Florence County
Hazard Mitigation Plan

Section Five

PROGRESS IN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This section discusses the current status of implementation of the Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan. There are several aspects of plan implementation that need to be addressed:

- The status of promulgation or formal adoption of the plan by the participating jurisdictions,
- The previously proposed mitigation initiatives that have been implemented,
- The activities of the FCHMPC to engage the public and the community at large in the mitigation planning process
- The FCHMPC priorities for implementation of approved mitigation initiatives now incorporated into the plan, and
- How recent disaster experience has illustrated the need for and success of the Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan.

Status of Plan Promulgation and Approval

Promulgation and approval of the plan is a very important step in assuring its implementation. It is the expectation of the FCHMPC that the governing body of each participating jurisdiction or organization will review, consider and act on their section of this plan. If the governing body acts in a positive manner, this is basically an approval or endorsement of the proposed mitigation initiatives contained in the corresponding individual section of the plan. This approval or endorsement, with or without modification by the governing body, represents both consent and commitment by the representatives of that organization or jurisdiction to seek the resources needed to implement the priority initiatives contained therein. Only through actual implementation of the proposed mitigation initiatives contained in this plan can it actually help to make Florence County a disaster resistant area.

As the FCHMPC continues the planning efforts in the future, it is intended that additional updates of the mitigation plan will be published to provide both the participating organizations and the public current information regarding the mitigation planning process. Further, approximately every five years, the FCHMPC will again seek the review and updating of the individual jurisdictional plans. This interval has been selected to provide a sufficient period for the FCHMPC to have made significant progress in further technical analysis, implementation of currently proposed initiatives, and development of new proposals, prior to again seeking formal local approval of the plan. In this way, the plan can be kept up-to-date on a continuing basis by FCHMPC, while nevertheless assuring that the jurisdictions’ governing bodies routinely review the plan and approve its implementation.
Public Information and Participation

The FCHMPC, as well as individual participating agencies and organizations, have been active in attempting to engage the general public in the planning process. Public information activities have been undertaken to explain the mitigation planning process to the community and to solicit their input and involvement in the planning process, as well as to provide mitigation awareness and educational information. The FCHMPC welcomes public input to the planning process, and fosters public participation through the issuance of media releases, holding public meetings and hearings, etc.

Public information activities by the FCHMPC have included: conducting an orientation meeting for all jurisdictions in the planning area; encouraging officials, community leaders and emergency service providers including representatives from local governments, business and industry, law enforcement, fire and rescue, health care, and others to be involved in the planning effort. A more direct involvement of the general public was addressed with a public hearing on the draft plan prior to formal adoption of the plan by the local county and municipal governments held on April 22, 2019 and May 15, 2019 at the Florence County Emergency Management Division. Appendix B “Notice of Public Meeting” is attached at the end of this plan. Public input was considered but not included.

Public information activities by the FCHMPC include: inviting the participation of all municipalities, and ensuring that there was broad representation and participation by emergency service provider organizations in the committee proceedings. Every year the FCHMPC will hold one public meeting and any feedback from the meeting will be incorporated in future mitigation plans.

FCHMPC will continue efforts to develop and implement a year-round program to engage the community in the mitigation planning process and to provide them with mitigation-related information and education. These efforts will be to continually invite public comments and recommendations regarding the mitigation goals for the community, the priorities for the planning, and the unique needs of each community for mitigation-related public information.

Completed Mitigation Initiatives

The implementation of the mitigation initiatives proposed as a result of the planning process followed by the FCHMPC is an important measure of the progress in implementation of the plan. As the participants in the planning are able to implement more and more of the proposed initiatives that have been incorporated into the plan, the facilities, systems and neighborhoods of the county can become more and more resistant to the impacts of future disasters.

The Priority for Initiative Implementation

As a part of its future planning process, the FCHMPC also will periodically review the proposed mitigation initiatives approved for incorporation into the plan to determine their priority for implementation during the next planning period. This assessment will provide guidance to the individual jurisdictions and organizations proposing the initiatives to encourage them to focus on those designated as priority. However, because each participating jurisdiction or organization has independent authority and responsibility for implementation of their proposed mitigation initiatives under the mitigation planning approach used by the FCHMPC the jurisdictions and organizations retain the prerogative to act in their own interests, using their own priorities for mitigation initiative implementation.
In many ways, the priority for implementation assigned to proposed mitigation initiatives could be considered a suggestion or recommendation to the proposal sponsors to seek the resources for implementation. These resources may range from the normal budgeting process for the jurisdiction or organization to seeking state or federal financial or technical support for implementation of the initiative.

