

# SECTION 2

## PLANNING PROCESS

This section describes the planning process undertaken by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) District 6 counties and jurisdictions in the development of its 2021 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. It consists of the following eight subsections:

- ❖ 2.1 Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning
- ❖ 2.2 History of Hazard Mitigation Planning in the MEMA District 6 Region
- ❖ 2.3 The MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Council
- ❖ 2.4 Community Meetings and Workshops
- ❖ 2.5 Involving the Public
- ❖ 2.6 Involving the Stakeholders
- ❖ 2.7 Documentation of Plan Progress

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### 44 CFR Requirement

**44 CFR Part 201.6(c)(1):** The plan shall include documentation of the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process and how the public was involved.

## 2.1 OVERVIEW OF HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Local hazard mitigation planning is the process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks, and determining how to best minimize or manage those risks. This process culminates in a hazard mitigation plan that identifies specific mitigation actions, each designed to achieve both short-term planning objectives and a long-term community vision.

To ensure the functionality of a hazard mitigation plan, responsibility is assigned for each proposed mitigation action to a specific individual, department, or agency along with a schedule or target completion date for its implementation (see Section 10: *Plan Maintenance*). Plan maintenance procedures are established for the routine monitoring of implementation progress, as well as the evaluation and enhancement of the mitigation plan itself. These plan maintenance procedures ensure that the Plan remains a current, dynamic, and effective planning document over time that becomes integrated into the routine local decision-making process.

Communities that participate in hazard mitigation planning have the potential to accomplish many benefits, including:

- ❖ saving lives and property,
- ❖ saving money,
- ❖ speeding up 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.

Typically, communities that participate in mitigation planning are described as having the potential to produce long-term and recurring benefits by breaking the repetitive cycle of disaster loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation is that the investments made before a hazard event will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery, and reconstruction. Furthermore, mitigation practices will enable local residents, businesses, and industries to re-establish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the community economy back on track sooner and with less interruption.

The benefits of mitigation planning go beyond solely reducing hazard vulnerability. Mitigation measures such as the acquisition or regulation of land in known hazard areas can help achieve multiple community goals, such as preserving open space, maintaining environmental health, and enhancing recreational opportunities. Thus, it is vitally important that any local mitigation planning process be integrated with other concurrent local planning efforts, and any proposed mitigation strategies must take into account other existing community goals or initiatives that will help complement or hinder their future implementation.

## **2.2 HISTORY OF HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING IN MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGION**

In 2012, all counties within the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan were consolidated from previous county-level plans.

For this plan, no new jurisdictions have joined the process and all of the jurisdictions that participated in previous planning efforts have participated in the development of this regional plan.

## **2.3 THE MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING TEAM**

In order to guide the development of this Plan, the counties in MEMA District 6 (Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Smith) and representatives from their participating municipal jurisdictions created the MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning Team (RHMPT). The RHMPT represents a community-based planning team made up of representatives from various county departments and municipalities and other key stakeholders identified to serve as critical partners in the planning process.

Beginning in January 2021, the RHMPT members engaged in regular discussions as well as local planning workshops to discuss and complete tasks associated with preparing the Plan. This working group coordinated on all aspects of plan preparation and provided valuable input to the process. In addition to regular meetings, committee members routinely communicated and were kept informed through an e-mail distribution list.

Specifically, the tasks assigned to the RHMPT members included:

- ❖ participate in RHMPT meetings and workshops
- ❖ provide best available data as required for the Risk Assessment portion of the Plan
- ❖ help review the local Capability Assessment information and provide copies of any mitigation or hazard-related documents for review and incorporation into the Plan
- ❖ support the development of the Mitigation Strategy, including the design and adoption of regional goal statements
- ❖ help design and propose appropriate mitigation actions for their department/agency for incorporation into the Mitigation Action Plan
- ❖ review and provide timely comments on all study findings and draft plan deliverables
- ❖ support the adoption of the *2021 MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

