

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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The Central Shenandoah Hazard Mitigation Plan (CSHMP) serves as a comprehensive framework for identifying natural hazards and man-made threats that affect the region and establishing evidence-based mitigation strategies to reduce their adverse impacts on residents, property, infrastructure, and economic assets. This multi-jurisdictional plan is the result of a collaborative planning process that brought stakeholders across the Central Shenandoah region together to build greater regional resilience.

The CSHMP encompasses twenty-one localities within the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission's (CSPDC) regional footprint. This includes five counties (Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham), five cities (Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro), and eleven incorporated towns (Bridgewater, Broadway, Craigsville, Dayton, Elkton, Glasgow, Goshen, Grottoes, Monterey, Mt. Crawford, and Timberville). Additionally, four special districts (James Madison University, Maury Service Authority, Bath County Service Authority, and Augusta Water) participate as full planning partners.

Hazard mitigation is defined as any sustained action to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from a hazardous incident. The hazard mitigation plan formalizes community policies, actions, and implementation tools into a cohesive strategy for disaster preparation and protection. By proactively minimizing risks before an incident impacts the region, the CSHMP reduces the need for post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, ultimately creating safer, stronger communities throughout the Central Shenandoah region.

To accomplish its mission, the CSHMP brings stakeholders together to:

- Identify the natural hazards and man-made threats that impact the region,
- Assess each locality's unique vulnerabilities to each hazard,
- Evaluate where critical infrastructure is located and which facilities are more at risk,
- Assess the capacity of local governments to reduce vulnerability, and
- Outline coordinated and individual mitigation efforts with short- and long-term goals and actions.

Through this comprehensive approach, the CSHMP establishes a roadmap for building long-term resilience while fostering collaboration among all participating jurisdictions and stakeholders. The plan also increases public awareness about local hazards and risks, fostering a culture of preparedness and prevention throughout the Central Shenandoah region.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND COMPLIANCE

The CSHMP is fully compliant with federal hazard mitigation planning requirements, specifically:

- **Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA2K):** Enacted October 10, 2000, and reinforces the critical importance of proactive mitigation planning. It serves as the foundation for FEMA's mitigation planning requirements for state, local, and tribal governments seeking mitigation grant assistance.
- **FEMA Section 322 Local Hazard Mitigation Planning Regulations:** Federal guidelines that establish the procedural and substantive requirements for local hazard mitigation plans.
- **Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §201.6:** The definitive federal regulatory framework that outlines policies and procedures for local mitigation planning under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, serving as FEMA's official guidance for both original and updated mitigation plans.
- **Local Mitigation Planning Policy Guide (effective April 11, 2025):** The most current FEMA guidance providing detailed requirements and best practices for developing local mitigation plans that serve local needs while ensuring compliance with eligibility requirements for mitigation funding.

Adoption of this plan and approval from FEMA is required for localities to remain eligible to apply for the four Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Programs. Approved plans must be updated and re-approved every five years to maintain eligibility for FEMA assistance for planning and mitigation.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT & UPDATE HISTORY

The CSHMP was originally adopted in 2005 through a collaborative planning process led by the Mitigation and Planning Work Group of the Shenandoah Valley Project Impact, with technical and administrative support provided by CSPDC staff. The plan has been comprehensively updated three times:

- **2010-2013**: First major update, guided by a steering committee of local government staff, state agency representatives, citizens, and other organizations.
- **2019-2020**: Second update, led by a steering committee representing all twenty-one localities and twenty-five additional organizations.
- **2024-2026**: Current update, incorporating expanded stakeholder engagement, four special districts, and enhanced data sources.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The CSHMP is developed to meet the requirements of the DMA2K and is organized into six main sections.

CHAPTER 2	**PLANNING PROCESS** Outlines the process undertaken to update the CSHMP. This includes information on the makeup and role of the steering committee, opportunities for the public to inform the plan's development, and the steps taken to complete and adopt the mitigation plan.
CHAPTER 3	**REGIONAL SETTING** Provides information on geography, natural features, employment, housing, development trends, and demographics of each jurisdiction in the CSPDC.
CHAPTER 4	**THREAT & HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT** Provides detailed risk analyses for 12 threats and hazards that impact the region. The analyses include hazard descriptions, maps, vulnerability assessments, and potential impacts. It also provides information on critical facilities.
CHAPTER 5	**CAPABILITIES ASSESSMENT** Details each community's administrative, planning, fiscal, legal, and technical capabilities needed to undertake hazard mitigation activities.
CHAPTER 6	**MITIGATION GOALS AND ACTIONS** Identifies actionable hazard mitigation goals and actions each jurisdiction will endeavor to undertake over the next five years.
CHAPTER 7	**PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE** Presents the process by which the CSPDC and its member localities will track projects and implementation efforts, maintain the plan, and update the CSHMP.