



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hazard Mitigation Overview

Hazard mitigation is the use of long-term and short-term policies, programs, projects, and other activities to minimize the loss of life, injury, and property damage that can result from a disaster. Communities, residents, and businesses across the United States have been faced with continually increasing costs associated with natural and human-caused hazards. Hazard mitigation is the first step in reducing risk and is the most effective way to reduce costs associated with hazards.

Cape May County has developed a hazard mitigation plan (HMP) to reduce risks from disasters to the people, property, economy, and environment within the County's planning area. The County and 17 participating local jurisdictions (the Planning Partners) prepared this plan as an update to the 2021 Cape May County HMP. The updated 2026 HMP (also referred to as "the plan") includes countywide analysis and assessment of hazards, risk, and capabilities.

The plan complies with federal and state hazard mitigation planning requirements to establish the Planning Partners' eligibility for funding under Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant programs. FEMA has issued guidelines for the development of multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plans. The federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires state and local entities to implement pre-disaster mitigation planning and develop HMPs. The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) supports plan development for jurisdictions in New Jersey.

The Planning Process

This HMP update documents the process and outcomes of the Planning Partners' mitigation planning efforts. To support the planning process, the Planning Partners accomplished the following:

- Developed a Steering Committee consisting of key stakeholders and a countywide Planning Partnership made up of the Steering Committee members, the Planning Partners, and other regional stakeholders
- Reviewed the 2021 Cape May County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Identified hazards of concern to the County to be included in the update
- Profiled the hazards of concern
- Estimated the inventory at risk and potential losses associated with these hazards
- Reviewed and updated the mitigation goals and objectives
- Reviewed mitigation strategy and actions outlined in the 2021 HMP to indicate progress
- Developed new mitigation actions to reduce the vulnerability of assets from hazards of concern
- Involved a wide range of stakeholders and the public in the plan update process
- Developed mitigation plan maintenance procedures to be executed after obtaining approval of the plan from NJOEM and FEMA



Involvement by Stakeholders and the Public

The Planning Partners kept stakeholders and the general public informed throughout the planning process and provided opportunities for public comment and input. In addition, numerous agencies and stakeholders participated as core or support members of the Steering Committee or Planning Partnership, providing input and expertise throughout the planning process.

Participating Jurisdictions Involved in the Mitigation Planning Effort

The following are the local governments in Cape May County that participated as Planning Partners in this HMP update:

- Cape May County
- Borough of Avalon
- City of Cape May
- Borough of Cape May Point
- Township of Dennis
- Township of Lower
- Township of Middle
- City of North Wildwood
- City of Ocean
- City of Sea Isle
- Borough of Stone Harbor
- Township of Upper
- Borough of West Cape May
- Borough of West Wildwood
- City of Wildwood
- Borough of Wildwood Crest
- Borough of Woodbine
- Cape May County
Municipal Utility Authority

The participating jurisdictions provided significant input into the preparation of the plan, in particular the preparation of jurisdiction-specific annexes included in Volume II.

Multiple Agency Support for Hazard Mitigation

Primary responsibility for the development and implementation of mitigation strategies and policies lies with local governments. However, local governments are not alone; various partners and resources at the regional, state, and federal levels are available to assist communities in the development and implementation of mitigation strategies. In New Jersey, NJOEM is the lead agency providing hazard mitigation planning assistance to local jurisdictions. In addition, FEMA provides grants, tools, guidance, and training to support mitigation planning.

In updating the HMP, the participating jurisdictions fully coordinated with and solicited participation from county and local governments, relevant organizations and groups, state and federal agencies, and the general public. This coordination ensured that stakeholders had established communication channels and relationships to support mitigation planning and mitigation actions included in the plan.

