

# APPENDIX B



ALAMO AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
REGIONAL MITIGATION ACTION PLAN UPDATE

## Glossary

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Acquisition of Hazard Prone Property: Local governments can acquire lands in high hazard areas through conservation easements, purchase of development rights, or outright purchase of property. When the land is purchased with FEMA mitigation grant funds, it is deed-restricted in perpetuity as open space.

Antiterrorism: Defensive measures used to reduce the vulnerability of individuals, forces, and property to terrorist acts.

Asset: Any manmade or natural feature that has value, including, but not limited to people; buildings; infrastructure like bridges, roads, and sewer and water systems; lifelines like electricity and communication resources; or environmental, cultural, or recreational features like parks, dunes, wetlands, or landmarks.

Base Flood: Flood depth that has a 1 percent probability of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. Also known as the 100-year flood.

Base Flood Elevation (BFE): Elevation of the base flood in relation to a specified datum, such as the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929. The Base Flood Elevation is used as the standard for the National Flood Insurance Program.

Bedrock: The solid rock that underlies loose material, such as soil, sand, clay, or gravel.

Benefit: Net project outcomes, usually defined in monetary terms. Benefits may include direct and indirect effects. For the purposes of conducting a benefit-cost analysis of proposed mitigation measures, benefits are limited to specific, measurable risk reduction factors, including a reduction in expected property losses (building, contents, and function) and protection of human life.

Benefit-cost Analysis (BCA): Benefit-cost analysis is a systematic, quantitative method of comparing the projected benefits to projected costs of a project or policy. It is used as a measure of cost-effectiveness.

Biological Event: An occurrence of a biological substances that poses a threat to the health of living organisms, primarily that of humans. This can include medical waste or samples of a microorganism, virus or toxin (from a biological source) that can impact human health. It can also include substances harmful to animals, particularly livestock.

Building: A structure that is walled and roofed, principally above ground and permanently affixed to a site. The term includes a manufactured home on a permanent foundation on which the wheels and axles carry no weight.

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Coastal Zone: The area along the shore where the ocean meets the land as the surface of the land rises above the ocean. This land/water interface includes barrier islands, estuaries, beaches, coastal wetlands, and land areas having direct drainage to the ocean.

Community Rating System (CRS): A program that provides incentives for National Flood Insurance Program participating communities to complete activities that reduce flood hazard risk. When the community completes specified activities, the insurance premiums of the policyholders in those communities are reduced.

Contour: A contour line depicts equal ground elevation on a topographic (contour) map.

Councils of Government: Regional bodies that exist throughout the United States. They are also sometimes called regional councils, regional commissions, regional planning commissions, planning district commissions, and development districts. A typical council is defined to serve an area of several counties, and they address issues such as regional and municipal planning, economic and community development, cartography and GIS, hazard mitigation and emergency planning, aging services, water use, pollution control, transit administration, and transportation planning. Council membership is typically drawn from the county, city, and other government bodies within its area.

Debris: The scattered remains of assets broken or destroyed in a hazard event. Debris caused by a wind or water hazard event can cause additional damage to other assets.

Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000): DMA 2000 (Public Law 106-390) is legislation to improve the mitigation planning process. It was signed into law on October 10, 2000. This legislation reinforces the importance of mitigation planning and emphasizes planning for disasters before they occur.

Drought: The consequence of anticipated natural precipitation reduction over an extended period of time, usually a season or more in length.

Earthquake: Any seismic event—whether a natural phenomenon or an event caused by humans—that generates seismic waves. Earthquakes are caused mostly by rupture of geological faults, but also by volcanic activity, landslides, mine blasts, and nuclear experiments.

Erosion: Wearing away of the land surface by detachment and movement of soil and rock fragments, during a flood or storm or over a period of years, through the action of wind, water, or other geologic processes.

Extent: The size of an area affected by a hazard or hazard event.

Fault: A fracture in the continuity of a rock formation caused by a shifting or dislodging of the earth's crust, in which adjacent surfaces are differentially displaced parallel to the plane of fracture.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Agency created in 1979 to provide a single point of accountability for all federal activities related to disaster mitigation and emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Flood Depth: Height of the floodwater surface above the ground surface.

Flood Hazard Area: The area inundated by a flood of a given magnitude on a map.

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Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM): Map of a community, prepared by FEMA, which shows both the special flood hazard areas and the risk premium zones applicable to the community under the National Flood Insurance Program.

Flood Zone: A geographical area shown on a FIRM that reflects the expected severity or type of flooding in the area.

Floodplain: Any land area, including watercourse, susceptible to partial or complete inundation by water from any source.

