

A Presentation to the New Jersey State Planning Commission

Hazard Planning in New Jersey:

**What Should be the Role of the State
Planning Commission in Dealing with
Threats to New Jersey?**

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Slide I. Introduction – January, 2006

Slide II. Are we prepared: In what condition is emergency planning in the nation and New Jersey?

We have had multiple warnings in New Jersey over the past century, including at least six significant hurricane events, numerous nor'easter and storm flooding events, as well other costly and devastating events.

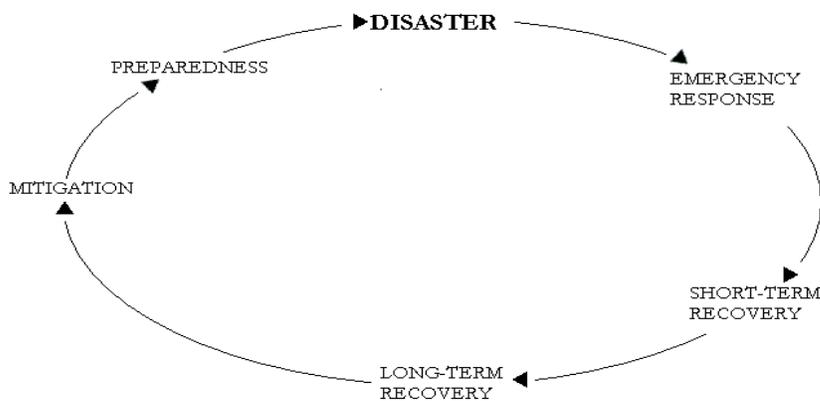
But, even as knowledge of weather systems, storm effects, better and longer prediction models are discovered, as technology is developed to save lives during crises, longer range emergency planning is relatively neglected in the emergency planning field. Katrina is just the most recent spectacular national confirmation of our under preparedness.

So what role, if any, should the State Planning Commission have in this long term planning? To answer this, the State Planning Commission's role up to this point will be explored as well as what other emergency planning is currently being done in New Jersey.

Slide III-IX. What emergency planning is being done in New Jersey?

If asked to assess our ability to respond once a disaster occurs, we are very prepared. Especially after 9/11, five of the six elements in the emergency management life cycle below are highly visible, well funded, and "taken care of" by most measures. Most of these elements are easily understood; a disaster occurs; respond to the disaster; carry out short-term recovery and clean up; implement long-term recovery and rebuilding; reduce the impact of and prevent, disasters; and prepare for the most likely and/or most damaging potential disasters.

Figure: Emergency Management Life Cycle



Response & Preparedness: The State has an exceptional State Police force, as well as above average local emergency responders and police. Homeland Security and State monies have been allocated to upgrade State and local police and first responder equipment.

Short & Long – Term Recovery: Federal Emergency Declaration aid, private insurance, businesses and individuals account for most short and long – term recovery efforts. Existing recovery plans are either short-term recovery plans more closely associated with emergency response or prepared after a disaster strikes along with funding legislation tied to that specific disaster.

Mitigation: Mitigation and its relationship to long-term recovery is the most neglected part of this cycle. Mitigation is unexciting, under funded, understudied, and off sync with the political cycle. Mitigation measures taken during one administration may not accrue benefits for 10, 50, 100 years or ever. Mitigation has no strong, independent advocacy organization with sufficient funding.

This is not to say mitigation efforts are non-existent. There is a mitigation office as part of the Office of Emergency Management as part of the State Police.

Under Governor Florio's Executive Order 115, the State established a State Hazard Mitigation Team which has met quarterly to review projects to which mitigation dollars were allocated and to review the work of completing the State mitigation document. Meetings are infrequent, participation varies, and staffing is minimal, but there is some discussion.

In addition, there are two documents which are closest to fulfilling the mitigation study needs of New Jersey.

Slide X. Building a Safer New Jersey - The State of New Jersey - Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP)

The most recent SHMP was contracted by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management in 2003 and completed in 2005. It is 730 pages long and its goals are to:

- (1) Reduce loss life and property
- (2) Create a system of implementation for mitigation
- (3) Meet FEMA and legal requirements

Unfortunately, the FEMA requirements make the rest of the report a much less useable document, making for a patchwork and un-unified report. For example, FEMA's preferred format is to see mitigation strategy analyzed by recent disaster, not by type. Therefore Tropical Storm Ivan has 30 pages dedicated to it in the report instead of a more comprehensive section on hurricanes and tropical storms identifying all strategies for coping with their effects. Although the body of the report is only 150 pages long, the appendices consume the other 580 pages.

