

## **V. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING**

### **A. Emergency Planning**

Building disaster-resistant communities through sound land use planning is the primary goal of emergency planning. When considering future land use in town plans and zoning regulations, towns should weigh the predictable consequences of development given disaster risks such as flood hazard areas, steep slopes, and inadequate roads. Emergency planning fits best land use practices, saves lives, reduces incidences of injury, and protects public and private property, as well as the cultural, historical, and natural resource assets of the Region.

There are four main objectives in emergency planning:

- Mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

Being prepared for when an emergency or natural disaster occurs is a priority for all towns in the Region. To help off-set the damages caused by these events, the RPC along with each town has a 2006 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved All-Hazards Mitigation Plan. With the plan and membership in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (discussed later in this chapter) all towns within the SWCRPC Region may apply for Pre-Disaster Mitigation, Hazard Mitigation, and Flood Mitigation grants all administered through FEMA. In addition to the All-Hazards Plan, towns may choose to adopt an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that outlines the specific procedures and locations for American Red Cross shelters, hazardous materials, and other emergency services.

### **B. Mitigation**

Mitigation is any action taken to reduce the loss of life (human, pets, or livestock) or property in the event of a foreseeable natural or man-made disaster. Mitigation reduces exposure to, probability of, and potential loss from hazardous and disastrous events. It includes compliance with the NFIP flood hazard regulations. Towns must be in compliance with this program in order to enable property owners to obtain flood insurance to blunt the effects of catastrophic loss. All towns in the Region are members in the NFIP program.

FEMA, through Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), has a hazard mitigation program to assist towns in permanent mitigation projects. The result of this program is a FEMA approved All Hazards Mitigation Plan that outlines a town's background along with a vulnerability assessment. Through risk analysis, towns can identify areas of concern and assign a priority ranking to mitigation projects. FEMA offers additional resources for making communities disaster-resistant. The Vermont Local Roads Program, administered through St. Michael's College, assists towns in setting the proper standards for planning roads, culverts, bridges, and access to local roads.

## **C. Preparedness**

Preparedness is taking stock of the persons and assets available for response to an emergency resulting from damage caused by a natural or man-made hazard. The first step in preparedness is the town's Rapid Response Plan (RRP), which is a guide for use in the early stages of disaster response. It identifies key emergency personnel (rapid response team), contact numbers, locations, tasks, and an evacuation plan. The RRP is not required, but is highly recommended as a first phase local plan. The Rapid Response Plan differs from an EOP in that it only involves the first phase of a response. The EOP offers a more detailed and effective guide to dealing with emergency situations.

## **D. Response**

Response is a time sensitive reaction to an incident designed to save lives and property and stabilize the situation. Response includes warning, evacuating, rescuing, sheltering, informing, and providing medical care to the public.

A town's response is often dependent on mutual aid, an agreement among towns in the Region to assist or standby with equipment and personnel during an emergency. Though few formal agreements have been made, many ad hoc mutual aid agreements exist throughout the Region. The need arises for additional assistance when one emergency situation is greater than what can be reasonably handled by the responding department. The situation may be a multiple alarm fire, such as the Springfield movie theater in summer 2008, or emergencies of a regional scope, such as the Middlebury train derailment in 2007.

## **E. Recovery**

Recovery is the effort to restore the infrastructure and the social and economic life of communities after a disaster. It incorporates mitigation and preparedness strategies to lessen and avoid damage from the next event.

## **F. Emergency Services**

### **1. Ambulance**

Ambulance and emergency rescue service is provided through volunteer services in Chester, Cavendish, Reading, and Ludlow. Several towns, including Andover, Baltimore, Weathersfield and West Windsor contract with other municipalities, as well as private firms from within and outside of the Region for ambulance service. Springfield and Windsor provide full-time ambulance service.

### **2. Fire**

All of the Region's towns currently utilize municipal fire departments. Andover contracts with the Town of Chester, and Baltimore contracts with Springfield for fire services. Capabilities of existing fire service facilities are generally considered adequate by the towns

to address current and projected needs. Weathersfield is expanding its fire protection infrastructure through the creation and installation of fire ponds and dry hydrants.

### 3. Police

Law enforcement in the Region is provided by local, county, state, and federal police offices. The towns of Springfield, Ludlow, and Windsor offer full-time 24 hour police service while Chester and Weathersfield have a full-time local police department supplemented by the Vermont State Police during off hours. All towns have, as required by state statute, an elected town constable. The Windsor County Sheriff's Office provides contractual patrol service to the towns of Andover, Cavendish, and Reading. In addition, the County Sheriff's Office serves as backup support for local and State Police when so requested. In addition, the State Police are mandated by Vermont law to provide service for any town that does not employ a full-time police department. State Police service for the Region is provided through the Rockingham and Royalton barracks. The duties of the various and related law enforcement organizations may either overlap or fall short of providing adequate coverage throughout the Region. An assessment of the service areas and coordination of the duties performed by each level of law enforcement would assist towns in planning for more efficient service. Such an analysis would also provide help for eliminating potential gaps in current and future services.

Since 1998, Enhanced 911(E911) service has been available for all Vermont towns choosing to participate in the system. Every town in the Region is participating in the E911 system. E911 relies on locatable physical addresses linked to telephone numbers. When an E911 call is made, the call taker is automatically provided with the name of the telephone subscriber, the location from which the call originated, and the names of all emergency service providers for the location. The call can then be forwarded to the proper dispatch center(s) to dispatch emergency service providers to the scene, even if the caller is unable to describe his or her location or the nature of the emergency. It is extremely important for towns to make the E911 Board immediately aware of any road changes to keep the master lists accurate and up-to-date.