Additional input and support for this planning effort was obtained from a wide range of agencies as well as through public involvement. Under the project management of the Cape May County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), the Cape May County Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee provided oversight for the preparation of this plan. The Steering Committee includes representatives from the following:

- Cape May County Emergency Management
- Cape May County Public Works and Engineering
- South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization
- Cape May County Health Department
- Cape May County Planning Department



- Cape May County Brewing Company
- National Weather Service
- Cumberland County
- Atlantic County
- Middle Township
- Cape May County MUA
- Cape May County Mosquito Control
- Cape May MAC
- Lomax Consulting Group
- Heist Insurance

Risk Assessment for Local Hazards of Concern

The Planning Partners evaluated each jurisdiction’s risk and vulnerability due to each of the hazards of concern, based on past events, past and predicted future losses, and the expected probability of future occurrence. From these evaluations, hazards were ranked as high, medium, or low risk to each jurisdiction. The hazard rankings were used to focus and prioritize individual jurisdictional mitigation strategies. Summary overall hazard rankings for all of Cape May County are presented in Table ES-1.

Table ES-1. Countywide Ranking for Cape May County Hazards of Concern

Hazard of Concern	Hazard Ranking
Dam Failure	Low
Drought	Medium
Earthquake	Low
Extreme Temperature	Medium
Flood	High
Severe Weather	High
Severe Winter Weather	Medium
Wildfire	Medium

Capability Assessment and Plan Integration into Other Local Mechanisms

Effective mitigation is achieved when hazard awareness and risk management approaches and strategies become an integral part of public activities and decision-making. Within the County, there are many existing plans and programs that support hazard risk management. It is critical that this HMP integrate, complement, and reference those plans and programs to the extent practical in order for it to be a comprehensive resource for hazard mitigation.

The HMP includes a capability assessment to review relevant local mechanisms for each participating jurisdiction. This assessment identifies where each jurisdiction is currently able to implement hazard mitigation measures and where each would benefit from improved capabilities for such measures. The capability assessment also provides a summary and description of the existing plans, programs, and regulatory mechanisms at all levels of government (federal, state, county and local) that support hazard mitigation in the County. In the jurisdictional annexes, each



participating jurisdiction identifies how it has integrated hazard risk management into its existing planning, regulatory and operational/administrative framework, and how it intends to continue to promote this integration.

Mitigation Strategy

Hazard Mitigation Plan Goals and Objectives

It is a federal requirement for hazard mitigation plans to include a description of mitigation goals to reduce or avoid long-term vulnerabilities to the identified hazards of concern.

The Cape May County HMP planning process included a review and update of mitigation goals and objectives that were previously established to guide the selection of mitigation actions addressing all hazards of concern. Mitigation goals were updated based on the updated risk assessment, discussions, research, and input from plan participants and stakeholders. The goal development process considered the goals expressed in the New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan, as well as other relevant county and local planning documents.

2026 Cape May County HMP Goals

Goal 1: Strategically protect life and property.

Goal 2: Promote public awareness, education, and preparedness of hazards and their risks.

Goal 3: Promote resiliency, preparedness, and continuity of operations between government, businesses, and community groups and organizations.

Goal 4: Enhance Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

Goal 5: Protect Open Space, the Environment, and Natural Resources through short and long-term actions focused on preservation and sustainability.

Goal 6: Promote Partnerships with government agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations

Goal 7: Address long-term vulnerabilities from hazardous dams.

Implementation of the 2021 Plan

The status of the mitigation projects identified in the 2021 HMP was reviewed for this HMP. Numerous projects and programs have been implemented that have reduced hazard vulnerability to assets in the planning area. Uncompleted projects have been reevaluated, modified as necessary, and incorporated into this plan. The Planning Partners' annexes describe these mitigation activities in more detail, and plan maintenance procedures have been developed to encourage thorough integration with local decisions and processes and regular review of implementation progress.

2026 Mitigation Strategy

Jurisdictional actions included in the mitigation strategy had a strong focus on education and outreach for the general population and socially vulnerable populations; training and education of municipal officials, including the Floodplain Administrators; ensuring continuity of operations for critical facilities through the installation of emergency backup generators; and the reduction of flood risk through the increase in capacity of stormwater infrastructure, including culverts, drainage systems, and catch basins.