

SECTION 2

PLANNING PROCESS

This section describes the planning process undertaken by the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) District 6 counties and jurisdictions in the development of its 2016 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. It consists of the following eight subsections:

- ❖ 2.1 Overview of Hazard Mitigation Planning
- ❖ 2.2 History of Hazard Mitigation Planning in the MEMA District 6 Region
- ❖ 2.3 Preparing the 2016 Plan
- ❖ 2.4 The MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Council
- ❖ 2.5 Community Meetings and Workshops
- ❖ 2.6 Involving the Public
- ❖ 2.7 Involving the Stakeholders
- ❖ 2.8 Documentation of Plan Progress

44 CFR Requirement

44 CFR Part 201.6(c)(1): The plan shall include documentation of the planning process used to develop the plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process and how the public was involved.

2.1 OVERVIEW OF HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

Local hazard mitigation planning is the process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks, and determining how to best minimize or manage those risks. This process culminates in a hazard mitigation plan that identifies specific mitigation actions, each designed to achieve both short-term planning objectives and a long-term community vision.

To ensure the functionality of a hazard mitigation plan, responsibility is assigned for each proposed mitigation action to a specific individual, department, or agency along with a schedule or target completion date for its implementation (see Section 10: *Plan Maintenance*). Plan maintenance procedures are established for the routine monitoring of implementation progress, as well as the evaluation and enhancement of the mitigation plan itself. These plan maintenance procedures ensure that the Plan remains a current, dynamic, and effective planning document over time that becomes integrated into the routine local decision making process.

Communities that participate in hazard mitigation planning have the potential to accomplish many benefits, including:

- ❖ saving lives and property,
- ❖ saving money,
- ❖ speeding up recovery following disasters,

- ❖ reducing future vulnerability through wise development and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction,
- ❖ expediting the receipt of pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding, and
- ❖ demonstrating a firm commitment to improving community health and safety.

Typically, communities that participate in mitigation planning are described as having the potential to produce long-term and recurring benefits by breaking the repetitive cycle of disaster loss. A core assumption of hazard mitigation is that the investments made before a hazard event will significantly reduce the demand for post-disaster assistance by lessening the need for emergency response, repair, recovery, and reconstruction. Furthermore, mitigation practices will enable local residents, businesses, and industries to re-establish themselves in the wake of a disaster, getting the community economy back on track sooner and with less interruption.

The benefits of mitigation planning go beyond solely reducing hazard vulnerability. Mitigation measures such as the acquisition or regulation of land in known hazard areas can help achieve multiple community goals, such as preserving open space, maintaining environmental health, and enhancing recreational opportunities. Thus, it is vitally important that any local mitigation planning process be integrated with other concurrent local planning efforts, and any proposed mitigation strategies must take into account other existing community goals or initiatives that will help complement or hinder their future implementation.

2.2 HISTORY OF HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING IN MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGION

Each of the counties and jurisdictions participating in this Plan has a previously adopted hazard mitigation plan. The FEMA approval dates for each of these plans, along with a list of the participating municipalities for each plan, are listed below:

- ❖ *Clarke County - Clarke County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ Enterprise
 - ❖ Quitman
 - ❖ Pachuta
 - ❖ Shubuta
 - ❖ Stonewall
- ❖ *Jasper County - Jasper County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2011)*
 - ❖ Bay Springs
 - ❖ Heidelberg
 - ❖ Louin
 - ❖ Montrose
- ❖ *Kemper County - Kemper County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ De Kalb
 - ❖ Scooba

- ❖ *Lauderdale County - Lauderdale County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ Marion
 - ❖ Meridian
- ❖ *Leake County - Leake County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ Carthage
 - ❖ Lena
 - ❖ Walnut Grove
- ❖ *Neshoba County - Neshoba County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2011)*
 - ❖ Philadelphia
 - ❖ Union (partially in Neshoba and Newton Counties)¹
- ❖ *Newton County - Newton County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)²*
 - ❖ Chunky
 - ❖ Decatur
 - ❖ Newton (city)
 - ❖ Union (partially in Neshoba and Newton Counties)
- ❖ *Scott County - Scott County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ Forest
 - ❖ Lake
 - ❖ Morton
 - ❖ Sebastopol
- ❖ *Smith County - Smith County Mississippi Hazard Mitigation Plan (2012)*
 - ❖ Mize
 - ❖ Polkville
 - ❖ Raleigh
 - ❖ Sylvarena
 - ❖ Taylorsville

