

**Breaking the Disaster Cycle:
Future Directions in Natural Hazard Mitigation**

*Implementing Mitigation at the State Level;
Sustainable Hazard Mitigation Criteria*

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➤ Objectives:

- 8.1 Understand the context for state hazard mitigation plans and programs, including the importance of natural disasters as focusing events.
- 8.2 Review the performance of state hazard mitigation planning under the Stafford Act.
- 8.3 Review lessons learned from assessments of state hazard mitigation plans, in terms of the potential for achieving sustainable communities.

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➤ Objectives:

8.4 Identify the obstacles to achieving the balance sought by sustainable development.

8.5 Participate in an exercise to develop sustainability criteria for evaluation of state hazard mitigation plans.

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➤ Objective 8.1

- Describe the context for state hazard mitigation plans and programs, including the importance of natural disasters as focusing events:
 - Low public priority except in times of crisis
 - Significant natural disasters focus government and public attention on hazard mitigation *after the fact*
 - Difficult to galvanize public before disasters strike

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The Northridge Earthquake increased public awareness of fault line hazards in Southern California after the fact (Source: FEMA)

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➤ **Figure 8.1 Context for State Hazard Mitigation Planning**

- Absent a crisis, state hazard mitigation planning is:
 - Viewed as a technical, rather than a policy, matter
 - Low salience issue for elected officials
 - Unsupported by citizen pressure groups
 - Lacking in staff & organizational resources
 - Forced to rely on federal (FEMA) standards & funding
 - A "policy without a public"

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➤ **Figure 8.2 Windows of Opportunity**

- Disasters can be seen as "focusing events" that elevate hazard mitigation to the top of the public policy agenda
- Focusing events:
 - Sudden, relatively rare events
 - Happen with little or no warning
 - May impact many of people in area or community
 - Known to policy makers & public at same time
 - Create strategic advantage for change-oriented groups
 - Bring state new funding & technical resources
 - Can lead to stronger hazard mitigation plans & policies

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Devastating floods in Texas served as a “focusing event”

(Source: FEMA)

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➤ **Objective 8.2**

- Review the performance of state hazard mitigation planning under the Stafford Act:
 - Lackluster history
 - Federal disaster policy based on post-disaster recovery
 - Eligibility for federal disaster assistance funds based on post-disaster plans
 - Checklist attitude toward hazard mitigation plans not related to expenditure of HMGP funds
 - Lack of commitment by state and local government officials to pre-disaster hazard mitigation
 - Lack of capacity in hazard mitigation staff and resources

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FEMA provides training for state and local officials. (Source: FEMA)

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➤ Objective 8.3

- Review lessons learned from assessments of state hazard mitigation plans, in terms of the potential for achieving sustainable communities:
 - Maintain and enhance environmental quality.
 - Maintain and enhance people's quality of life.
 - Foster local resiliency to, and responsibility for, disasters.
 - Recognize that sustainable, vital local economies are essential.
 - Identify and ensure inter- and intra-generational equity.
 - Adopt a consensus-building approach, starting at the local level.

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Seagulls on a Patuxent River Beach (Source: NOAA)

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➤ Objective 8.4

- Identify the obstacles to achieving the balance sought by sustainable development:
 - Private property rights groups oppose governmental regulations
 - Local governments think only about impacts of their decisions on themselves
 - Hazard mitigation is viewed as a technical process
 - Specialization is viewed as road to success in our economic system
 - Poor and future generations are not involved in public policy making
 - Consensus-building must contend with competition, individualism, and majority-rule

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➤ Objective 8.5

- Participate in an exercise to develop sustainability criteria for evaluation of state hazard mitigation plans:
 - Develop no more than 15 criteria
 - Provide rationale for each criterion
 - Apply criteria to 2000 Oregon *Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan*

➤ **Figure 8.3 Oregon Natural Hazards Plan** (Source: Oregon Department of Emergency Management)

