

# Guide for Community Resilience Planning Offers Improved Event Response through Recovery Planning

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Since 1989, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has spent about \$6.5 billion per year on Presidential Disaster Declarations, with an average of 48 declarations per year. However, these funds only cover a fraction of the total cost of recovery from disasters. Community resilience plans can reduce the impacts to communities when a hazard strikes. The concept of community resilience planning recognizes that the social and economic functions of a community should drive the performance goals for buildings and infrastructure systems.

Emergency managers play a variety of roles in community resilience planning. As communities think more broadly about how to strengthen their resilience to hazard events, emergency managers may be called to either lead resilience efforts or be a key member of the resilience planning team.

## Improve Existing Resilience Plans

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) *Community Resilience Planning Guide for Buildings and Infrastructure Systems* (Guide) can be used to improve existing resilience plans or to begin the process of developing a resilience plan. The NIST Guide is a practical, flexible tool designed to enable communities of any size to improve their resilience by setting their own goals, priorities and allocating resources to manage risks for their prevailing hazards.

The Guide helps communities think through and plan for their

social and economic needs, their particular hazard risks, and recovery of services and functions that rely on the built environment through the following steps:

- Form a collaborative team.
- Understand the situation.
- Determine goals and objectives.
- Plan development.
- Plan preparation, review, and approval.
- Plan implementation and maintenance.

## The Guide Process Aligns with FEMA and the National Preparedness System

This six-step process is aligned with the approach taken in FEMA's *Comprehensive Planning Guide 101* and the frameworks that comprise the National Preparedness System. The Guide is particularly consistent with the National Disaster Recovery Framework, Version 2, and Recovery Support Function Six. Both documents emphasize the inclusion of private sector infrastructure owners, operators, and service providers in planning at all levels and the value of coordinated planning and implementation across all levels of government for critical infrastructure systems and assets.

## Developed by Working Closely with Private and Public Sectors

Issued in late 2015 and now being put to its first use by several U.S. communities and states (e.g., [Fort Collins/Larimer County](#) and [Boulder County](#) in Colorado, the Guide was developed by working closely with private and public sector experts – including the emergency

management community – through an open and transparent process with significant public input. Planning and implementing prioritized measures can do more than increase emergency response effectiveness.

Taking these steps also can strengthen resilience, improve a community's ability to maintain and restore vital services in a more timely way, and assist in building back better. That not only will enable emergency managers and other community leaders to do their jobs well, it also makes the community more attractive to residents and businesses before a hazard event occurs. Community resilience comes with co-benefits, part of the "resilience dividend" that has been talked about by Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation.

## Identify and Align Priorities and Resources with Long-Term Community Goals

The NIST Guide goes beyond emergency response planning for hazard events, which includes critical functions immediately after damaging and disruptive events, such as relief for individuals and restoring critical services and operations. As all communities have limited resources, the Guide provides a way to identify and align priorities and resources with long-term community goals for each community's prevailing hazards. The Guide's approach helps communities identify actions that can be taken in the near-term and others that may take years or even decades to complete.

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Just beginning the six-step process should yield benefits in better understanding roles and responsibilities. It also will allow communities to assess their own resilience status, challenges, and opportunities for improvements and collaboration among stakeholders (including key players in emergency management).

Ideally, the community resilience planning process aligns with and integrates existing community comprehensive plans, and plans for economic development, climate adaptation, zoning, mitigation, and emergency response. This integration of plans is especially important in many jurisdictions where plans are already mandated or are the basis for funding they have received.

The *Guide's* six-step process can improve community planning by encouraging collaboration and common goal setting within existing resources and staffing. Especially

important to emergency managers, the *Guide* is compatible with the National Preparedness System and efforts supported by FEMA and others. In fact, FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and other agencies were among those organizations joining the private sector in contributing to the *Guide's* development.

### The NIST *Guide's* Three Unique Aspects

While there are other guides available that address resilience issues, NIST's *Guide* has three unique aspects:

- It recognizes that social and economic needs should drive expectations for how our buildings and infrastructure systems must perform.
- The *Guide* is aimed at local governments as logical conveners to bring together all the relevant stakeholders to determine community goals and needs, and to develop a resilience plan that matches those

goals and needs with available resources.

- The *Guide* addresses dependencies between social and physical systems.

### Conclusion

Emergency management officials are playing important roles in the communities that are using the NIST *Guide* to review, improve, and develop their resilience plans. The early adopters and adapters of the *Guide* are offering useful information and perspectives about the intersection of resilience and emergency management planning at the community level. Their experience will inform community leaders, and especially emergency management officials, who increasingly are relied upon to deal with these issues.

### Learn More

More information on the *Guide* is available by contacting [resilience@nist.gov](mailto:resilience@nist.gov) or at <http://www.nist.gov/el/resilience/guide.cfm>. ▲