

Augusta-Richmond County Hazard Mitigation Plan HMPC Meeting 1 - Minutes

Introductions

David Stroud and Abby Moore, consultants from Wood, facilitated the Meeting. David kicked off the meeting by asking Mie Lucas, EMA Director for Augusta-Richmond County and the coordinator of this Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) update, to lead introductions. The participants in this meeting introduced themselves as follows:

- Mie Lucas – EMA Director, Augusta Fire/Emergency Management Division
- Chad Hendrix – Engineering Manager, Augusta Utilities Department (Augusta Canal and Operations; Utilities broadly)
- Scott Peebles – Chief, Richmond County Marshal’s Office
- Shaw Williams – Interim Fire Chief, Augusta Fire Department
- Marie Corbin – Assistant Director, Augusta Utilities Department (Canal System and Department broadly)
- Jeff Pigg – Emergency Management Program Manager, University Hospital
- Jeff Tilley – Emergency Operations, Richmond County School System
- James Demonns – Interim EHS Director, Starbucks Manufacturing
- Sharon Dottery – Director, Public Transit (Phone Number 1818 on Attendance)
- Terri Turner – Development Services Administrator, Augusta Planning, Zoning, and Development
- Dian Mead – EHS Manager, Prayon Inc. (Tier II Industry in Augusta)
- Frederick Polen – EH Manager, Starbuck Manufacturing
- Acy Miller – Emergency Manager, Doctors Hospital of Augusta
- Tony McDonald – Deputy Administrator, City of Augusta
- Dr. Hameed Malik – Director, Augusta Engineering (manages levee)
- Michele Pearman - IT/GIS Manager, City of Augusta
- Evelyn Chanti – GIS Analyst – Database Management, City of Augusta
- Amanda Brookins – City Clerk, City of Hephzibah
- Brandon Landis – Emergency Manager, Charlie Norwood VA Hospital
- Bill Hegedusich – Installation Emergency Manager, Fort Gordon
- Susan Beckham – Emergency Preparedness Director, East Central Health District (GA Department of Public Health)
- Takiyah Douse – Director, Augusta Central Services Department
- Mark Mehall – Director, Augusta Environmental Services
- Domingo Ruiz – EMA CERT Volunteer
- Sharon Bennett – Deputy Director, Augusta Fire/Emergency Management Division

Note: please let us know if any of the above information is incorrect so it can be correctly reported in the plan.

Agenda

David and Abby led the meeting following the below agenda:

- Introductions
- Project Overview
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Requirement
 - Trends in Disasters
 - Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000
 - Planning Requirements
 - Planning Process Review
 - Project Schedule
- Public Outreach
- Risk Assessment Information
- Next Steps & Questions

Project Overview

Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Requirements: David discussed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) plan update requirement and the HMGP grant process. Communities are required to update their plans every five years to remain eligible for federal disaster funding including HMGP, FMA, and BRIC programs. Any federal declared disaster in the State of Georgia means that Augusta-Richmond County is eligible to apply for funding. Having an updated plan ensures Augusta-Richmond county will be ready with mitigation project ideas when funding was available.

Trends in Disasters: Disaster trends are resulting in increased costs for disaster response and recovery. As growth and development occur, exposure to hazard events increases. Exposure to risk includes the people as well as the infrastructure and buildings. Because exposure has increased, when hazard events occur, they may cause more damage. There are also trends toward more severe hazard events. There has been a continual increase in hazard expenses and an increase in the issuance of major disaster declarations. David reviewed a list of the costliest natural disasters by NOAA estimates. All of them occurred in the last 40 years; 14 of the 18 costliest disasters in the U.S. occurred in the last 20 years. David also went over the costliest disasters across Georgia; 15 of the 18 in the state occurred in the last 20 years, including 9 hurricanes, 6 droughts/heatwaves, 2 tornadoes, and 1 winter weather event.

David went over four reasons why addressing these trends is a priority: 1) the cost of doing nothing is too high; 2) many events are predictable and repetitive; 3) loss reduction activities can be undertaken, and they work, they're cost effective, they're environmentally sound, and there are funds available to help; and 4) there are legal and moral responsibilities to act. David also noted that planning breaks the "damage→rebuild→damage→rebuild" cycle.

DMA 2000 Planning Requirements: David reviewed the DMA planning requirements, which include a four-phase planning process: organize resources, risk assessment, develop a mitigation plan, and adoption and implementation. The Wood consultant team will lead a process that blends this four-phase process with the 10-step Community Rating System (CRS) Floodplain Management Planning process. The completed HMP will meet the requirements of both FEMA programs.

David discussed the main phases of this planning process, as follows:

Phase I: Organize Resources, will involve planning for public involvement and coordinating with other departments and agencies. Other stakeholders to involve include Georgia Emergency Management Agency, FEMA Region IV, NOAA, other adjoining communities, citizens, schools, businesses, and others. These stakeholders have been invited by email to participate in the planning process.

Phase II: Assess Risks entails hazard identification (what can happen here), vulnerability assessment (what will be affected or impacted), and capability assessment (how prepared we are).

Phase III: Develop Mitigation Plan involves setting planning goals, reviewing mitigation alternatives, and drafting an action plan. In addition to reviewing actions from the previous plan, the HMPC may need to develop new actions. David noted that in this process Wood will ensure that the County meets the CRS requirements for considering mitigation alternatives to maximize CRS credit for the plan.

Phase IV: Adopt and Implement involves each participating community adopting the plan through formal resolution. Additionally, the HMPC should meet at least annually to pursue action implementation, monitor funding opportunities, update and revise the plan as needed, and continue public involvement. However, Wood recommends the HMPC gather at least quarterly in some capacity to maximize CRS credits.