**Table 2.1** lists the members of the RHMPT who were responsible for participating in the development of the Plan.

**TABLE 2.1: Members of the MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Planning Team**

NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT / AGENCY
Henderson, Jana	Mitigation Office Director	MEMA
Hill, Frank	Mitigation Planner	MEMA
Fleming, Tyler	Area Coordinator	MEMA
Buchanan, Erin	Director	Witt O’Brien’s
Foss, Steven	Hazard Mitigation Planner	Witt O’Brien’s
Ivy, Eddie	Director	Clarke County EMA
Lucas, Mike	Director	Jasper County EMA
Dudley, Ben	Director	Kemper County EMA
Barrett, Odie*	Director	Lauderdale County EMA
Malone, Tommy	Director	Leake County EMA
Wilson, Darrell	Director	Neshoba County EMA
Taylor, Brian	Director	Newton County EMA
Marlow, Mike	Director	Scott County EMA
Easterling, Heather	Director	Smith County EMA
Freeman, Randy		Town of Enterprise
Fuller, Phil		Village of Pachuta
Fulton, Eddie	Mayor	City of Quitman
Peebles, C	Mayor	Town of Shubuta
Rich, Jerry	Mayor	Town of Stonewall
Jenkins, Hudson		Jasper County
Hitt, Craig*		Kemper County
Adams, Clark	Mayor	Town of DeKalb
Nave, Craig	Mayor	Town of Scooba
Spears, Penny		City of Carthage
Bone, Robert		Town of Lena
Eakes, Jay	Mayor	City of Philadelphia

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Richardson, R		Netwon County
Clark, Aaron		Town of Chunky
Anderson, David		Town of Decatur
Wash, J.C.	Mayor	Town of Hickory
Welch, Wayne		Town of Union
Chambers, Nancy	Mayor	City of Forest
Latimer, Allen	Mayor	Town of Lake
Keeton, Sr., Gerald	Mayor	City of Morton
McGarrity, Greg		Town of Sebastopol
Cain, Kenny		Smith County
Hancock, Larry	Mayor	Town of Mize
Miles, Robert	Mayor	Town of Polkville
Boykin, Bobby		Town of Raleigh
Wilson, Don		Town of Sylvarena
Phillips, Kellie		Town of Taylorsville

\* Served as the county's main point of contact

Some of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Council Members listed above were designated to represent more than one jurisdiction. Specifically:

- ❖ Eddie Ivy represented Clarke County and the Town of Enterprise
- ❖ Hudson Jenkins represented Jasper County and the City of Bay Springs, Town of Heidelberg, Town of Louin, and Town of Montrose.
- ❖ Odie Barrett represented Lauderdale County and the Town of Marion and City of Meridian.

This authorized representation is documented in signed letters that were provided to MEMA from each of these municipalities that designated these persons as their representatives. Copies of these letters can be obtained by contacting MEMA.

Each of the municipalities participated in the planning process through county-level meetings and calls with their respective county's emergency management agency director, who discussed the risk assessment with them and helped them update their mitigation actions accordingly.

Additional participation and input from other identified stakeholders and the general public was sought by the MEMA District 6 counties during the planning process through phone calls and the distribution of e-mails, advertisements, and public notices aimed at informing people of the development of the Hazard Mitigation Plan (public and stakeholder involvement is further discussed later in this section). It should be noted that many neighboring communities were offered the opportunity to participate in the planning process through phone conversations and Microsoft Teams virtual meetings.

### **2.3.1 Multi-Jurisdictional Participation**

The MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan includes nine counties and thirty incorporated municipalities. To satisfy multi-jurisdictional participation requirements, each county and its participating jurisdictions were required to perform the following tasks:

- ❖ Participate in mitigation planning workshops or designate a representative to do so;
- ❖ Identify completed/new mitigation projects, if applicable; and
- ❖ Develop and adopt (or update) their local Mitigation Action Plan.

Each jurisdiction participated in the planning process and has developed a local Mitigation Action Plan 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.

## 2.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The preparation of this Plan required a series of meetings and workshops for facilitating discussion, gaining consensus and initiating data collection efforts with local government staff, community officials, and other identified stakeholders. More importantly, the meetings and workshops prompted continuous input and feedback from relevant participants throughout the drafting stages of the Plan. The following is a summary of the key meetings and community workshops held during the development of the plan update. In many cases, routine discussions and additional meetings were held by local staff to accomplish planning tasks specific to their department or agency, such as the approval of specific mitigation actions for their department or agency to undertake and include in the Mitigation Action Plan.

