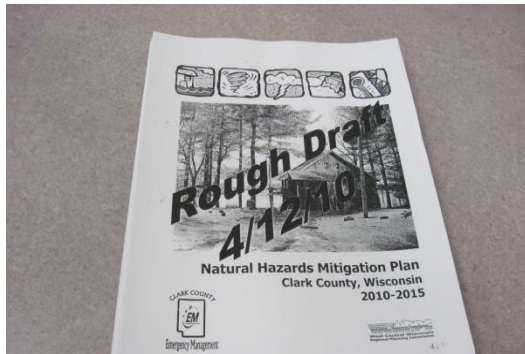


## Teamwork Gives Rise to Comprehensive All Hazards Mitigation Plan



Copy of the rough draft of Clark County's All Hazards Mitigation Plan

**Clark County, WI** – State, Indian Tribal, and local governments are required to develop a hazard mitigation plan as a condition for receiving funding for mitigation projects. With team work involving a new emergency management director with project management experience, an experienced planner, conscientious directors, mayors and village presidents, the five-year update of Clark County's Hazard Mitigation Plan received rave reviews in its draft format!

As a new director, Michelle Hartness, Clark County's Emergency Management Director (EMD), used the planning process as an opportunity to not only abide by the Robert T. Stafford Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-388) as amended by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 but also to familiarize herself with the cities, towns and villages within the county, to identify the county's vulnerabilities and to plan accordingly.

"Emergency disaster has become a real part of my life and being here in Clark County has been an amazing opportunity," said Hartness. "Enhancing public safety is a priority for me."

In 2008, Clark County received a Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in the amount of \$14,697.75, to fulfill the requirements for updating their hazard mitigation plan. Total cost of the project was \$19,597, which included a \$4899.25 local match. With a proposed two-year completion timeframe, Clark County's Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan project began in December 2008 to be completed by December 2010. As the new EMD, Hartness took the helm of the project. The county's original mitigation plan was approved July 13, 2005.

The combination of a new, eager to learn EMC, a seasoned regional planner, diligent community leaders and the cooperation of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) contributed to the success of driving the plan forward.

Made up of a cross-section of professionals from various departments and community stakeholders (including sheriff, fire, highway, public health and hospital), the LEPC reviewed and established the priorities for the county. They helped steer the direction of where Clark County needed to be in planning for emergencies. Input from mayors and village presidents regarding their vulnerabilities was taken into consideration. They knew their communities and the risks. They were able to provide a comprehensive profile.

For example, agriculture is a vital component of Clark County's economy. Agricultural risks which included (1) Weather-related damages to crops, (2) Manure run-off and storage facility failure and (3) Pests and disease were addressed in detail.

“They had to answer questions on where they needed mitigation projects; what were their ‘all hazards’ potential problems within their communities?” said Hartness. “We looked at their historical data; we looked at a lot of analysis and research within each community.”

Hartness continued, “We wanted to know how many mobile home parks are in our cities, towns and villages? What is the vulnerability to high wind events? Do we have storm shelters? What places are susceptible to flooding? What are we going to do about long-term power outage? If something serious were to shut Clark County down, it would be a long-term power outage resulting from an ice storm.”

Asking those critical questions, making the administration aware of what information was crucial to the development of a comprehensive plan and requiring feedback from local administrators allowed Clark County to put the plan together.

Hartness also acknowledged the good working relationship that existed with the planner, Christ Straight, contracted to assist the county in developing their plan. According to her the camaraderie helped to make the task welcoming and expeditious.

“The plan was a success because it was driven by experience and lessons learned from plans in other communities and the fact that I was working with a pro-active group of individuals,” said Chris Straight, project planner.

By creating a coalition involving a regional planner, the LEPC and local community leaders, Hartness submitted a plan that “left nothing to chance”.

A draft was submitted for approval to Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) on May 4, 2010. The plan was reviewed at WEM with no changes requested on June 3, 2010 and forwarded to FEMA on October 22, 2010. FEMA provided a “Meets Requirements” letter on November 12, 2010.

Lynsey Kawski, Disaster Response and Recovery Planner with Wisconsin Emergency Management stated "Clark County did a fantastic job in updating the plan. The County tailored the plan based on its own unique risks and needs. It is evident that this is a genuine planning document that will not collect dust on a shelf." The final step is formal adoption by the county and participating jurisdictions.



**Michelle Hartness, Clark County's EMD**

“Some individuals might look at this project as ‘This is something I have to do because every five years it’s required that I update the hazard mitigation plan’. I looked at it as an opportunity to get to know my communities and to make them safer,” said Hartness. “Projects like this one take teamwork. I had an amazing group of professionals and I believe in what I do. Believe in the process. Let the process work. Yes, we are doing this because it’s required but in the end we are creating a better, safer place.”