Hail: A form of solid precipitation which consists of balls or irregular lumps of ice, that are individually called hail stones. Hail stones on Earth consist mostly of water ice and measure between 0.20 inches and 5.9 inches in diameter, with the larger stones coming from severe thunderstorms.

Hazard: A source of potential danger or adverse condition.

Hazard Event: A specific occurrence of a particular type of hazard.

Hazard Identification: The process of identifying hazards that threaten an area.

Hazard Mitigation: Sustained actions taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk from hazards and their effects.

Hazardous Materials Incident: A biological, chemical or physical agent with the potential to cause harm to the environment or people on its own or when combined with other factors or materials.

HAZUS (Hazards U.S.): A GIS-based, nationally standardized loss estimation tool developed by FEMA.

Hurricane: An intense tropical cyclone, formed in the atmosphere over warm ocean areas, in which wind speeds reach 74 miles per hour or more and blow in a large spiral around a relatively calm center or "eye." Hurricanes develop over the Atlantic Ocean, northeast Pacific Ocean, or the south Pacific Ocean east of 160°E longitude. Hurricane circulation is counter-clockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere.

Infrastructure: Refers to the public services of a community that have a direct impact on the quality of life. Infrastructure includes communication technology such as phone lines or Internet access, vital services such as public water supplies and sewer treatment facilities, and includes an area's transportation system such as airports, heliports, highways, bridges, tunnels, roadbeds, overpasses, railways, bridges, rail yards, depots; and waterways, canals, locks, seaports, ferries, harbors, dry docks, piers, and regional dams.

Landslide: Downward movement of a slope and materials under the force of gravity.

Lightning: An atmospheric discharge of electricity accompanied by thunder, which typically occurs during thunderstorms, and sometimes during volcanic eruptions or dust storms. In the atmospheric electrical discharge, a leader of a bolt of lightning can travel at speeds of 130,000 MPH, and can reach temperatures approaching 54,000 °F, hot enough to fuse silica sand into glass.

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Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC): LEPCs consist of community representatives and are appointed by the State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs), as required by Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), Title III. They develop an emergency plan to prepare for and respond to chemical emergencies. They are also responsible for coordinating with local facilities to find out what they are doing to reduce hazards, prepare for accidents, and reduce hazardous inventories and releases. The LEPC serves as a focal point in the community for information and discussions about hazardous substances, emergency planning, and health and environmental risks.

Loss of Function: Damage to a facility or interruption of service to a point that the facility or service can no longer provide a public benefit. Most often associated with utilities and critical service providers, such as police and fire facilities.

Magnitude: A measure of the strength of a hazard event. The magnitude (also referred to as severity) of a given hazard event is usually determined using technical measures specific to the hazard.

Mitigate: To cause something to become less harsh or hostile, to make less severe or painful.

Mitigation Plan: Systematically evaluating community policies, actions, and tools, and setting goals for implementation over the long term that will result in a reduction in risk and minimize future losses community-wide.

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP): Federal program created by Congress in 1968 that makes federally subsidized flood insurance available in communities that enact minimum floodplain management regulations as indicated in 44 CFR §60.3.

National Weather Service (NWS): Prepares and issues flood, severe weather, and coastal storm warnings and can provide technical assistance to federal and state entities in preparing weather and flood warning plans.

Pandemic: An epidemic of infectious disease that is spreading through human populations across a large region; for instance a continent, or even worldwide. A widespread endemic disease that is stable in terms of how many people are getting sick from it is not a pandemic. Further, flu pandemics exclude seasonal flu, unless the flu of the season is a pandemic. Throughout history there have been a number of pandemics, such as smallpox and tuberculosis. More recent pandemics include the HIV pandemic and the 2009 flu pandemic.

Planning: The act or process of making or carrying out plans; the establishment of goals, policies, and procedures for a social or economic unit.

Preparedness: Actions that strengthen the capability of government, citizens, and communities to respond to disasters.

Probability: A statistical measure of the likelihood that a hazard event will occur.

Recovery: The actions taken by an individual or community after a catastrophic event to restore order and lifelines in a community.

Regulatory Power: Local jurisdictions have the authority to regulate certain activities in their jurisdiction. With respect to mitigation planning, the focus is on such things as regulating land use development and construction through zoning, subdivision regulations, design standards, and floodplain regulations.

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**Response:** The actions taken during an event to address immediate life and safety needs and to minimize further damage to properties.

