

Onondaga County Preparing Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

Onondaga County, through the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency and Department of Emergency Management, is in the process of creating a comprehensive natural hazards mitigation plan for the County and its participating municipalities. The Onondaga County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazards Mitigation Plan is being funded by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The mission of the Onondaga plan is protect the health, safety, property, environment and economy of the communities within Onondaga County by partnering to identify and reduce our vulnerability to natural hazards in a proactive and efficient manner. The goal of the plan is to identify projects that can reduce damages from future natural hazards.

As a multi-jurisdictional plan, it serves as an efficient and cost-effective way for all municipalities within Onondaga County to satisfy each jurisdiction's federal requirements under the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. And having an adopted plan in place allows these jurisdictions to apply for mitigation project implementation funding through FEMA. There is no cost for municipalities to participate in the County planning process.

"The creation of this plan will allow the county and its participating municipalities to protect ourselves against rather than react to the impacts of natural hazards," said Don Jordan, Director of the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency. "This is an opportunity for us to create a detailed plan that will address a variety of potential hazards that affect our communities."

The plan will include a risk assessment and a hazard-mitigation strategy. The risk assessment will include four phases: The first phase will identify hazards that may impact the County and its municipalities; the second will profile the relevant hazards and their potential consequences. The third phase will identify assets that are subject to losses or damage, including physical structures, functions and populations. Finally, the fourth phase will estimate the potential losses that could result from each type of hazard. Following the risk assessment will be the development of a hazard mitigation strategy. The strategy will include the identification of hazard mitigation goals as well as a prioritized list of actions designed to reduce losses.

The main natural hazards in Onondaga County include flooding, severe winter storms, landslide, earthquake and severe storms. Vulnerability to these hazards will be determined in terms of existing and future buildings, infrastructure and critical facilities that might be impacted, including police, fire, shelters and hospitals, power-generation facilities, sewer and water utilities, roadways, bridges and communication systems.

To inform and engage the public and other local and regional stakeholders in the planning process, the County has developed a hazard mitigation planning website at <http://www.ongov.net/Planning/haz.html>. This site includes an online hazards awareness and preparedness survey, and draft sections of the Plan as they become available. The public is encouraged to visit the site and take the online survey. The site will advise the public of other opportunities to participate in the planning process, review draft plan documents, and provide direct input and feedback.

For more information, contact Megan Costa at the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency at 315-435-2611 or megancosta@ongov.net.