4, describes and analyzes the natural and human-caused hazards present within the H-GAC region. This analysis utilizes historical data on past hazard occurrences, and establishes hazard profiles and a hazard risk ranking based on hazard frequency, magnitude and impact. The FEMA HAZUS[®] loss estimation methodology, combined with the use of existing historical hazard data, was used to conduct the assessment. The findings of the risk assessment enable communities to focus their efforts on those structures or planning areas facing the greatest risk.

The *Capability Assessment*, found in Section 5, provides a comprehensive examination of participating jurisdictions' capacity to implement meaningful mitigation actions and identifies existing opportunities for program enhancement. Capabilities addressed in this section include staff and organizational capability, technical capability, policy and program capability, fiscal capability, legal authority and political willpower. Information was obtained through the use of detailed questionnaires and the analysis of existing plans, ordinances and relevant documents. The purpose of this assessment is to identify any existing gaps, weaknesses or conflicts in programs or activities that may hinder mitigation efforts, or to identify those activities that can further the overall mitigation strategy.

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The *Community Profile*, *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment* are considered background studies and form the basis for developing, adopting and implementing the *Mitigation Strategy* found in Section 6. The *Mitigation Strategy* is intended to be both strategic (based on long-term goals) and functional (tied to short-term actions). In order to ensure that the *Mitigation Strategy* is effectively implemented over time, *Plan Maintenance Procedures* have been established and are found in Section 7.

Community Meetings and Workshops

The creation of the Plan required a series of meetings and workshops, designed to collect data, inform counties and local governments of the *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment* findings, develop mitigation actions, and involve the public. The series of meetings and workshops prompted continuous input and feedback from H-GAC, local officials and concerned citizens throughout the planning process. The meetings and community workshops are described below.

Initial Project Kickoff Meeting

The project kickoff meeting was held April 21, 2003 with the staff of the Houston-Galveston Area Council and representatives from the consulting firms of PBS&J and H2O Partners. Discussions focused on the overall project approach, emphasizing the steps necessary to meet the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and building on the work already completed at the state and local levels.

First, a description of the hazard mitigation planning process was presented, explaining each step and the type of data that would be required to develop the plan. Specific tools, including the *Data Acquisition and Categorization Matrix*, used to collect necessary risk assessment information, and the *Capability Assessment Survey* were described. Next, the project timeline was presented. Finally, roles and responsibilities were assigned to members of the planning team, including H-GAC, county and municipal governments, and project consultants.

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Specific roles for the parties involved in the planning process included:

Houston-Galveston Area Council

- ? Project Management
- ? Coordination
 - o Developing and monitoring inter-local agreements;
 - o Meeting and workshop logistics; and
 - o Data collection and exchange.
- ? Communications
 - o Group e-mail distribution; and
 - o Web site postings.
- ? Data
 - o Providing demographic profiles for the H-GAC region;
 - o Providing hazard identification and risk assessment data; and
 - o Disseminating *Local Capability Assessment Questionnaires* to counties and participating municipalities.
- ? Documentation

PBS&J & H2O Partners

- ? Technical Assistance
- ? Data Collection
- ? Analysis
 - o Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment;
 - o Capability Assessment; and
 - o Mitigation Strategy Development.
- ? Community Workshops/ Public Participation Monthly Progress Reports

County and Municipal Governments

- ? Coordination
 - o Establish single point of contact;
 - o Attend community workshops; and
 - o Solicit public input/involvement.
- ? Data
 - o Hazard Identification;
 - o Capability Assessment; and
 - o Completed Hazard Mitigation Programs.
- ? Mitigation Strategy
 - o Develop goals and mitigation actions; and
 - o Establish local implementation procedures (responsibility and timeline).
- ? Plan adoption by governing body

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Finally, critical “next steps” were discussed, including the need for ongoing coordination throughout the planning process. Specific issues included the need to gather and analyze additional data, such as information associated with human-caused hazards. Future meetings were discussed, including the first planning workshop with each county and participating municipalities and the second workshop that involved the presentation of the risk and capability assessment findings.