Project Schedule: The anticipated project schedule was presented. The process will aim for completion of a final draft document by November 2021 to send to GEMA for review. This timeline does not include final approval and adoption of the plan, which should be completed by March 2022.

Public Outreach

Plan Website: Abby presented the website to be used for the planning process, which will be a tool for HMPC coordination and public outreach. The website is www.augustaga-HMP.com. The site contains upcoming meeting announcements, meeting agendas and minutes, draft documents of the plan update, information on the identified hazards, and opportunities to

provide feedback including the public survey. Augusta-Richmond County and participating communities are asked to put a link to this website on their local community pages and social media accounts to encourage more public involvement.

Public Survey: Abby presented the proposed public survey and provided the link to the HMPC to gather feedback. Chief Williams noted that there should be an option for other under question 2. David stated that he would send a hard copy of the survey to everyone on the HMPC to have an opportunity to provide feedback.

Outreach Opportunities: Other outreach opportunities were presented to the HMPC. These include the web tools mentioned previously (survey and website) as well as a flyer that Wood has developed. The flyer, available on the plan website, could be made available digitally or in hard copy format around the community. Other opportunities include social media and news media. As noted previously, invitations were sent out to a list of stakeholders developed by Mie, but the HMPC was encouraged to send other stakeholders who would be beneficial to the planning process. Abby asked that photos or screenshots any outreach done (online or in hard copy format) be sent to the Wood consultants to document in the plan.

Risk Assessment Information

Hazard Identification: Abby presented the HMPC with a list of hazards that were included in the 2019 Georgia Hazard Mitigation Strategy and the 2017 Augusta-Richmond County HMP in order to compile a list to be included in the Augusta-Richmond County 2022 plan update. All of the natural hazards included in the 2017 plan will be carried forward to the 2022 plan. The goal of this discussion was to go over the human-caused and technological hazards; some of these were rated as low priority hazards and no specific mitigation actions were developed (which is okay – FEMA and GEMA only review for natural hazards). The following comments were made:

- **Dr. Hameed Malik** noted that the railroad carries materials that could be hazardous and asked if this would be included under Chemical Hazards. Wood answered that typically the Chemical Hazard would include transportation routes (road, rail, etc.) as well as fixed facility hazards. This hazard will be carried forward.
- **James Demonn**s asked if utility failure would be covered under hurricane, tornado, etc.? The consultants noted that in their plans, utility failure is typically considered as more of an impact of natural hazards. It is up to the HMPC to decide how to include it: as an impact of associated hazards or as an individual hazard. Based on this, the HMPC decided to remove utility failure.
- **Mie Lucas** deferred to Terri Turner about EMP/Solar Flare as her department chose to include it in the 2017 plan. Terrie and Mie will discuss this hazard offline and make a decision.
- **Mie Lucas** also noted that Cyber Terrorism and Terrorism were included in the prior plan by the previous Fort Gordon contact. Bill responded that we should keep cyberterrorism as ransomware and other forms of cyber attacks are a risk to the community but remove terrorism as it is a low risk to the area.

As such, the final list of hazards, pending the EMP/Solar Flare decision, is as follows:

- Hurricane Wind
- Coastal Hazards
- Wind
- Severe Weather
- Tornadoes
- Inland Flooding
- Severe Winter Weather
- Drought
- Wildfire
- Earthquake
- Geological Hazards
- Dam Failures
- Extreme Heat
- Radiological Accidents
- Infectious Disease
- Chemical Hazard
- Terrorism

Risk Assessment Next Steps: Wood will assist Augusta-Richmond County with updating the GMIS database. Mie is planning to send Wood an updated list, but if any other committees have updates to be included, they should be sent to Wood as soon as possible so GEMA can begin their Hazus run. Wood will also be running Hazus and will include the GEMA run as an appendix.

For the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), Wood will identify hazard locations, past occurrences, future probability, and magnitude as well as address the vulnerability of people, property, critical facilities, etc. for each hazard. Wood will use a variety of information sources, as presented in the meeting slides, but asks for detailed HMPC input. Although Wood has access to many broad databases, the best resources for understanding how a hazard impacts a community is information provided by the HMPC.

Next Steps

- 1) **Data Collection Guide:** Wood will send out a data collection guide – only one needs to be completed per jurisdiction – to gather information about local capability, vulnerability (especially areas prone to stormwater and localized flooding), hazard-specific information, past hazard events, recent community changes, and planned future development. The more detailed the responses to this guide, the better Wood can prepare an accurate plan update. The data collection guide should be returned by **Friday May 7th**.
- 2) **Action Plan Progress Update:** Wood will provide the community with a copy of the mitigation action plan from the 2017 Augusta-Richmond County HMP. The community will need to provide a statement on the status of each action, identify completed actions, and identify whether each incomplete action should be carried forward or removed. David noted that is totally acceptable, and encouraged, to delete an action if it is no longer prioritized. The goal of updating the mitigation action plan is to devote attention and resources to a manageable number of actions that area feasible to complete. There is FEMA guidance on the plan website for ideas for new mitigation actions.
- 3) **Public Outreach:** The community should share the link to the plan website (via local community website, social media, news media, etc.) – if you do post the link or hard copy information anywhere, send a screenshot or photo so all outreach can be documented in the plan.
- 4) **Risk Assessment:** Any additional data to be included in the Risk Assessment should be submitted by **Friday, April 30th**.

Mie finished the meeting by thanking the HMPC and Wood Consultants for taking the time to meet. She reminded the HMPC that the reason Augusta-Richmond County has received FEMA grant funding in the past (outdoor warning sirens, sheriff's office generator) was because of this planning process.