

# SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

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Mitigation is commonly defined as sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects. Hazard mitigation focuses attention and resources on community policies and actions that will produce cumulative benefits over time. A mitigation plan states the goals and specific courses of action that a community intends to follow to reduce vulnerability and exposure to future hazard events. A systematic process centered on the participation of citizens, businesses, public officials, and other community stakeholders is the basis of this plan.

A local mitigation plan is the physical representation of a jurisdiction’s commitment to reduce risks from natural hazards. Local officials can refer to the plan in their day-to-day activities and in decisions regarding regulations and ordinances, permitting, and funding capital improvements and other community initiatives. The local mitigation plan also serves as the basis for the state to prioritize future grant funding as it becomes available.


The Polk County Multi-jurisdictional Local Mitigation Strategy is intended to be a tool for all community stakeholders by increasing public awareness about local hazards and risks, while at the same time providing information about options and resources available to reduce those risks. Teaching the public about potential hazards will help each jurisdiction protect itself against the effects of the hazards, and will enable informed decision making on where to live, purchase property, or locate businesses.

### Background

Natural hazards, such as hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, are a part of the world around us. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little to do to control their force and intensity. These hazards must be considered as legitimate and significant threats to human life, safety, and property.

Polk County is located in the central portion of Florida. This area is vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards, including hurricanes and severe thunderstorms, flooding, tornadoes, and wildfires. It is also vulnerable to human-caused hazards, including hazardous material spills and dam/levee failure. These hazards threaten the life and safety of county residents, and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property, disrupt the local economy, and affect the overall quality of life of individuals who live, work, and vacation in the community.

While natural hazards cannot be eliminated, much can be done to lessen potential impacts upon the community and its residents. The effective reduction of a hazard’s impact can decrease the likelihood that such events will result in a disaster. Hazard mitigation is the concept and practice of reducing risks to people and property from known hazards.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FEMA Definition of Hazard Mitigation:</b></p> <p>“Any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards.”</p>
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Hazard mitigation techniques include both structural measures, such as strengthening or protecting buildings and infrastructure from the destructive forces of potential hazards, and non-structural

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measures, such as the adoption of sound land use policies and the creation of public awareness programs. It is widely accepted that the most effective mitigation measures are implemented at the local government level where decisions on the regulation and control of development are ultimately made. A comprehensive mitigation approach addresses hazard vulnerabilities that exist today and in the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is essential that projected patterns of future development are evaluated and considered in terms of how that growth will increase or decrease a community's overall hazard vulnerability.

A key component in the formulation of a comprehensive approach to hazard mitigation is to develop, adopt, and update, as needed, a local hazard mitigation plan. A hazard mitigation plan establishes the broad community vision and guiding principles for reducing hazard risk, and further proposes specific mitigation actions to eliminate or reduce identified vulnerabilities.

The Polk County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (hereinafter referred to as "LMS", "LMS Plan", or "Plan") is a logical first step toward incorporating hazard mitigation principles and practices into the routine government activities and functions of Polk County and its municipalities. At its core, the Plan recommends specific actions to combat the forces of nature and protect residents from losses to those hazards that pose the greatest threats. These mitigation actions go beyond recommending structural solutions to reduce existing vulnerability, such as elevation, retrofitting, and acquisition projects. Local policies regarding community growth and development, incentives for natural resource protection, and public awareness and outreach activities are examples of other actions considered to reduce Polk County's future vulnerability to identified hazards. The Plan remains a living document, with implementation and evaluation procedures established to help achieve meaningful objectives and successful outcomes over time.

This LMS Plan affects the following jurisdictions in Polk County:

- Polk County
- Polk County School Board
- City of Auburndale
- City of Bartow
- City of Davenport
- Town of Dundee
- City of Eagle Lake
- City of Fort Meade
- City of Frostproof
- City of Haines City
- Village of Highland Park
- Town of Hillcrest Heights
- Town of Lake Alfred
- Town of Lake Hamilton
- City of Lake Wales
- City of Lakeland
- City of Mulberry
- City of Polk City
- City of Winter Haven



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Each jurisdiction in the county and the Polk County School Board will adopt the LMS by resolution once the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Florida Division of Emergency Management have approved the Plan document.

