

## **Section 2 – Executive Summary**

### **2.1 Background**

On October 20, 2000, the United States Congress passed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, also known as DMA2K. A copy of the Act is included as **Appendix A**. Among its other features, DMA2K established a requirement that in order to remain eligible for federal disaster assistance and grant funds, States and localities must develop and adopt hazard mitigation plans. On February 26, 2002, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) published an Interim Final Rule (IFR) that provided the guidance and regulations under which such plans must be developed. The IFR provides detailed descriptions of both the planning process that States and localities are required to observe, as well as the contents of the plan that emerges. It is included as **Appendix B**.

On October 17, 2004, the State of Alabama officially adopted the initial Alabama Statewide Hazard Mitigation Plan in response to the requirements of DMA2K and the IFR Section 201.4(a). In addition Section 201.4(d) mandates that a state update its plan every three years “to reflect changes in development, progress in statewide mitigation efforts, and changes in priorities.” This plan update is in response to those requirements.

### **2.2 Organization of the Plan**

The Alabama Hazard Mitigation Plan is organized to parallel the structure provided in the Interim Final Rule (IFR). The plan has ten sections.

- Section 1 Table of Contents and Lists
- Section 2 Executive Summary
- Section 3 Approval and Adoption
- Section 4 Planning Process
- Section 5 Risk Assessment
- Section 6 Mitigation Strategy
- Section 7 Coordination of Local Planning
- Section 8 Plan Maintenance
- Section 9 Enhanced Mitigation Plan Elements
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There are references to the IFR throughout the plan; where possible these provide specific section and subsection notations for the convenience of reviewers.

The plan update follows this same basic structure as the 2004 Plan. In addition, each section now includes a table summarizing the significant changes made as part of the update to that section.

### **2.3 Highlights of the Plan**

The purpose of the Plan is to rationalize the process of identifying and implementing appropriate hazard mitigation actions across the State. The document includes a detailed characterization of natural hazards Statewide; a risk assessment that describes potential losses to physical assets, people and operations; a set of goals, objectives, strategies and actions that will guide the

State's mitigation activities, and a detailed plan for implementing and monitoring the required aspects of the Plan. The following provides a brief summary of each section of the Plan.

### 2.3.1 Approval and Adoption

**Section 3** of the Plan describes the Plan approval and adoption process and provides assurances as required by the IFR. It also includes documents related to Plan adoption, including an approval letter from the Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), and a letter of endorsement and support from the Governor.

The Alabama State Hazard Mitigation Plan was adopted by the Governor through the authority delegated to AEMA. As noted elsewhere in the plan (see **Section 4**), each State Hazard Mitigation Team (SHMT) member was provided a full draft copy of the plan for review, comment and endorsement prior to adoption by the Governor. AEMA retains the comments and changes. The Plan was approved by the Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, through authority delegated by the Governor.

Upon completion, this Plan Update will be approved and adopted through the same mechanism used for the 2004 Plan.

### 2.3.2 The Planning Process

**Section 4** of the Plan includes a detailed description of the process and the individuals and agencies who were involved. The process used to develop the initial Plan was closely modeled on the FEMA "How-To" series for hazard mitigation planning.

As the process of developing the 2004 Plan began, Alabama Governor Bob Riley signed Executive Order No. 19 (EO 19). EO 19 established the State Hazard Mitigation Council (also referred to as the State Hazard Mitigation Team or SHMT throughout this document), directed the members of the SHMT to participate in the process and reiterated the importance of the plan for the State. The Governor delegated responsibility for overseeing development of the plan to the AEMA. The SHMT was the core group responsible for all decisions about planning process and content. The SHMT met four times during development of the plan, and during the meetings considered and approved/amended aspects of it. A list of the SHMT members and other agencies involved in the planning process is provided in **Appendix D**.

At the start of the plan update process, it was immediately determined that EO 19 remained valid and current. Per EO 19, AEMA assumed the role as lead agency responsible for the plan update. The SHMT reconvened and met twice during this process (note: only one of these meetings has taken place to date). AEMA developed a strategy for updating each section of the plan under a very constricted schedule. This strategy was reviewed and approved by the SHMT at its first meeting. AEMA then led the update of all sections of the plan. Subject matter experts on the SHMT were solicited for specific information regarding hazards, risks, capabilities and strategies. SHMT members were also asked to review mitigation strategies from the 2004 Plan for which they were responsible and asked to provide new actions that they may pursue in the future. Certain SHMT members also provided interim reviews of draft sections as appropriate throughout the update process. After all sections were completed and comments incorporated, the Plan was submitted to FEMA and the SHMT for review. The SHMT met again to discuss the results of its review on August 23, 2007.

### **2.3.3 Risk Assessment**

**Section 5** includes a detailed description of the process that was used to identify, assess and prioritize Alabama's natural hazard risks. The initial part of **Section 5.2** provides hazard profiles for 15 natural and man-made hazards. **Section 5.3** then describes a ranking system that was used to reduce the list of significant hazards to those that would be afforded a detailed risk assessment. **Section 5.5** provides detailed risk assessments for these hazards, and **Section 5.6** follows with a summary of the jurisdictions that are most at risk from these three hazards.

