Rochester Annex

Introduction

This appendix, when used with the Regional (multi-jurisdictional) PDM Plan, is an All-Hazard Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan for the Town of Rochester.

Mitigation is any sustained action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from natural and human-caused hazards and their effects. Previous FEMA, State and Regional Project Impact efforts demonstrate the fact that it is less expensive to prevent disasters than to repeatedly repair damage after a disaster has struck. This plan recognizes that communities have opportunities to identify mitigation strategies. Hazards cannot be eliminated, but it is possible to determine what the hazards are, where the hazards are most severe and identify local actions that can be taken to reduce the severity of the hazard.

Hazard Mitigations strategies and measures **avert** the hazard by redirecting its impact by means of a structure or land treatment, **adapt** to the hazard by modifying structures or standards or **avoid** the hazard through improved public education, relocating/removing buildings in the flood zone, or ensuring development is disaster resistant. Measures and strategies could include projects such as:

- Flood-proofing structures
- Tying down propane/fuel tanks in flood-prone areas
- Elevating furnaces and water heaters
- Identifying & modifying high traffic accident locations and routes
- Ensuring adequate water supply
- Identifying & upgrading undersized culverts
- Proactive land use planning for floodplains and other flood-prone areas
- Proper road maintenance and construction
- Ensuring critical facilities are safely located
- Buyout & relocation of structures in harms way
- Establish & enforce appropriate building codes
- Public information and education

Purpose

The purpose of this Pre-disaster Mitigation Plan is to assist Rochester in identifying all hazards facing the town and list strategies to begin reducing risks from known hazards.

Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Hazard Mitigation Goals

- Reduce the loss of life and injury resulting from all hazards.
- To lessen financial losses and property damage incurred by municipalities, businesses and private citizens due to disasters.

These overarching goals can be further refined as follows:

- The impacts of hazards should be first avoided, then reduced where they cannot be reasonably avoided. For flooding and riverine erosion, this can best be achieved by precluding development from hazard areas, and where development exists through property buyouts or flood protection sympathetic to the natural and human resources of the area.
- The connections between land use, development siting, drainage systems, building standards, and road design and maintenance and the effects of disasters on the Region should be recognized and incorporated into policy so that there is no adverse impact (increased hazard) from development.
- Mitigation actions should be part of larger, systematic efforts at disaster reduction based on the highest threats. Flooding should be addressed on a watershed scale. Structural fire and technological hazards should be lessened through statewide safety education and code compliance.

Rochester Town Plan (adopted 6/11/07) – Objectives/Goals that support Hazard Mitigation

- To protect the quality of the White River and West Branch (page 7)**.**
- To consider the needs and capacities of the school system, fire department, rescue squad and law enforcement in our planning efforts (page 7).

Community Background

Rochester is located in the center of Vermont and in the northwest corner of Windsor County. It is a most oddly shaped Town, abutted by eight towns and three counties. The White River runs north to south through the Town. There are mountain ranges on both sides of the River, creating a narrow valley. The picturesque village is located approximately in the center of the township. The Town contains approximately 36,000 acres, and of that, about one-third is Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) land owned by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The Town works cooperatively with the governments of the United States and the State of Vermont to prevent and respond to fires.

According to the U.S. Census Reports, there were 539 year-round housing units and 229 seasonal housing units in Rochester in 2000, totaling 768. In 1990, there were 737 units. This marks a 4% increase in housing units. The overall increase for the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Region during this period was 6%. Currently, there are 768 residential buildings in Rochester. 33.9% of these buildings were built prior to 1939.
The Town receives its power from Central Vermont Power Service which supplies electrical power to all sections of town.

The fire station is located at the northern end of Rochester village. It consists of two bays with very limited space for expansion. In 1988 the cement structure was insulated and new siding was added for better energy conservation. Two new insulated entry doors, two new insulated garage doors and a new gas furnace were also installed.

The department is chartered for up to 30 members, all who are required to attend fire fighting classes. Executive officers are elected yearly, consisting of a Chief, Assistant Chief, one Captain, one Lieutenant, Secretary, Treasurer, and two Stewards.

The alarm system utilizes the E 9-1-1 emergency phone method of reporting incidents. Bethel State Police Barracks acts as the system's dispatching service. Volunteers are equipped with portable pagers.

Neighboring towns of Hancock and Granville respond to all structure fires as mutual aid is important due to daytime manpower shortages. Cooperation among towns is also important due to the rising costs of fire fighting equipment. The Rochester volunteer fire department also serves with the Valley Rescue Squad at auto accidents in Rochester.