Slide XI. The State Development and Redevelopment Plan

The other report is the **State Development and Redevelopment Plan**, a Plan State Planning Commission prepared with the Office of Smart Growth. The last official plan was completed in 2001, with its current revision beginning with the release of the Preliminary Plan in 2004. The current plan is 359 pages long.

In addition to being a land use guideline for the State of New Jersey, contains policies related to land use, approximately 30 of which have emergency management implications.

However, policies may not be enough to prevent hazard-increasing land use decisions

Slide XII. Hazard & Vulnerability Analysis

This is the largest section of the State Hazard Mitigation Plan is the “Hazard and Vulnerability Analysis”, and is how this Office became involved with hazard planning. This office was asked to prepare a Hazard and Vulnerability Analysis by the Office of Emergency Management in 1999 and completed it early in 2000.

The Hazard and Vulnerability Analysis in many ways is the core of the State Hazard Mitigation Plan. Used to identify threats to New Jersey and analyze them for their impact on people, property and the economy, it attempted to identify the geographic reach of each threat and provide some risk measure of each hazard.

In many ways, the Office of Smart Growth was the perfect ‘candidate’ to complete this project since our office contained the GIS skills, writing ability, and analytical expertise to take on such a project. However, the project was done “on a shoestring”, in a very tight timeframe, and at a loss in terms of budgeted time for the project.

While the Office of Smart Growth didn’t have enough time, money, data, or authority to carry out that project, it was still a highly improved document over previous document done in 1984. In 2004 and 2005, the document was only minimally revised because OEM’s contractors focused on improving dozens of other sections of the larger SHMP document.

Slide XIII. What needs to be done to properly protect New Jersey from hazards

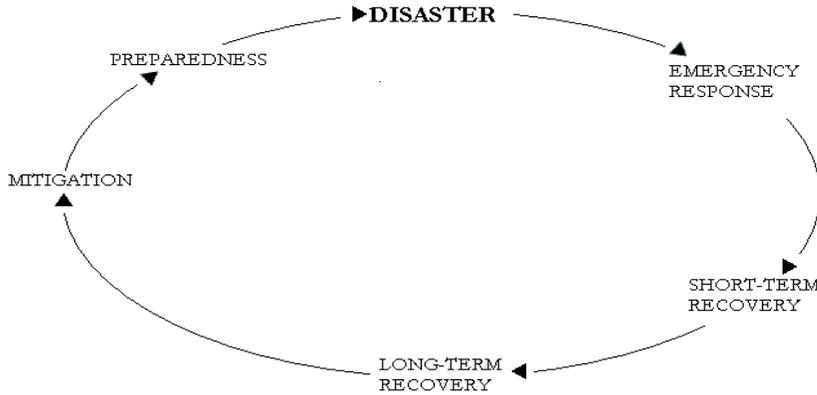
To protect something, one needs to identify the threat, analyze its traits and risks and neutralize its impact or occurrence.

If this works, the result can be:

- (1) A reduction in costs to infrastructure, property, and of disruption of commerce
- (2) A reduction in loss of life and casualties
- (3) A reduced number of disasters

Of the three, the first two are mentioned in most mitigation planning literature, but the third is not mentioned or explored enough and is potentially the most effective in reducing the first two.