It was decided that immediately following the second planning workshop, separate brainstorming sessions would be conducted in order to assist each county and participating municipality formulate countywide goals and their jurisdiction-specific mitigation actions. It was also decided that evening public meetings would be held following each workshop to invite public comment on the findings of the risk and capability assessments and solicit input regarding hazard concerns and potential mitigation actions that could be added to those identified by participating county and municipal officials. Once a draft plan was completed, it would be presented to local officials and the general public for further comment. The comments would be incorporated and a final draft plan would be prepared for submittal to the state and FEMA for their review and approval.³

First Planning Workshop

The first countywide planning workshops were held the week of April 21, 2003, during which the project was introduced to all participating municipalities. The intent of this meeting was to educate officials from participating municipal jurisdictions on the mitigation planning process, explain the multi-jurisdictional planning requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, and assign specific duties required to complete the project. The concept of hazard mitigation was introduced, followed by a more detailed discussion of local mitigation planning. Specific data requirements were explained, including the need to gather local hazard risk information, if available. Instructions were provided to local officials regarding how to complete the *Capability Assessment Survey* and when to return them to H-GAC staff. Roles and responsibilities for the individual jurisdictions were defined, and the project timeline was presented. Following an interactive question and answer session, county and municipal officials were provided an Inter-Local Agreement that, once completed, officially recognized their participation in the planning process.

Second Planning Workshop

The second round of community workshops were held the week of August 11, 2003, in the locations documented below. During these meetings, the findings of the *Risk Assessment* and *Capability Assessment* were presented to counties and participating municipalities. Providing officials with a more thorough understanding of hazard risks and the capabilities present to address them set the stage for the next step in the process — the creation of specific mitigation actions designed to reduce future impacts.

³ For a more detailed discussion of each meeting, please refer to the meeting minutes and the PowerPoint® presentation slides. This information can be obtained by contacting the H-GAC offices.

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Table 2.3
Workshop Participants and Meeting Specifics

Participating Counties	Location	Date
Montgomery/Walker	Conroe	August 12, 2003
Galveston/Brazoria	Texas City	August 13, 2003
Liberty/Chambers	Anahuac	August 14, 2003
Austin/Waller	Sealy	August 15, 2003

Following the presentation of the risk assessment findings, an interactive session was held to address questions and discuss potential concerns. In addition, each workshop attendee was issued a survey form entitled, "*Identification of Hazards Unique to Individual Jurisdictions*" designed to capture data on hazards not identified in the *Risk Assessment* presentation. Next, the *Capability Assessment* findings were presented. Participating communities that had not submitted surveys to HGAC prior to the workshop were encouraged to do so as soon as possible.

An interactive brainstorming session was conducted in the afternoon with all workshop attendees. A "cardstorming" technique was used to begin building general countywide consensus on the mitigation goals for the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Attendees were asked to identify specific mitigation actions that their county or municipality could undertake to help them become less vulnerable to identified hazards. Each jurisdiction was encouraged to keep their existing capabilities in mind, in order to develop feasible mitigation actions and recommend specific improvements in existing programs.

Workshop participants were asked to spend 30 minutes discussing possible mitigation actions, including policies or projects, with other representatives from their jurisdiction. Following these discussions, individuals were instructed to write down specific mitigation actions on adhesive cards. The cards were then posted on the wall in order for all participants to review and discuss. Community officials were encouraged to elaborate upon each of their proposed mitigation actions. The discussion allowed individuals to clarify their thoughts and recognize similarities and differences across mitigation actions.

Next, the group sought to build consensus on the categorization of each proposed mitigation action. Following a brief review of the index cards placed on the wall, the workshop participants began to arrange the mitigation actions into columns that represented separate mitigation categories. Once categorized, each column was labeled by the group and later transformed into the goal statements found in Section 6. The following categories were identified at each two-county workshop:

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Montgomery/ Walker Counties:

- ? Education and Outreach
- ? Policy
- ? Planning/Study

Galveston/ Brazoria

- ? Training
- ? Public Education and Outreach
- ? Structural Mitigation Measures (Public)
- ? Projects/Structural Mitigation (Citizens)
- ? Programs
- ? Evacuation
- ? Planning

Liberty/ Chambers

- ? Stormwater Policies/ Projects
- ? Education and Outreach
- ? Development Policies
- ? Evacuation
- ? Codes and Regulations
- ? Planning