A First and a Second Constable are appointed by the Selectboard. The Town provides a 2002 S10 Chevrolet Police cruiser for use by the Constables. A Vermont State Trooper is stationed in Rochester and may be reached by calling VT State police at (802) 234-9933. The Constable and Town residents may call upon the Vermont State Police (Troop D), with barracks in Royalton or the Windsor County Sheriff's Department, for assistance. At the present time, the law enforcement procedures in Rochester are considered adequate for Rochester's present population.

Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. is housed on Route 100 in Hancock. It was established in 1972 to provide 24-hour emergency transport service to area medical centers. At the time the squad was staffed by volunteers who were on call in 12-hour shifts, 2 or 3 volunteers per shift. Since 1992, VRS, Inc. has upgraded to an intermediate service through education, testing and state certification of its personnel.

In 1993, with funding from the towns of Granville, Hancock and Rochester, VRS, Inc. purchased a new ambulance to replace the aging rig, which was beginning to cost too much in repairs and maintenance.

In 1994, due to lack of volunteers and resignations from long-time members, VRS, Inc. determined that in order to stay in operation staffing had to change. So on November 1, 1994 Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. opened on a trial basis with a full time paid administrator and part-time paid drivers who staffed the ambulance during the day shifts, Mon. - Fri. Volunteers continue staffing the night and weekend shifts. After affirmative votes on town meeting day (March 1995) from all three towns, Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. is now permanently staffed by the full time paid administrator, part time drivers and volunteers. Valley Rescue Squad, Inc. is governed by a seven member Board of Directors consisting of four VRS, Inc. officers and three town representatives. The latest addition to services offered by VRS, Inc. is the Wilderness Rescue Team.

The closest hospital is Gifford Medical Center, located in Randolph. Medivac services are available by the DHART helicopter.

Community Hazards Inventory and Risk Assessment

In Rochester, interviews with the town Selectboard and municipal Emergency Management officials, and hazards analysis indicate that the following hazards are listed as probable (frequent to unusual) – Flash Flood, HAZMAT (Transportation Accidents), Winter Storm/Ice Storm and Structural Fire. In terms of potential severity of damage, the following hazards are rated as having the potential to produce serious to locally catastrophic damage – Flash Flood, HAZMAT, Hurricane/Tropical Storm, Drought, Winter Storm/Ice Storm, Wildfire/Forest Fire, and Structural Fire. Hazards to which the town is vulnerable (probable and damaging) include Flash Flood, HAZMAT, Winter Storm/Ice Storm, and Fire. Therefore, the mitigation measures in this Plan focus on these four hazards.

Flash Flood (Risk = Med-High/High)

Based on the results of overlaying the FIRM flood maps with the location of the E911 points, there are 19 residences and 8 commercial and industrial businesses in the town that are vulnerable to potential flooding. The estimated loss for damage to these properties from the 100 year flood, assuming average residential and commercial values (derived from 2008 Annual Report by the Vermont Department of Taxes, Division of Property Valuation and Review) would be $4,945,774. This is about 3% of the grand list.

Recent flooding that had led to federal disaster declarations for Windsor County occurred from June 17, 1998 to July 13, 1998 (DR 1228 VT), Sept. 16 through Sept. 21, 1999 (DR 1307 VT), July 14, 2000 through July 18, 2000 (DR 1336 VT), July 21, 2003, through August 18, 2003 (DR 1488 VT), April 15-21, 2007 (DR 1698 VT), July 9-11, 2007 (DR 1715 VT), and July 21 through August 12, 2008 (DR 1790 VT). This list does not include flood events that were not federally declared. Flooding and flash flooding are the most likely and most frequently recurring natural disaster events in Vermont. Private properties near some of Rochester's rivers and streams are at risk for inundation flooding, and the Town must plan on how to prioritize emergency response to this hazard.

No development projects are planned in Rochester in areas that would be vulnerable to flooding. There are no repetitive loss properties in Rochester on FEMA's NFIP list. Areas subject to flooding are shown on the NFIP map of Rochester.

Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) - Transportation Accidents (Risk = Med-High/High)

Based on available VT Tier II data, there are three sites in town that have sufficient types and/or quantities of hazardous materials to require reporting. Rochester's village is located on Route 100 which sees a moderate quantity of truck traffic. There are 275 residential and 46 commercial buildings within 1,000 feet of a potential HAZMAT spill on Route 100. In the event that 5% of these structures were involved in a HAZMAT incident, the estimated damage would be $2,723,375. It should also be noted that the State of Vermont currently has one fully trained HAZMAT response team, with vehicles located in Essex Junction, Brandon, and Windsor. The HAZMAT crew chief is available within minutes of a call for the team but on-scene response would be a matter of hours. In the event of a serious accident in town, there would be little time for evacuation and response would be difficult.