### **Project Kickoff Meeting February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

Following the contractual Notice to Proceed, Witt O'Brien's staff arranged for a project kickoff meeting. An email invitation was distributed on January 27, 2021 which invited representatives from the participating counties and municipalities, external stakeholders, and other local organizations to the virtual meeting on Zoom. This planning process was conducted remotely due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on public gatherings. The regional participants are collectively known as the Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning Team ("RHMPT" or "Team"). The meeting was held virtually on Zoom, and included a PowerPoint presentation and open discussion of the planning process.

Erin Buchanan, Project Manager and Senior Planner with Witt O'Brien's, started the meeting by welcoming the representatives from each county, participating municipal jurisdictions, and other stakeholders.

Ms. Buchanan presented the key objectives and structure of the planning process, explaining the specific tasks to be accomplished for this project, including the planning process, risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, capability assessment, mitigation strategy and action plan, plan maintenance procedures, and documentation. The project schedule was presented along with the project staffing chart, which demonstrates the number of experienced individuals that would be working on the HMP. The data collection needs and public outreach efforts were also discussed.

Ms. Buchanan then reviewed the roles and responsibilities of Witt O'Brien's, participating jurisdictions, and stakeholders. The presentation concluded with a discussion of the next steps to be taken in the project development, which included discussing data collection efforts, continuing public outreach, and the next meeting for the RHMPT.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments, but nothing of note was brought up other than to discuss when the next meeting might take place.

Ms. Buchanan thanked everyone for attending and identified himself as the point of contact for any questions or issues. The meeting was adjourned.

**Mitigation Strategy**  
**Meeting September 24,**  
**2021**  
**Microsoft Teams**

Erin Buchanan initiated the meeting with a review of the meeting agenda, presentation slides, proposed goals for the plan. Ms. Buchanan reviewed the project schedule and stated that a draft of the Hazard Mitigation Plan would be presented to the Hazard Mitigation Planning team at the end of October.

Steven Foss, Hazard Mitigation Planner for Witt O'Brien's, then presented the findings of the risk assessment, starting with a review of the Presidential Disaster Declarations that have impacted the region. Since the last plan update, there have been seven Presidential Disaster Declaration. He then explained the process for preparing Hazard Profiles and discussed how each hazard falls into one of five categories: Flood-related, Fire-related, Geologic, Wind-related, and Other. He indicated that each hazard must be evaluated and then profiled and assessed to determine a relative risk for each hazard.

Mr. Foss reviewed the Hazard Profiles and the following bullets summarize the information presented:

**Flood-Related Hazards**

- ❖ **FLOOD.** There have been 97 flood events recorded in MEMA District 6 from April 2015 to April 2020, resulting in \$2.55 million in property damage. According to the National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI), there has been an overall reduction in reported property damage for the time period April 1, 2015 – April 1, 2020 in comparison to the time period April 1, 2010 – April 1, 2015.
- ❖ **EROSION.** There have not been any instances of major erosion reported, however, some HMPT members noted that erosion has occurred to some degree as part of the land subsidence hazard.
- ❖ **DAM/LEVEE FAILURE.** There have been 11 recorded dam failures in the region according to the State HMP. There are 48 high hazard dams in the region. Future occurrences are possible.
- ❖ **WINTER STORM.** There have been 130 recorded winter weather events in the region since 1996 resulting in \$12.48 million in reported property damages. Future occurrences are likely.

**Fire-Related Hazards**

- ❖ **WILDFIRE.** According to the Mississippi Forestry Commission data, there has been an overall reduction in total number of wildfires reported as well as total acres burned per year since 2015. From 2005 – 2014 the region experienced an average of 294 wildfires annually and 3,522 acres burned. From 2015 – 2021 an average of 160 fires annually and 1,859 acres burned annually.

### Geologic Hazards

- ❖ **EARTHQUAKES.** There have been 8 recorded earthquake events in MEMA District 6 since 1886. The strongest had a recorded magnitude of V MMI. Future occurrences are possible.
- ❖ **LANDSLIDE.** No known occurrences of landslides and USGS mapping shows a very low risk for most of the region, though there are some areas of moderate risk. Future occurrences unlikely.
- ❖ **LAND SUBSIDENCE.** There were no major recorded past events and in general the region has a low susceptibility. Future occurrences unlikely.

