

Chapter Six

Community Participation

6.1 Overview

Community involvement in the planning and implementation of mitigation initiatives must be a continual process. The success of the Marion County Mitigation Plan is contingent upon this premise. It is the obligation of the Planning Committee to inform the community of the Plan's purpose and to consider all public input during the entirety of Plan implementation. The Marion County Mitigation Plan functions as a means to address community issues and concerns as they relate to mitigation of natural disasters in relation for it is toward their protection and the protection of their properties that this Mitigation Plan is directed.

6.2 Initial Notification

Initial notification of the public was accomplished by releases through news media sources, discussions with community groups by Committee representatives and formal meetings with community leaders representing the general populace.

Information presented during these formal and informal notifications centered on the development and passage of the federal Mitigation Act of 2000 and the parameters established by that legislation. Descriptions were provided on the underlying purpose of the Act and how the County, through an established Mitigation Planning Committee, would achieve the goals outlined within the completion.

6.3 Preliminary and Continued Involvement

During the developmental stages and eventual completion of the Hazard Analysis Chapter of the Marion County Mitigation Plan, public responses were received that provided needed historical data of natural disaster occurrences within the County. These data were obtained from County citizens, community leaders, and others knowledgeable of past natural disasters and their personal and financial impacts upon the county.

Forthcoming public participation efforts will come in several forms. First of all, public input will be requested following the completion of the draft Plan. Through various news media sources, Marion County citizens will be apprised of the progress of the Plan as well as being informed of ways to view the draft Plan. Hard copy versions of the draft Plan will be made available for public viewing in the Office of the Marion City / County Emergency Management Agency as well as in several other governmental offices. Once the final Plan has been accepted by FEMA, copies of the approved Plan will be maintained in these locations for review by the public. As a part of this hard copy review process, instructions

will be provided to citizens who wish to comment or make suggestions on Plan components.

Secondly, citizens, using Mitigation Planning Committee members as points of contact, will also be afforded the opportunity to receive digital copies of the draft Plan via email attachments. They may also print the draft Plan, if desired. This resource will be made available on a continual basis, once the final Plan has been approved. Periodic news releases and other community educational efforts, as referenced in Chapter Five, will continually provide citizens the opportunity to review the Plan and comment.

A more formal means of gathering input for the general populace will be through an established Open House. The Open House, which has been scheduled for mid February, will provide an occasion for citizens to meet some of the Mitigation Planning Committee members on the overall concepts and processes involved in the mitigation of natural disasters. The public will be informed on how they can participate in the process by their reviewing the Plan and providing constructive assessments of any Plan component. They will also be afforded the opportunity to ask questions about the Plan or planning process.

An ongoing method of providing information to County citizens will be the development and continued maintenance of a web page. This web page will be a component of the Marion County Emergency Management Agency web site. Maintaining and updating of the web page will be the responsibility of the Marion City / County EMA in conjunction with the Marion County Mitigation Planning Committee. The web page will incorporate a means for individuals to comment on the content of the page. A questionnaire will be included that will allow the completed form to be submitted to the Director of the Marion City / County EMA. As necessary, responses from the web-based questionnaire will be submitted to the Mitigation Planning Committee for their consideration.