

ITASCA COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

VICTOR J. WILLIAMS, SHERIFF



440 1st Avenue NE • Grand Rapids, MN 55744 • 218-326-3477 • FAX: 218-326-4663

ITASCA COUNTY NEWS RELEASE

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Public Comment Sought for County's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Itasca County has completed an updated draft of the of its Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP) and is now seeking public feedback on it. Citizens can find a link to review the plan and offer feedback by visiting https://z.umn.edu/itasca_hmp. The review and comment period is open through Tuesday, January 18, 2022. After that, the county will submit the draft plan to the State of Minnesota and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for review.

The Itasca County MHMP is a multi-jurisdictional plan that covers Itasca County, including the cities of Bigfork, Bovey, Calumet, Cohasset, Coleraine, Deer River, Effie, Grand Rapids, Keewatin, La Prairie, Marble, Nashwauk, Squaw Lake, Taconite, Warba, and Zemple. The Itasca County MHMP also incorporates the concerns and needs of townships, school districts, and other stakeholders participating in the plan.

Itasca County is vulnerable to a variety of potential natural disasters, which threaten the loss of life and property in the county. The plan addresses how to mitigate against hazards such as tornadoes, flooding, wildland fires, blizzards, straight-line winds, ice storms, and droughts which have the potential for inflicting vast economic loss and personal hardship.

Update of the plan has been under direction of Itasca County Emergency Management in cooperation with U-Spatial at the University of Minnesota Duluth and representatives from County departments, city and township governments, school districts, and other key stakeholders. Together, the planning team worked to identify cost-effective and sustainable actions to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life or property from natural hazards. Some examples include improvement of roads and culverts that experience repetitive flooding; construction of safe rooms at campgrounds, public parks, mobile home parks or schools to protect lives in the event of tornados or severe wind events; burying powerlines that may fail due to heavy snow, ice or wind storms; ensuring timely emergency communication to the public through warning sirens and mass notification systems, and conducting public awareness and education campaigns to help people be prepared to take safe action before, during, or following a hazard event.

Hazard mitigation planning helps Itasca County and other jurisdictions protect their residents. Working with local communities through the process helps identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies to reduce or eliminate the effects of a potential hazard. In addition, increasing public awareness of local hazards and disaster preparedness helps to create a community that is resilient to disaster, and breaks the cycle of response and recovery. Updating the plan further allows the County and its jurisdictions to apply for eligible projects under future Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant funding from FEMA for projects that are cost-effective and will help to reduce or eliminate impacts of future natural disaster events.

Community feedback is vital to the success of the plan. Itasca County invites public review and feedback of the draft plan prior to submitting it to the State of Minnesota and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for review. Feedback may be provided via the online comment form or directly to Itasca County Emergency Management.

Contact:

John Linder

Itasca County Emergency Manager Coordinator

Phone: 218-327-7483

Email: john.linder@co.itasca.mn.us