### Wind-Related Hazards

- ❖ **THUNDERSTORM/HIGH WIND.** There have been 426 severe thunderstorm/high wind events reported during the time period April 2015 – April 2020 with \$6.092 million in reported property damages. Future occurrences are highly likely.
- ❖ **TORNADOES.** There have been 100 recorded tornado events reported in the region between April 2015 – April 2020 resulting in \$30.06 million in property damages. Future occurrences are likely.

### Other Hazards

- ❖ **PANDEMIC.** The MEMA District 6 Region has been, and continues to be impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. As of 9/22/2021 there have been a total of 40,037 cases reported, along with 1,004 deaths in the MEMA D6 Region. Future occurrences possible.

The results of the hazard identification process were used to generate a Priority Risk Index (PRI), which categorizes and prioritizes potential hazards as high, moderate or low risk based on probability, impact, spatial extent, warning time, and duration. The highest PRI was assigned to Thunderstorm/High Wind followed by Tornado, Hailstorm, and Flood.

In concluding the review of Hazard Profiles, Mr. Foss stated if anyone had additional information for the hazard profiles, or had concerns with any of the data presented, they should call or email him.

Beginning in October 2021, individual mitigation action strategy meetings were held to discuss specific actions and updates. The summary of the meetings is below.



**Table 2.1: MITIGATION ACTION STRATEGY MEETINGS**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
<b>Clarke County</b>	L. Evans, Clarke Co. EMA; Steve Watkins, City of Quitman Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	October 13th, 2021 1pm
<b>Jasper County</b>	Mike Lucas, Jasper Co. EMA; Hudson Jenkins, Jasper Co. Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	September 27th, 2021 1pm
<b>Kemper County</b>	Ben Dudley, Kemper Co. EMA; Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	September 28th, 2021 9am
<b>Lauderdale County</b>	Odie Barret, Lauderdale Co. EMA; Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	September 28th, 2021 1pm
<b>Leake County</b>	Tommy Malone, Leake Co. EMA, Frank Hill, MEMA Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	October 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2021 1pm
<b>Neshoba County</b>	Darrell Wilson, Neshoba Co. EMA; Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	September 29th, 2021 1pm
<b>Newton County</b>	Robbie Richardson, Newton Co. EMA; Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	October 12th, 2021 9am
<b>Scott County</b>		<b>DID NOT PARTICIPATE</b>
<b>Smith County</b>	Heather Easterling, Smith Co. EMA Robert Miles, Town of Polkville Frank Hill, MEMA; Tammera Catchings, MEMA; Steven Foss, Witt O'Brien's	October 12th, 2021 1pm

Each county in the MEMA District 6 Region participated in virtual meetings on Microsoft Teams lead by Mr. Foss between September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Designated county representatives along with those representing individual jurisdictions were invited to attend these meetings. Each representative received a copy of their individual county annex and were asked to review it prior to their scheduled meeting.

Mr. Foss reviewed the Relevant Plans and Ordinances, Relevant Staff/Personnel Resources, and

Relevant Fiscal Resources. All of these categories were used to rate the overall capability of the participating counties and jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions are in the limited to moderate range for Planning and Regulatory Capability and in the limited range for Fiscal Capability.

During the individual county meetings, Mr. Foss gave an overview of Mitigation Strategy Development and presented the existing goals for the plan. Each county was asked to provide objectives to meet their 10 goals. Mr. Foss then provided an overview and examples of suggested mitigation actions tailored for MEMA District 6 counties and their municipalities. Mr. Foss then asked each county and the municipalities to provide a status update for their existing mitigation actions (completed, deleted, or deferred), along with any new mitigation actions.

Mr. Foss thanked the group for taking the time to attend and explained that if team members had any issues or questions about the planning process or their next steps, they could contact him.

## 2.5 INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

<b>44 CFR Requirement</b>
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<b>44 CFR Part 201.6(b)(1):</b> The planning process shall include an opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval.
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An important component of the mitigation planning process involves public participation. Individual citizen and community-based input provides the entire Council with a greater understanding of local concerns and increases 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 hazards present in their community and take the steps necessary to reduce their impact. Public awareness is a key component of any community’s overall mitigation strategy aimed at making a home, neighborhood, school, business or entire city safer from the potential effects of hazards.

Public involvement in the development of the *MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan* was sought using two methods: (1) public survey instruments (hard copy and web-based) were made available, and (2) copies of draft Plan deliverables were made available for public review on county websites and at government offices. The Public was provided two opportunities to be involved in the actual plan development at two distinct periods during the planning process: (1) during the drafting stage of the Plan; and (2) upon completion of a final draft Plan, but prior to official plan approval and adoption. A public participation survey (discussed in greater detail in Section 2.6.1) was made available during the planning process at various locations throughout the MEMA District 6 Region and at various locations on the internet.