Winter Storm (Risk = Med-High/High)

A winter storm or ice storm could cause a long term power outage, creating loss of water supply and sewer service. These hazards have no specific damage estimate as their effect could occur anywhere in town.

Fire (Risk = Med-High/High)

Poor access to fires, limited water supply for firefighting outside the Village area, and distances of homes from the Fire Station are a few of the challenges that leave Rochester vulnerable to the impacts of structure fires. Because the town is heavily forested, wildfires are possible during late spring, late summer, and early fall. The forests contain potential fuel for a serious conflagration. Some recreational and retirement homes with single access roads and no fire-fighting water supply are in jeopardy.

Existing Hazard Mitigation Measures in the Community

Ongoing efforts to mitigate hazards in the community include:

1. ditch and culvert maintenance.
2. administration of flood hazard regulations

National Flood Insurance Program

The Town of Rochester is an NFIP participant. Rochester's initial Flood Hazard Boundary Map was identified on 12/20/74. The Town's initial Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) was dated 8/5/91. The Town's FIRM has been updated, and the current effective map date is 9/28/07.

The Rochester Zoning Administrator serves as the NFIP Administrator. Rochester is located in Windsor County and completed an update of its flood hazard regulations in 2007. Beyond the Town's NFIP program, there are no additional erosion control or flood management regulations that apply in Rochester. There are no plans to enroll the community in the CRS program.

Based on the regional and local hazard assessment and analysis, this Annex identifies actions related to continued compliance with the NFIP. These actions are prioritized, along with the other actions developed in this Annex, using the method described on Page 21 of the Regional PDM Plan. The actions are included in the Implementation Schedule for Prioritized Mitigation Projects, which follows.

Areas of Local Concern

1. Route 100 poses a major threat of potential HAZMAT spills.
2. The Park House has a large elderly population. The shape and height of the building could create difficulties for the Rochester Fire Department in the event of a major fire.
3. Rochester Village contains a numerous adjacent commercial buildings. These buildings do not contain an extended fire suppression system. In the event of a major fire in one building, it is likely that others nearby would be threatened.

Implementation Schedule for Prioritized Mitigation Projects

Tasks currently under way or under consideration – in order of priority:

MITIGATION ACTION	WHO (LEADERSHIP)	WHEN (TIMEFRAME)	HOW (FUNDING/ SUPPORT)	IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH EXISTING PROGRAMS
ALL HAZARDS 1. Ensure that RRP is current	Selectboard	Yearly	With TRORC assistance	
2. Re-write and update existing Emergency Operations Plan	Emergency Management Coordinator	Yearly	With TRORC assistance	
3. Participate in post disaster training programs.	Emergency Management Coordinator	Yearly	With TRORC assistance and state and local resources	
4. Review and modify evacuation and sheltering plan based on results of procedures implemented in an actual hazard incident.	Emergency Management Coordinator	Yearly	With TRORC assistance and state and local resources	
FLASH FLOOD 5. Continue the planned road maintenance program and update existing culvert inventory. Upgrade culverts and ditching.	Highway Department	Ongoing	Local resources	
6. Participate in NFIP training offered by the State and/or FEMA, or in other training, that addresses flood hazard planning and management.	Emergency Management Coordinator, Highway Dept.	Ongoing	Local resources	
HAZMAT 7. Pursue HAZMAT training for Fire Department	Fire Department	2009	Funded by Fire Service Training Academy	
WINTER STORM 8. Educate citizens on preparedness for winter travel and extended power outages.	Emergency Management Coordinator	Ongoing	Local resources	
9. Encourage utilities to continue a regular schedule of tree trimming along power lines	Emergency Management Coordinator	Yearly	Local resources	
FIRE 10. Upgrade or relocate fire station to improve space and storage for equipment.	Fire Department	2010	Local resources	
11. Institute a smoke detector awareness program through a survey conducted by students at the high school.	Fire Department	Ongoing	Local resources	
12. Conduct regular drills at high school and elementary school.	Fire Department	Yearly	Local resources	
13. Investigate ways to ensure the safety of the population of the Park house in the event of fire	Fire Department	2009	Local resources	
14. Work with GMNF to develop wildfire response plan	Fire Department	2009	Local resources and GMNF	
15. Consider installation of fire sprinkler systems in the closely spaced historic downtown structures.	Fire Department, Selectboard	2010	Local resources	