The designation “priority for implementation” means that the FCHMPC recommends that sponsors of those initiatives so classified focus on their implementation as soon as feasible. As such, this recommendation for priority represents input from the jurisdictions and organizations throughout the county to individual sponsors of proposed mitigation initiatives and therefore the recommendation should be given appropriate weight in the jurisdiction’s decision process regarding implementation.

The designation “On Going” for implementation status means that the sponsoring organization or agency is currently working toward securing funding or actual work on this initiative. The designation “No Change” means that the subject mitigation initiative should continue to be included in the plan. FCHMPC believes that a continuing effort should be made to secure the funding for, or create the opportunity for, implementation of the proposed mitigation initiative within the normal business activities of the sponsoring organization or agency. The designation “deleted” means that re-review of the proposed initiative has resulted in the conclusion that the initiative should be removed from the mitigation plan, because it is no longer desirable or necessary. Of course, when a mitigation initiative is actually completed, it is so indicated as within the program. The designation “New” indicates an initiative that the FCHMPC has identified as a new initiative to be added to the plan.

A report entitled “Initiatives By Priority” is provided in an attachment to Section 7, which identifies the implementation priority desired. The operating procedure also calls for the FCHMPC planning staff to recommend an implementation schedule for any proposed mitigation initiative considered to be “On Going” or “priority for implementation.” This schedule, which represents the FCHMPC suggestion to the sponsoring organization, gives a recommended date for initiation of implementation as well as a recommended date for completion of the initiative.

**Effectiveness of Mitigation Initiatives**

Of course, the true measure of progress in the implementation of mitigation initiatives is their success in saving lives, avoiding property damage and protecting valuable or irreplaceable resources in the community. As the mitigation initiatives that have been incorporated into the plan are implemented, there will be more opportunities to measure the “success” of the mitigation efforts.

The best opportunity for measuring this success is to evaluate the community’s experience with actual disasters and to attempt to estimate the number of lives that were saved by the implemented initiatives or the value of the property protected from disaster-related damage.

In addition, however, recent disaster events can be very helpful in highlighting the mitigation needs of the community based on the type, location or magnitude of the impacts experienced. In turn, this can be a major factor in the future progress of implementation of the plan, as the FCHMPC considers and acts on actual disaster experience by the community. Such recommendations can be referred to a “lead” agency with the intention that that organization will use the information to propose additional mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the plan.
Compiling data on the “success” of existing and/or completed mitigation initiatives is an activity undertaken by the FCHMPC members on an ongoing basis and is an integral component of the process used to implement and maintain the plan.

To date, the participating organizations have not had an opportunity to conduct extensive analysis of the effectiveness of the previously implemented mitigation initiatives. This is a planning activity, however, to be included in the process to continue to expand and maintain this plan.

Plan Implementation and Plan Maintenance Procedures

This portion of the plan discusses the manner in which the plan will continue to be implemented and maintained over time. “Plan implementation” is considered as the implementation of the proposed mitigation initiatives now included in the plan. “Plan maintenance” is considered to be the process by which the FCHMPC will continue to update, improve and expand the mitigation planning process. It also includes the technical analyses needed for the process to propose more mitigation initiatives for incorporation into the plan. “Plan maintenance” further includes the group’s activities to monitor implementation of the plan, to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented mitigation initiatives, and to continually strive to engage the community in the planning process. The basic elements of the FCHMPC actions to implement and maintain the plan are also described in the operating procedures.

Planning and regulatory capability is based on the implementation of plans, ordinances and programs that demonstrate a local jurisdiction’s commitment to guiding and managing growth, development and redevelopment in a responsible manner, while maintaining the general welfare of the community. It includes emergency response and mitigation planning, comprehensive land use planning and transportation planning, in addition to the enforcement of zoning or subdivision ordinances and building codes that regulate how land is developed and structures are built, as well as protecting environmental, historic and cultural resources in the community. Although some conflicts can arise, these planning initiatives generally present significant opportunities to integrate hazard mitigation principles and practices into the local decision making process. This mitigation plan will be integrated into the following plans Florence County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Florence County Emergency Operations Plan, Florence County Zoning and Planning, and Florence County Building Codes as appropriate. As each municipality is covered in a comprehensive planning process under the above listed plans, Florence County will ensure the updated hazard mitigation plan is integrated.

