

2026 CENTRAL SHENANDOAH

HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Central Shenandoah Hazard Mitigation Plan (CSHMP) serves as the region's long-range plan for reducing the impact from natural and human-caused hazards. The Plan identifies vulnerabilities in communities across the region and establishes strategies to protect lives, property, infrastructure, and critical services.

On May 20, 2026, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) formally approved the plan, enabling participating jurisdictions to remain eligible for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant programs upon local adoption.

The full CSHMP can be viewed online: https://connect.cspdc.org/hazard-mitigation-plan

PLANNING PROCESS

Originally adopted in 2005, the 2026 Plan represents the third comprehensive update and reflects the region's continued commitment to proactive hazard mitigation. The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC) developed the plan over the course of two years in collaboration with 21 jurisdictions, 4 special districts, and more than 30 regional organizations. It serves as coordinated guidance for building safer communities while maintaining eligibility for federal mitigation funding. The process included:

- Comprehensive risk assessments for 8 natural hazards and 4 human-caused threats
- Evaluation of local and regional capabilities for 5 cities, 5 counties, 11 towns, and 4 special districts
- Development of regional goals and jurisdiction-specific mitigation actions
- Extensive public and stakeholder engagement, including 458 public survey responses, 4 steering committee meetings, and individual consultations with all participating entities

Notably, the region's mountainous terrain, extensive river systems, rural development patterns, karst geology, and communication restrictions under the National Radio Quiet Zone create unique resilience challenges that require coordinated regional planning. Through the planning process, flooding, wildfires, and severe winter weather emerged as the region's highest-risk hazards. Other significant threats include hazardous materials incidents, drought, sinkholes, tropical storms, and infrastructure failure.

REGIONAL MITIGATION PRIORITIES

To guide implementation, the Plan establishes six overarching regional goals supported by regional strategies and locality-specific mitigation actions. Actions include infrastructure improvements, flood mitigation projects, emergency preparedness initiatives, land use planning tools, and public education efforts. Together, these actions seek to reduce future losses and improve long-term community resilience.

1	**Economic Resilience and Protection:** Bolster the regional economy by reducing hazard impacts on economic sectors and critical business infrastructure.
2	**Housing and Neighborhood Protection:** Protect residential properties and prioritize vulnerable neighborhoods and housing populations.
3	**Environmental Stewardship and Natural Hazard Mitigation:** Restore and enhance natural systems' hazard mitigation functions while protecting environmental resources.
4	**Resilient Public Infrastructure:** Ensure high-quality, resilient infrastructure that maintains essential services before, during, and after hazard events.
5	**Public Health and Safety Enhancement:** Promote public health and safety by reducing hazard-related risks and ensuring effective emergency response.
6	**Collaboration and Innovation:** Collaborate across jurisdictions and sectors to improve resilience through innovative approaches.

LOCAL ACTION ITEMS

In accordance with FEMA's planning requirements, participating localities and special districts developed prioritized mitigation actions and projects for each of the 12 hazards and threats based on local needs, capacity, timeline, and available funding. Implementation of these actions may occur through future capital projects, policy initiatives, infrastructure investments, and state or federal grant opportunities.

PLAN ADOPTION & IMPLEMENTATION

Adoption of the CSHMP is required for participating jurisdictions and special districts to remain eligible for FEMA's grant programs, including funding opportunities that support flood mitigation, infrastructure hardening, emergency power systems, property protection, and other resilience projects. Upon local adoption, the CSPDC will continue to monitor the Plan annually and update it every five years in accordance with FEMA requirements. Through coordinated regional implementation, the CSHMP provides a framework for building safer and stronger communities across the Central Shenandoah region.