Austin/ Waller

- ? Education and Outreach
- ? Drainage Issues
- ? Policy/ Regulations

It was explained to county and municipal officials that following this workshop, they were expected to go back to their respective jurisdictions and convene with appropriate officials to identify additional mitigation actions. These actions, and those identified in the cardstorming exercise, were to be filled out using Mitigation Action Worksheets, provided by H-GAC.⁴ Once completed, the worksheets were returned to H-GAC and incorporated into the Plan. Finally, the existing actions were reviewed relative to identified hazard vulnerabilities and local capabilities. Based on this review, additional mitigation actions were suggested by the planning team. Proposed actions were derived from an extensive listing of pre-drafted mitigation measures, referred to as the *Mitigation Policy Matrix*. This approach, emphasizing three distinct phases (cardstorming, in-house mitigation action identification, and expert input via the *Mitigation Policy Matrix*), was designed to provide each participating jurisdiction with a more comprehensive *Mitigation Strategy*.

Involving the Public

An important component of this planning process involved public participation. Individual citizen and community-based input provided the entire planning team with a greater understanding of local concerns and increased the likelihood of successfully implementing mitigation actions by developing community “buy-in” from those directly affected by the decisions of public officials. As citizens become more involved in decisions that affect their safety, they are more likely to gain a greater appreciation of the natural hazards present in their community and take the steps

⁴ An example of the Mitigation Action Worksheet is located in Section 6, *Mitigation Strategy*.

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necessary to reduce their impact. Public awareness is a key component of an overall mitigation strategy aimed at making a home, neighborhood, school, business or city safer from the potential effects of natural and human-caused hazards.

Public input was sought using four methods: 1) public meetings; 2) public participation survey; 3) Web site access; and 4) public library posting of the draft Plan. County-level public meetings were held at two stages of the planning process — following the second planning workshop and upon completion of the draft Plan. County-level public meetings were held to present the findings of the risk and capability assessments and garner input regarding hazard concerns and possible mitigation actions that could be included in the Plan. In many cases, citizens provided localized details of problematic hazards, particularly those that directly affected them.

Citizen concerns were also captured through the use of a *Public Participation Survey*.⁵ This tool was distributed to counties and participating municipalities as well as concerned citizens during public meetings. In addition, the survey was posted on the H-GAC public Web site. The survey asked a variety of questions that allowed the public a chance to weigh in on hazard mitigation issues within their communities⁶. A total of 93 surveys were collected from jurisdictions within the region. Comments were incorporated into the *Risk Assessment* and *Mitigation Strategy* sections of this Plan.

A second round of public meetings followed the release of the draft Plan. This provided citizens the opportunity to comment and suggest possible revisions. The draft Plan was also posted on the H-GAC Web site for citizen comment. For those who do not have Internet access, the Plan was placed in the public library of each county seat. In order to notify residents of public meetings and Web and library access to the draft Plan, public notices were published in local papers and posted at the meeting site in advance of the workshops.

Note: All of the above actions will take place after the plan has been reviewed by the State DEM and by FEMA.

How Other Potential Stakeholders Were Involved

A range of stakeholders were involved in the mitigation planning process. Stakeholder involvement was encouraged through the use of multiple planning workshops, public meetings, press releases, public notices and the notification of stakeholder groups. *Appendix D* contains information on how the public meetings were advertised. Any potential stakeholders were invited to attend and offer comments.

Multi-Jurisdictional Participation

The H-GAC regional Hazard Mitigation Plan includes eight counties and 74 incorporated jurisdictions. All participating jurisdictions signed inter-local agreements stating their commitment to participate in the multi-jurisdictional planning process. To satisfy multi-jurisdictional participation requirements, counties and local jurisdictions were required to perform the following tasks:

- ? Participate in mitigation planning workshops;

⁵ A sample of the Public Participation Survey can be found in Appendix D.

⁶ A summary of all the Public Participation Surveys received can be found in Appendix D.

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- ? Complete the *Local Capability Assessment Survey*,
- ? Identify completed mitigation projects, if applicable; and
- ? Develop and adopt a local Mitigation Action Plan, including county or municipal-level goals and mitigation actions.

Each municipality participated in the planning process and has developed local Mitigation Action Plans unique to their jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction will adopt their Mitigation Action Plan separately. This provides the means for jurisdictions to monitor and update their Plan on a regular basis.