As part of the plan update process, the team reevaluated its hazards based on new and current information and modified its risk assessments based on newly available data. The initial list of hazards was revised to reflect an improved understanding of its risks. These hazards were then evaluated based on newly acquired data and risk assessment were performed on the most threatening hazards to incorporate current data. Jurisdictions were then ranked based on their vulnerability and risk.

### **2.3.4 Mitigation Strategy**

**Section 6** is a description of the State's mitigation strategy, goals, actions and capabilities. The State hazard mitigation strategy is straightforward:

Reduce risks through actions and policies that limit the effects of natural hazards on the physical assets and citizens of Alabama.

The State Hazard Mitigation Team and AEMA developed six goals for hazard mitigation, in support of this general strategy. These are discussed in detail in **Section 6**, and are briefly reviewed here as well.

1. Ensure that the State maintains a comprehensive, current and accurate understanding of its risks from natural hazards.
2. Identify and implement actions that reduce the State's risk from natural hazards.
3. Ensure that future development in the State is undertaken in such a way that it does not create new risks or exacerbate existing ones.
4. Develop local and regional capacity and commitment to become less vulnerable to hazards.
5. Promote public understanding, support and demand for hazard mitigation.
6. Develop and maintain productive relationships among organizations with interests in mitigation, including federal, state, county and local organizations, and other quasi-governmental or private non-profit organizations, for the purpose of sharing knowledge and capabilities about reducing the effects of natural hazards on the State.

The SHMT reviewed the state hazard mitigation goals developed as part of the 2004 Plan in light of recent disasters that have impacted the State and determined that these goals remained relatively unchanged. However, because so much has been learned from recent disaster and

mitigation activities, the team was able to identify a number of new actions that have been incorporated into this update.

### **2.3.5 Coordination of Local Planning**

**Section 7** describes how the State provides assistance and guidance to local jurisdictions for developing their hazard mitigation plans, how information from the State and local plans are linked and integrated, and how the State prioritizes funding opportunities for local jurisdictions. As noted in numerous places throughout this document, the local hazard mitigation plans had the same deadline as the initial State Plan (November 1, 2004), so nearly all of them were being developed concurrently with the latter. Because of this, AEMA and the SHMT had only very limited opportunities to incorporate important parts of the local plans into the 2004 State document. However, AEMA and members of the State Hazard Mitigation Team interacted very closely with the Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC), the 12 Regional Planning Councils (RPCs), and many communities as this plan was developed.

At the start of the state plan update process, 64 local plans had been approved by FEMA and adopted by the local governments, and another two plans were very close to completion. The last plan is expected to be complete some time in June 2007. This update discusses how the state facilitated the completion of the local plans, the current status of the local plan update process, and a summary of how the state has prioritized funding for local mitigation projects over the past three years. Each of the 66 available local plans was reviewed. The team extracted pertinent information and incorporated it into the relevant sections of the plan update.

### **2.3.6 Plan Maintenance**

**Section 8** describes how the plan will be periodically evaluated and updated. The Interim Final Rule requires that the State Hazard Mitigation Plan be updated and re-submitted to FEMA for re-approval every three years. In addition to meeting this requirement, the State, under the direction of AEMA, will review the plan annually, based on criteria that are described in **Section 8.2**. The criteria are:

1. Changes in risk;
2. Changes in laws, policies, or regulations at the state or local level;
3. Changes in State agencies or their procedures;
4. Significant changes in funding sources or capabilities;
5. Progress on mitigation actions or new mitigation actions that the State is considering;
6. Changes in the composition of the State Hazard Mitigation Team; and
7. Major changes to local or multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plans.

In addition, AEMA may initiate the review process under the following conditions:

1. After a major disaster declaration;
2. At the request of the Governor; and
3. When significant new risks or vulnerabilities are identified.

**Section 8.2** describes the process that AEMA will use to initiate and complete the periodic reviews and updates. It is expected that the SHMT will be re-convened at periodically to consider any draft updates to the plan that are identified and developed by AEMA. The interim

reviews may be relatively simple, but the three-year update is expected to comprise a comprehensive update and multi-stage process similar to the initial development of the plan.

Other parts of **Section 8** describe how the State will monitor mitigation activities and measure progress toward achieving the goals that are described in **Section 6**.

### **2.3.7 Enhanced Mitigation Plan Elements**

The Interim Final Rule (Section 201.5) describes requirements for states to achieve “enhanced mitigation plan” status, and become eligible for increased funding through certain grant programs. AEMA and the SHMT focused on development of the basic plan to meet the November 1, 2004 deadline, so the enhanced plan elements are not addressed in the initial version of the Plan.

The State began working towards achieving enhanced plan status shortly after the initial plan was approved and adopted; however, a number of significant disasters forced AEMA to shift priorities towards response and recovery efforts. The State will resume work on enhanced plan elements in the summer and fall of 2007 and intends to develop this section of the plan as soon as possible after submitting the standard plan to FEMA.

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