## G. Hazard Assessment

During the process of developing the Regional All-Hazards Mitigation Plan, a regional risk assessment was completed. The assessment began with an inventory of possible hazards along with assigning a probability and vulnerability score to each hazard. The LEPC #3 was extensively involved in this process as it mirrors the process to develop the Regional Emergency Operations Plan. A probability score of 0-4 was given to each potential hazard with 0 being unlikely and 4 being an annual event. Next a vulnerability score of 1-4 was assigned with 1 being a moderate event impacting between 30-300 people and 4 being a disaster impacting over 9,000 people. **Table 5.1** below shows the results of the risk assessment.

<b>Table 5.1 Results of Regional Risk Assessment</b>		
<b>Type of Disaster</b>	<b>Probability</b>	<b>Vulnerability</b>
Residential Fire	4	1
Flash floods/Ice Jams	4	2
Blizzard or Severe Storms	3	4
Power Outages	3	4
Slow-rising Floods	3	3
Hazardous Materials Release	3	3
Hurricanes/Severe Storms/Tornado	3	3
Airplane	3	2
Major Fires/Industrial Explosion	3	2
Dam Break	1	4
Wildfire	4	1
Avalanche, Landslides & Mudslides	1	1
Serious Earthquake	1	4
Nuclear Power Incident	1	4
Civil Disturbance	1	2
Epidemic	1	3
Terrorism: Explosives & Biologicals	1	4
Nuclear Attack	0	4
Meteorite Fall	0	4
Drought	1	1

Source: Regional All Hazards Mitigation Plan

According to the National Climatic Data Center, 201 emergency events occurred in Windsor County between January 1, 2000 and February 28, 2008, resulting in two deaths, two injuries, and \$6.353 million in property damage due to:

- **floods** – 16 events and \$1.704 million in property damage;
- **winter storms** - 88 events with one death, two injuries, and \$3.019 million in property damage;
- **extreme cold** – 12 events and \$100,000 in property damage;
- **thunderstorms, precipitation, and/or high winds** - 59 events with 1 injury, and \$1.2 million in property damage;
- **lightning** – 7 events with 1 death, and \$130,000 in property damage; and
- **hail** – 19 events and \$200,000 in property damage.

In addition to the above listed weather related emergency events, there are also man-made emergency events including vehicular crashes. According to the Vermont Department of Transportation data on federal aid system roads in the Region, from 2002-2006, there were 1,797 vehicle crashes resulting in 710 injuries and 12 deaths.

## **H. LEPC #3**

Emergency management in Vermont is primarily a town responsibility, led by its local emergency managers, or persons in the community who are involved in emergency preparedness. It is handled differently from town-to-town.

In the late 1990s, VEM recognized that most towns lacked the staffing and equipment to accomplish tasks set forth by FEMA, which require local governments to prepare for future disasters and to qualify for assistance in the event of a federal disaster declaration in the Region. Regional planning commissions are seen as partners in the delivery of educational information, training, and expertise.

Under 20 V.S.A. §32, Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC) are appointed under the State Emergency Response Commission. The LEPC includes membership from fire departments, local emergency medical services, law enforcement, regional planning commissions, hospitals, Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Emergency Management, American Red Cross, and other interested public and private individuals.

The LEPC performs a number of duties including: activities pursuant to the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), 42 U.S.C. §11001 et seq. (1986), collection and administration of data related to the legal right to know what chemicals are used, stored, transported through or made in the region store hazardous materials, coordinating with local emergency officials in the development of both local and regional emergency management plans, and pursuing additional funding opportunities. In addition, the LEPC is responsible for developing a regional disaster response plan, which includes training and testing exercises.

LEPC #3, covering all ten towns in the Region plus Hartford, Hartland, and Norwich, has developed an All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan. The plan has received LEPC approval and will be sent to each town to be used as a reference tool during an emergency event.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT GOALS**

1. To build disaster-resistant communities in the Region through sound emergency and land use planning.
2. To maintain Enhanced 911 service as designed and provided by the Vermont Enhance 911 Board.

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

1. Encourage towns to undertake and periodically review an all-hazards risk assessment in their community to identify potential hazards and the life and property at risk, including cultural, historical, and natural resource assets.
2. Encourage towns in emergency planning to develop and implement regulations to make communities more disaster-resistant.
3. Encourage towns to review, update, and adopt Rapid Response Plans yearly for newly identified risks.
4. Encourage towns to adopt minimum standards for public roads, bridges, and culverts, using the Vermont Local Roads Program and FEMA standards.

5. Encourage towns, in the adoption of minimum road standards, to include the requirement that all private roads and driveways be properly constructed to prevent damage from storm water runoff.
6. Explore efforts to develop a regional emergency response plan that includes surrounding areas in Vermont and New Hampshire.
7. Participation in the Vermont Enhanced 911 program by all towns in the Region is encouraged.

### **EMERGENCY PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Work with towns to undertake and periodically review an all-hazards risk assessment in their communities to identify potential hazards and the life and property at risk, including cultural, historical, and natural resource assets.
2. Work with towns to plan and adopt regulations that promote mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery in the event of a disaster.
3. Work with towns to keep their Rapid Response Plans current.
4. Work with towns to compile a comprehensive all-hazard risk assessment and emergency response plan for the Region.
5. Assist towns in obtaining administrative and financial assistance from the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board for ongoing system maintenance.