

# Federal Emergency Management Agency

Washington, D.C. 20472

MEMORANDUM FOR: Regional Directors  
FEMA Regions I-X

ATTENTION: Mitigation Division Directors

FROM: David I. Maurstad  
Acting Director  
Mitigation Division

DATE: 28-OCT 05

SUBJECT: Mitigation Planning after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Achieving FEMA's mission to reduce loss of life and property by creating stronger and safer communities following a disaster requires commitment to mitigation planning throughout all stages of the reconstruction effort. The catastrophic damage wrought by Hurricane Katrina and compounded by Hurricane Rita brings significant pressure to relax construction standards and quickly rebuild structures, infrastructure and other critical facilities to their pre-hurricane design. However, this overwhelming pressure to rebuild immediately must be balanced with the need to rebuild wisely, ensuring to the maximum extent reduced vulnerability from future disaster events.

With this memorandum, I am conveying FEMA's commitment to hold fast to the mitigation planning regulations as a key element in our strategies to assist States and local jurisdictions in rebuilding in a manner to reduce risk and vulnerability. Specifically we will:

- Expect communities to meet or exceed the planning requirements at 44 C.F.R. 201.6, to ensure stronger, safer communities to better withstand future disasters, reduce losses and recover faster. FEMA will support States, communities and Tribes in adhering to the mitigation planning regulations by assisting them in developing flexible approaches to address capability and capacity issues that may inhibit successful implementation of mitigation strategies.
- Assist communities in employing the planning process framework to update or conduct risk assessments using the new Advisory Flood Elevations and Flood Recovery Maps, as well as other post-disaster data generated from damage assessments. FEMA will work with States, communities and Tribes to determine how to use the new hazard data as part of their decision-making when developing these mitigation strategies.
- Coordinate the mitigation planning process with long-term community recovery planning. Planning provides the framework for citizens to participate in not only the rebuilding process but also in the resulting plans and policies that will help shape the future of the community and region. Local mitigation planning will play

- a central role in implementing goals and objectives set for long-term community recovery.
- Assist communities by providing information and training on "best practices" that lead to increased disaster resistance. In the coming months, the Mitigation Division in coordination with the Recovery Division will make available "best practices" that communities have implemented following major disasters.

As you know, a community must have a local mitigation plan in order to receive project grant funding under HMGP (as well as the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program). HMGP planning grants will be available to develop new plans or update existing ones. However, regulations do provide for exceptions whereby a community without an approved plan can receive an HMGP project grant, provided a plan is approved within 12 months of the award date of the project grant. My staff, in consultation with Regional mitigation staff, has developed guidance to enable you to implement this exception where appropriate. This guidance is attached to this memorandum.

The Mitigation Division has developed several tools to assist States and communities in working through the planning process and ultimately creating mitigation plans that meet FEMA criteria for approval. These technical tools, along with the financial resources provided for under the Stafford Act, should be used to form the basis of FEMA's field support for planning. A list of these existing available resources is attached.

The rebuilding challenge ahead presents an unprecedented opportunity for FEMA to work with States and communities to incorporate mitigation directly into the reconstruction process, and thereby create more disaster resilient communities for the future.

Attachments:

- (1) Guidance Memorandum for FEMA Regional Directors Regarding "Extraordinary Circumstances" Exception
- (2) Overview of FEMA Authorities and Capabilities for Mitigation and Planning

Attachments removed