Each of these plans was developed using the multi-jurisdictional planning process recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). For this plan, all of the aforementioned jurisdictions have joined to form a regional plan. No new jurisdictions have joined the process and all of the jurisdictions that participated in previous planning efforts (with the exception of the Town of Hickory) have participated in the development of this regional plan. The process of merging all of the above plans into this regional plan is described in more detail below.

2.3 PREPARING THE 2016 PLAN

Local hazard mitigation plans are required to be updated every five years to remain eligible for federal mitigation funding. To simplify planning efforts for the jurisdictions in the MEMA District 6 Region,

¹ The Town of Union will only be included under Newton County for this plan.

² Although the Town of Hickory participated in the 2012 Newton County Hazard Mitigation Plan, the town has decided not to participate in the 2016 MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan.

MEMA officials worked with each county to ask them to join together to create the *MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan*. This allows resources to be shared amongst the participating jurisdictions and eases the administrative duties of all of the participants by combining the two existing multi-jurisdictional plans into one regional plan.

To prepare the 2013 *MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan*, MEMA hired Atkins as an outside consultant to provide professional mitigation planning services. Atkins also enlisted AWG as a subcontractor for the project. Ryan Wiedenman from Atkins served as the lead planner for this project and is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

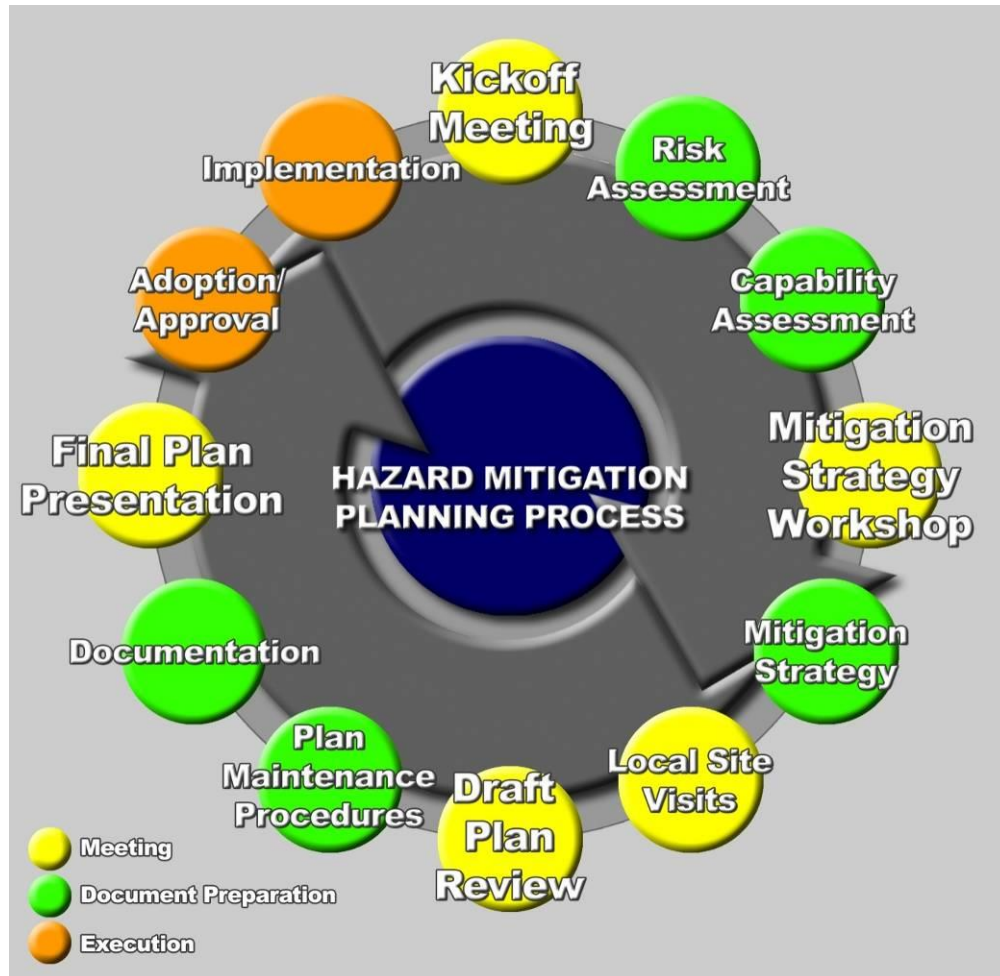
Per the contractual scope of work, the Atkins consulting team followed the mitigation planning process recommended by FEMA in the Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning Guidance³. The Local Mitigation Plan Review Tool, found in Appendix C, provides a summary of FEMA's current minimum standards of acceptability for compliance with DMA 2000 and notes the location where each requirement is met within this Plan. These standards are based upon FEMA's Final Rule as published in the Federal Register in Part 201 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). The Hazard Mitigation Council used FEMA's Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide (October 2011) for reference as they completed the Plan.