Implementation of these actions is dependent on financial resources and the fiscal capabilities of each jurisdiction. Each will pursue outside funding from outside sources from Federal and State agencies.

Florence County will distribute one copy of the plan in the community or jurisdiction. Each of the jurisdictions in Florence County utilizes a variety of ordinances, policies and plans to guide and control development. These ordinances, policies and plans as identified in this plan in Section 2 vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. After each jurisdiction officially adopts the Hazard Mitigation Plan, these existing mechanisms will have hazard mitigation strategies integrated into them, as they are applicable to the ordinance, policy and plan. The Florence County Hazard Mitigation Plan will be available on the Florence County Emergency Management website, www.fcemd.org and also at the Florence County Emergency Management office at 1221 Justice Way, Effingham, S.C. 29541.
Plan Implementation Responsibility and Schedules

As noted above, implementation of the plan is basically through implementation of the approved mitigation initiatives incorporated into the plan. As these initiatives are implemented over the years, the facilities, systems and neighborhoods of the participating jurisdictions will become less vulnerable to the impacts of future disasters, and the communities of the county will become increasingly more disaster resistant.

Upon adoption of this plan, local jurisdictions accept the responsibility to implement the strategies and actions of this plan in concert with all other community development plans and activities where applicable.

As a part of the planning process, on a periodic basis, (after each disaster event or annually, whichever occurs first) approved mitigation initiatives included in the plan are re-evaluated as to their continuing value and the need for their implementation. The purpose of this re-evaluation is to assure that a proposed mitigation initiative remains a valuable component of the plan, and whether any unique or unanticipated conditions warrant extra efforts to implement the initiative.

Plan Maintenance and Monitoring of Plan Implementation

Mitigation planning is a dynamic process that must be continually adjusted to account for changes in the community and to further refine the information, judgments and proposals documented in the local mitigation plan. The process used by the FCHMPC to maintain the plan consists primarily of four functions.

The first is to continue to expand and improve the mitigation plan by accomplishing additional technical analyses, such as vulnerability assessments, evaluation of the policy framework of the participating jurisdictions, and post-event analysis of disasters, etc. The second is to continue to expand participation in the planning process by soliciting the involvement of additional agencies from the participating jurisdictions, by implementing public information programs, and by inviting expanded participation by the private sector. The third is to routinely monitor implementation of the initiatives in the plan until each is completed and in-place, and to assess their actual effectiveness following the next relevant disaster event. The fourth is to issue an updated plan document for use by the participating jurisdictions, to inform the community, and when appropriate for submittal to state and federal agencies for approval pursuant to the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This portion of the plan describes these four activities to maintain the plan.

The technical analyses conducted by the participating jurisdictions will be an ongoing effort to continually assess the hazards threatening the community, the vulnerabilities to those hazards, and the adequacy of the participating jurisdictions’ policy and program framework to control those vulnerabilities. When indicated, the technical analysis also includes formulating proposed mitigation initiatives to eliminate or minimize the identified vulnerabilities. Therefore, the extent to which all of the vulnerabilities of the important facilities and neighborhoods in the planning area have been identified is a direct indicator of the mitigation planning remaining to be done.

Another technical analysis important to maintenance of the plan is the expanded and refined evaluation of the policy and program framework of the participating jurisdictions and the
adequacy of this framework to control the vulnerabilities of the community. The emphasis of this plan maintenance activity during the upcoming planning cycle will be to evaluate the effectiveness of hazard specific local ordinances and the adequacy of their enforcement.

The next type of activity to continue to maintain the plan will be to continue to expand participation in the FCHMPC and the mitigation planning process. The current participants in the planning are listed at the end of Section 2. Gaining additional participation in the planning is also part of the public information and community outreach component of the approach to plan development. The planned public information activities are attached as Appendix B entitled “Notice of Public Meeting.”

As part of the plan maintenance process, the FCHMPC intends to encourage expanded participation in the planning through active recruitment and involvement of additional local agencies, community groups, and private sector interests in the planning. Also, public hearings will be encouraged at the beginning of future editions of the plan.