Figure: Emergency Management Life Cycle

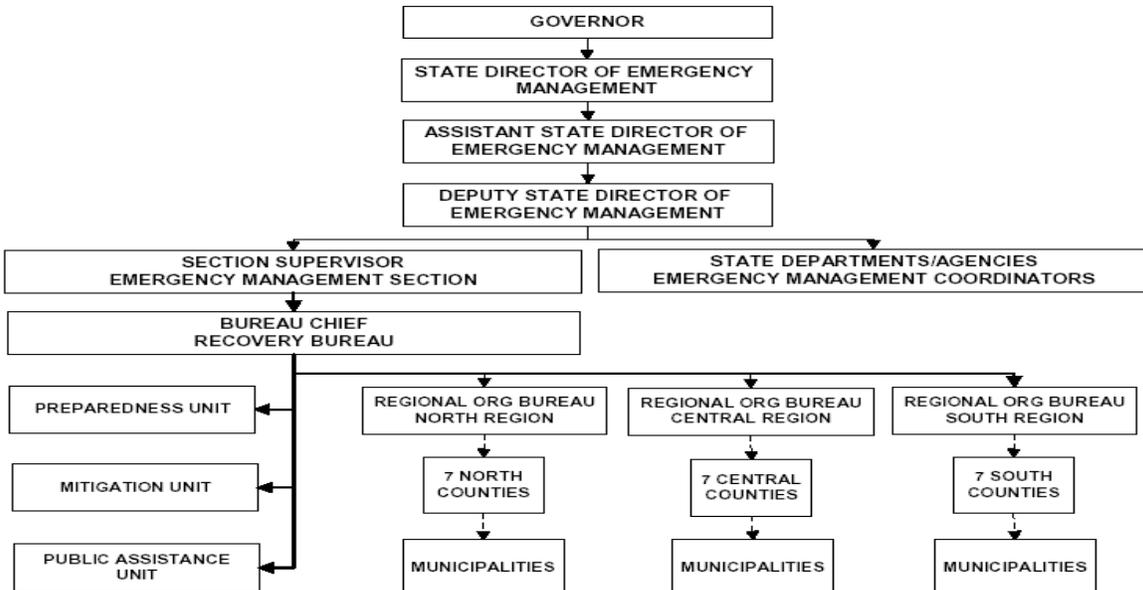


Revisiting the Emergency Management Life Cycle, to accomplish all three protective goals, the most ignored, least funded, and most effective way to this is mitigation; mitigation based on effective, long-term planning paired with funding and authority to carry out sometimes unpopular projects.

Business as usual focuses on the other aspects of the reactive elements of the life cycle and not mitigation; in the long run this costs us more because we do not reduce the costs and incidences of disasters as we could if mitigation were a higher priority.

Slide XIV. What organizations should be in charge of mitigation?

Exhibit 1: New Jersey Emergency Management Structure



Who is in charge now? Shown is the only emergency management organizational flow chart shown in the SHMP. Two important items to notice; how deeply embedded mitigation is in the organizational framework and that a second organizational chart which should have been in the SHMP is missing - showing which state agencies are responsible for the long term analysis of the myriad of hazards to New Jersey e.g. Fire Safety, Dam Safety, Epidemiological center of Department of Health, etc.

Mitigation leadership is not as well formed as it could be because of two “holes”. The first hole is the one between the research and implementation of reactive services provided by emergency response organizations and currently structured offices of emergency management; and that of the slow deliberative land use planning offered by the Office of Smart Growth and other land use planning organizations. As Katrina and other disasters have demonstrated, this situation is not unique to New Jersey.

The other hole is partly a result of the first and it is a funding hole. With no strong advocate or champion of mitigation research and project implementation, funding for mitigation projects will continue to be spread out over dozens of funding sources and programs, not well coordinated, and is inadequate to reduce threats to New Jersey [sounds a lot like brownfields].

A FEMA and Department of Homeland Security that works would go a long way toward this goal, by way of guiding emergency management toward mitigation and prevention. However, this can hardly be expected any time soon, and is somewhat out of our control.

New Jersey, however, can improve its own situation. At minimum, the State should look at how emergency management organizations are structured, how they are funded and what kinds of research is being done, and not done.

A potential comprehensive solution to the problem may be the creation of an organization, perhaps a division or department, whose role is to do planning, research and project implementation on hazard mitigation and other tough long-term issues like land use policy.

Slide XV. Recommendations to the State Planning Commission

1. The SPC should consider its role, if any, in planning, research and project implementation on hazard mitigation,
2. Study the implications of land use decisions on emergency planning and emergency planning on land use decisions,
3. Continue to integrate hazard and emergency planning into the State Plan and advocate that other organizations add emergency planning land use policies to their plans,
4. SPC and OSG should urge regions, counties and municipalities to perform comprehensive planning which includes better emergency planning elements,
5. SPC and OSG should use its I-Team to reach out to State agencies to research ways that land use decisions affect emergency planning and outcomes, and add to the State Plan as appropriate,

6. Advocate for permanent status, increased membership and more frequent meetings of the State Hazard Mitigation Team (SHMT) originally created under Executive Order 115 – Florio to continually update and improve emergency management documents throughout the State of NJ,
7. Research whether an emergency element is an appropriate addition to the MLUL and,
8. Investigate local, State and Federal assistance programs to insure that they do not encourage land uses counterproductive to emergency planning.