**Risk:** The estimated impact that a hazard would have on people, services, facilities, and structures in a community; the likelihood of a hazard event resulting in an adverse condition that causes injury or damage. Risk is often expressed in relative terms such as a high, moderate, or low likelihood of sustaining damage above a particular threshold due to a specific type of hazard event. It also can be expressed in terms of potential monetary losses associated with the intensity of the hazard.

**Scale:** A proportion used in determining a dimensional relationship; the ratio of the distance between two points on a map and the actual distance between the two points on the earth's surface.

**Sinkhole:** A natural depression or hole in the Earth's surface caused by karst processes - the chemical dissolution of carbonate rocks or suffosion processes in sandstone. Sinkholes may vary in size from less than 3.3 to 2,000 feet, both in diameter and depth, and vary in form from soil-lined bowls to bedrock-edged chasms. They may be formed gradually or suddenly, and are found worldwide. Sinkholes may capture surface drainage for running or standing water, but may also form in currently high and dry locations.

**Social Vulnerability Index:** The Social Vulnerability Index (SOVI™) measures the social vulnerability of U.S. counties to environmental hazards. The index is a comparative metric that facilitates the examination of the differences in social vulnerability among counties.

**Stafford Act:** The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 100-107 was signed into law November 23, 1988 and amended the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, PL 93-288. The Stafford Act is the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities, especially as they pertain to FEMA and its programs.

**Stakeholder:** Individual or group that will be affected in any way by an action or policy. They include businesses, private organizations, and citizens.

**State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO):** The representative of state government who is the primary point of contact with FEMA, other state and federal agencies, and local units of government in the planning and implementation of pre- and post-disaster mitigation activities.

**Substantial Damage:** Damage of any origin sustained by a structure in a Special Flood Hazard Area whereby the cost of restoring the structure to its before-damaged condition would equal or exceeds 50 percent of the market value of the structure before the damage. In some communities, substantial damage can also be calculated based on cumulative damage events rather than a single damaging event.

**Tectonic Plate:** Torsionally rigid, thin segments of the earth's lithosphere that may be assumed to move horizontally and adjoin other plates. It is the friction between plate boundaries that cause seismic activity.

**Terrorism:** Violence committed by groups or individuals in order to intimidate a population or government into granting their demands.

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Thunderstorm: A form of weather characterized by the presence of lightning and its acoustic effect on the Earth's atmosphere known as thunder. Thunderstorms can generally form and develop in any geographic location, perhaps most frequently within areas located at mid-latitude when warm moist air collides with cooler air. Thunderstorms are responsible for the development and formation of many severe weather phenomena.

Topographic: Characterizes maps that show manmade features and indicate the physical shape of the land using contour lines.

Tornado: A violently rotating column of air extending from a thunderstorm to the ground.

Tropical Cyclone: A generic term for a cyclonic, low-pressure system over tropical or sub-tropical waters.

Tropical Storm: A tropical storm or cyclone having maximum sustained winds greater than 39 mph and less than 74 mph.

Vulnerability: Describes how exposed or susceptible to damage an asset is. Vulnerability depends on an asset's construction, contents, and the economic value of its functions. Like indirect damages, the vulnerability of one element of the community is often related to the vulnerability of another. For example, since many businesses depend on uninterrupted electrical power, if an electric substation is flooded it will affect not only the substation itself, but a number of businesses as well. Often, indirect effects can be much more widespread and damaging than direct ones.

Vulnerability Assessment: The extent of injury and damage that may result from a hazard event of a given intensity in a given area. The vulnerability assessment should address impacts of hazard events on the existing and future built environment.

Wildfire: An uncontrolled fire spreading through vegetative fuels, exposing and possibly consuming structures.

Wind: The horizontal motion of the air past a given point. Winds begin with differences in air pressures. Pressure that's higher at one place than another sets up a force pushing from the high toward the low pressure. The greater the difference in pressures, the stronger the force. The distance between the area of high pressure and the area of low pressure also determines how fast the moving air is accelerated. Meteorologists refer to the force that starts the wind flowing as the "pressure gradient force." High and low pressures are relative. There's no set number that divides high and low pressure. Wind is used to describe the prevailing direction from which the wind is blowing with the speed given usually in miles per hour or knots.

Winter Storm: An event in which the dominant varieties of precipitation are forms that only occur at cold temperatures, such as snow or sleet, or a rainstorm where ground temperatures are cold enough to allow ice to form. In temperate continental climates, these storms are not necessarily restricted to the winter season, but may occur in the late autumn and early spring as well. Very rarely, they may form in summer, though it would have to be an abnormally cold summer. In the Northern Hemisphere, the most powerful winter storms usually occur in March (such as the 1993 Superstorm) and, in regions where temperatures are cold enough, April.