The third category of plan maintenance activities that will be undertaken by the FCHMPC will be to monitor the implementation of mitigation initiatives by the participating jurisdictions and their agencies. The FCHMPC will document the efforts to fund the initiative, to conduct required studies, and to obtain any needed permits, as well as to estimate the time remaining to complete design, needed studies and purchasing or construction. When an initiative is completed, this fact is noted in the program as well. The current status of initiative implementation has been discussed in Section 7 of this plan, and this section will again be updated for the next publication of the plan.

As a part of monitoring the implementation of mitigation initiatives, following a disaster and as a part of the post-event analysis that the FCHMPC will conduct the effectiveness of completed mitigation initiatives, or any pre-existing mitigation initiatives, in reducing the human and economic impacts of the event can be estimated. As time passes and disaster events occur, this will enable the FCHMPC to accumulate a database of “mitigation success stories” with regard to the value of the property losses avoided and the number of fatalities, injuries or illnesses prevented.

Monitoring of the effectiveness of plan implementation and maintenance also involves assessing the effectiveness of the mitigation goals and objectives established for the planning process. As noted above, the FCHMPC proposed general goals and a number of specific objectives to guide the participants in the mitigation planning process, and these are given in Section 6. The committee’s attempts to address the established objectives, with the intent of achieving the associated mitigation goals for the community, is a key measure of the effectiveness of the continuing plan maintenance and plan implementation. In future planning cycles, these goals will be reviewed and re-evaluated to ensure they are still relevant to the unique needs of the community and continue to address current and expected conditions.

The fourth category of plan maintenance activities is to actually incorporate the results of all technical analyses, including the development of new mitigation initiatives, and to publish another, updated edition of the plan. In addition to documenting additional technical analysis, the FCHMPC will document the efforts to continue to engage the public in the planning process, to expand direct participation in the planning, and to increase representation on the FCHMPC.

Plan Updating, Review and Approval
This plan will be reviewed, updated and approved at least every 5 years beginning with the date of the initial plan approval by FEMA. In addition to the start date for the planning cycle, this planning timeline also documents the intended deadlines for completion of key activities in the planning approach. When determined necessary, the FCHMPC shall meet yearly to evaluate the progress attained and to revise, where needed, the activities set forth in the plan. The findings and recommendations of the FCHMPC shall be documented in the form of a report that can be shared with interested City and County Council members. The FCHMPC will also meet following any disaster events warranting a re-examination of the mitigation actions being implemented or proposed for future implementation. This will ensure that the plan is continuously updated to reflect changing conditions and needs within the county which includes the participating jurisdictions.

At the conclusion of the planning cycle, a draft of the updated mitigation plan will be prepared and distributed for public comment and input. Several public hearings will be advertised and conducted on the draft update. Copies of the draft will be placed at Florence County’s Emergency Management office for review by interested persons, and its availability for review will be advertised in the local media.

The Next Planning Cycles

As given in this section, the FCHMPC has established a schedule and procedure for both plan implementation and plan maintenance that is expected to be very helpful in improving and expanding the mitigation planning process. Initially, the planning efforts will seek to build on the analyses and proposals included in this edition of the mitigation plan, primarily by completing more vulnerability assessments, evaluations of plans and programs, and proposing additional mitigation initiatives. During these continuing efforts, the FCHMPC will prioritize their efforts towards focusing on facilities and neighborhoods in known hazard areas, assessing all critical facilities, etc.

In addition to these activities for plan maintenance, the FCHMPC has established recommended schedules for implementation of the proposed priority initiatives included in this edition of the plan. It is expected that the agencies and organizations that sponsored these initiatives for the plan will, during the next planning cycles, take advantage of timely opportunities and available resources to implement them on the desired schedule, if it is possible to do so.

The plan is a dynamic document, reflecting a continuing and expanding planning process. The efforts of the FCHMPC will continue into the future, striving to make all of the jurisdictions of county truly disaster resistant communities.

Summary

The FCHMPC recognizes that it will take a long period of time and implementation of many if not all of the proposed initiatives approved for this plan, to make the county a truly disaster-resistant community. However, the continuing dedication to the safety and welfare of the community shown by the participants in this planning process will make this ambitious goal possible.