

Okaloosa County News Release

August 23, 2016

Kathy Newby, 850.651.7515, knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us

Okaloosa Mitigation Plan Will Help Citizens Better Prepare for Natural Disasters

Okaloosa County is better prepared for disasters with the recent **approval of its local hazard mitigation plan, which is a long-term strategy to reduce the community's vulnerability to natural disasters.** The plan identifies hazards and potential hazards, as well as creates a framework to help community officials make decisions that may ultimately protect lives and property.

Okaloosa County's Mitigation Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of the County's and municipalities' floodplain areas and floodplain management strategies. **The Plan is approved through the year 2021; however, annual reports are due each year.** These annual reports are also used in conjunction with the National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System (CRS), which lowers insurance costs for citizens. **"I commend the effort it takes, especially for our Growth Management Department, as well as other departments and the cities, to proactively support and mitigate these programs,"** stated Chairman Kelly Windes, commissioner. **"These two programs greatly complement each other and benefit all Okaloosa County citizens."**

History shows that the physical, financial and emotional losses caused by disasters can be reduced significantly through hazard mitigation planning. The planning process encourages communities to integrate mitigation with day-to-day decision making regarding land-use planning, floodplain management, site design and other activities.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reviews and approves state, tribal and local hazard mitigation plans, which are required as a condition for states and communities to receive certain types of disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects. State, local and tribal mitigation plans must be approved at least once every five years.

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Okaloosa County Department of Growth Management consists of a Planning Division, Building Division and Code Enforcement. These divisions work hard to successfully and consistently implement the Okaloosa County Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Code, as well as policies and directives of the Board of County Commissioners. Growth Management does everything from administer grants to permitting, with 26 employees. Connect with us: <http://www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/gm/home>