It should be noted that many local officials explained that the best way to reach members of the public in their jurisdiction was often not through the internet and that many local governments do not have official websites on which to advertise an online survey link. Therefore, Atkins provided hard copies of the survey for all local governments and these were distributed to members of the public in the way each county felt would be most conducive to receiving responses. For instance, some communities brought hard copies to local community events and encouraged citizens to fill out the survey and send it directly to Atkins or to their local Emergency Management office.

Additionally, each of the participating jurisdictions will hold public meetings before the final plan is officially adopted by the local governing bodies. These meetings will occur at different times once FEMA has granted conditional approval of the plan. Adoption resolutions will be included in Appendix A.

### 2.5.1 Public Participation Survey

The MEMA District 6 Region was successful in getting citizens to provide input to the mitigation planning process through the use of the *Public Participation Survey*. The *Public Participation Survey* was designed to capture data and information from residents of the Region that might not be able to participate through other means in the mitigation planning process, such as attending a public meeting at a specific time and location.

As mentioned above, hard copies of the *Public Participation Survey* were distributed to the RHMC to be made available for residents to complete at local public offices. A link to an electronic version of the survey was also posted at various locations on the internet.

The public survey was open for responses from June 4<sup>th</sup> until July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021, and provided valuable input for the RHMPT to consider in the development of the plan update. Selected survey results are presented below.

- ❖ Approximately 38 percent of survey respondents had been impacted by a disaster, mainly tornadoes and thunderstorms.
- ❖ Respondents ranked Tornado as the highest perceived threat to their neighborhood (95 percent), followed by thunderstorms (38 percent).
- ❖ Approximately 68 percent of respondents answered that incentives such as insurance discounts, property tax breaks, or low-interest loans would motivate them to take additional steps to protect their home or business from natural disasters.
- ❖ 42 percent of respondents feel that their community is somewhat prepared for a natural disaster.
- ❖ Emergency Services and Public Education and Awareness were ranked as the most important activities for communities to pursue in reducing risks.

Public survey results were presented to the RHMC at the September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting.

## 2.6 INVOLVING THE STAKEHOLDERS

44 CFR Requirement
<b>44 CFR Part 201.6(b)(2):</b> The planning process shall include an opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia and other non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process.

At the beginning of the planning process for the development of this plan, the project consultant worked with MEMA mitigation staff, the MEMA District 6 Area Coordinator, and each of the eleven

County Emergency Management leads to initiate outreach to stakeholders to be involved in the planning process. Additionally, we engaged other stakeholders such as the Mississippi Forestry Commission.

In addition to the efforts described above, the participating jurisdictions in the MEMA District 6 plan went above and beyond the minimum requirements for stakeholder outreach by designing and distributing the *Public Participation Survey* described earlier in this section. In addition to collecting public input for the plan, the survey was generated to allow those stakeholders that could not attend Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning Team meetings the opportunity to provide input to the plan and the planning process. All survey results were shared with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Planning Team and represented input from citizens, local officials, businesses, academia, and other private interests in the Region. Several of these organizations contacted the consultant directly with comments as well.

## **2.7 DOCUMENTATION OF PLAN PROGRESS**

Progress in hazard mitigation planning for the participating jurisdictions in the MEMA District 6 Region is documented in this plan update. Since hazard mitigation planning efforts officially began in the participating counties with the development of the initial Hazard Mitigation Plans in the late 1990's/early 2000s, many mitigation actions have been completed and implemented in the participating jurisdictions. These actions will help reduce the overall risk to natural hazards for the people and property in the Region. The actions that have been completed are documented in the Mitigation Action Plan found in Section 9.

In addition, community capability continues to improve with the implementation of new plans, policies, and programs that help to promote hazard mitigation at the local level. The current state of local capabilities for the participating jurisdictions is captured in Section 7: *Capability Assessment*. The participating jurisdictions continue to demonstrate their commitment to hazard mitigation and hazard mitigation planning and have proven this by reconvening the Hazard Mitigation Council to update the Plan and by continuing to involve the public in the hazard mitigation planning process.