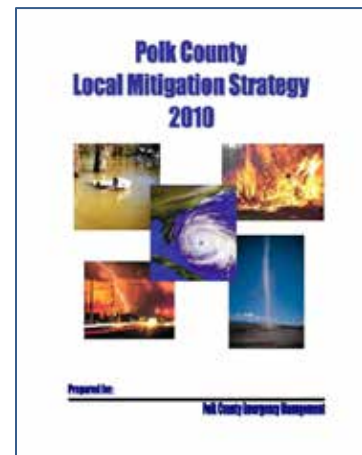
### Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000

In an effort to reduce the Nation's mounting natural disaster losses, the U.S. Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) in order to amend the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act and invoke new and revitalized approaches to mitigation planning. Section 322 of DMA 2000 emphasizes the need for close coordination on mitigation planning activities by state and local government entities. The Act makes the development of a hazard mitigation plan a specific eligibility requirement for any local government applying for federal mitigation grant funds. These funds include the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) program, both of which are administered by FEMA under the Department of Homeland Security. Communities with an adopted and federally approved hazard mitigation plan thereby become prepositioned and are more apt to receive available mitigation funds before and after the next disaster strikes.

FEMA set forth guidelines for the LMS Plan in the Interim Final Rule in the Federal Register of 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 201. This document instructs that a Local Mitigation Strategy identify natural hazards and their impacts, identify actions to reduce losses resulting from the hazards, and create a process for the implementation of the Plan. For Polk County and its jurisdictions to remain eligible for federal mitigation funds, the County must review, revise, and resubmit an updated Plan for approval every five years.

### Polk County LMS History

Polk County and its jurisdictions initially created the Polk County LMS in 1999. In 2010, the County and its jurisdictions updated the LMS in accordance with all FEMA and State of Florida guidelines. The 2015 Update to the Polk County Multi-jurisdictional LMS Plan has been prepared in coordination with FEMA Region IV and the Florida Division of Emergency Management to ensure that the Plan meets all applicable DMA 2000 and State requirements.



### Purpose

The purpose of the Local Mitigation Strategy is to develop and execute an ongoing strategy for reducing the community's vulnerability to identified natural, technological, and human-caused hazards. The strategy provides a rational, managed basis for considering and prioritizing hazard-specific mitigation options and for developing and executing sound, cost-effective mitigation projects. The LMS Plan also provides a basis for justifying the solicitation and use of local, state, federal, and other funding to support hazard mitigation projects and initiatives.

The LMS establishes an ongoing process that will make hazard mitigation part of the daily functioning of the entire community, including both public and private sectors and the residents. The Local Mitigation Strategy is a plan that serves as a bridge between local governments' comprehensive growth management plans, the county comprehensive emergency management plan, land development

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regulations, and relevant ordinances and codes such as those for floodplain management. This strategy integrates mitigation initiatives established through various policies, programs, and regulations into a single stand-alone working document.

### Authority

The development of the Polk County Multi-jurisdictional LMS is in accordance with current state and federal rules and regulations governing local hazard mitigation plans. Polk County and its participating jurisdictions and partners will adopt the LMS Plan in accordance with standard local procedures. Copies of local adoption resolutions are included in Section VII. The LMS Plan partners shall routinely monitor, review, and revise the Plan, as necessary, to maintain compliance with the following provisions, rules, and legislation:

- Section 322, Mitigation Planning, of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as enacted by Section 104 of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-390);
- FEMA's Interim Final Rule published in the Federal Register on February 26, 2002, at 44 CFR Part 201; and
- Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-264).

### Plan Contents

The Plan includes the following sections to address FEMA requirements for a local mitigation plan.

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Planning Process
- Section 3: Community Profile
- Section 4: Hazard Identification and Analysis and
- Section 5: Hazard Vulnerability and Risk Assessment
- Section 6: Mitigation Plan
- Section 7: Plan Adoption
- Section 8: Plan Maintenance and Evaluation
- Section 9: References Cited
- Appendices