Although each participating jurisdiction had already developed a hazard mitigation plan in the past, the combination of the nine county-level plans into one regional plan still required making some plan update revisions based on FEMA's Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Planning Guidance. Since all sections of the regional plan are technically new, plan update requirements do not apply. However, since this is the first regional plan among the jurisdictions, key elements from the previous approved plans are referenced throughout the document (e.g., existing actions) and required a discussion of changes made. For example, all of the risk assessment elements needed to be updated to include most recent information. It was also necessary to formulate a single set of goals for the region, but they were based on previously determined goals (Section 8: *Mitigation Strategy*). The Capability Assessment section includes updated information for all of the participating jurisdictions and the Mitigation Action Plan provides implementation status updates for all of the actions identified in the previous plans.

The process used to prepare this Plan included twelve major steps that were completed over the course of approximately nine months beginning in June 2015. Each of these planning steps (illustrated in **Figure 2.1**) resulted in critical work products and outcomes that collectively make up the Plan. Specific plan sections are further described in Section 1: *Introduction*.

Over the past five years, each participating jurisdiction has been actively working to implement their existing plans. This is documented in the Mitigation Action Plan through the implementation status updates for each of the Mitigation Actions. The Capability Assessment also documents changes and improvements in the capabilities of each participating jurisdiction to implement the Mitigation Strategy.

³ A copy of the negotiated contractual scope of work between MEMA and Atkins is available through MEMA upon request.

FIGURE 2.1: MITIGATION PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGION

As is further detailed below, the planning process was conducted through Hazard Mitigation Council meetings comprised primarily of local government staff from each of the participating jurisdictions and advisory stakeholders.

2.4 THE MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION COUNCIL

In order to guide the development of this Plan, the counties in MEMA District 6 (Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Smith) and representatives from their participating municipal jurisdictions created the MEMA District 6 Regional Hazard Mitigation Council (RHMC). The RHMC represents a community-based planning team made up of representatives from various county departments and municipalities and other key stakeholders identified to serve as critical partners in the planning process.

Beginning in June 2015, the RHMC members engaged in regular discussions as well as local planning workshops to discuss and complete tasks associated with preparing the Plan. This working group coordinated on all aspects of plan preparation and provided valuable input to the process. In addition to regular meetings, committee members routinely communicated and were kept informed through an e-mail distribution list.

Specifically, the tasks assigned to the RHMC members included:

- ❖ participate in RHMC meetings and workshops
- ❖ provide best available data as required for the Risk Assessment portion of the Plan
- ❖ help review the local Capability Assessment information and provide copies of any mitigation or hazard-related documents for review and incorporation into the Plan
- ❖ support the development of the Mitigation Strategy, including the design and adoption of regional goal statements
- ❖ help design and propose appropriate mitigation actions for their department/agency for incorporation into the Mitigation Action Plan
- ❖ review and provide timely comments on all study findings and draft plan deliverables
- ❖ support the adoption of the *2016 MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan*

Table 2.1 lists the members of the RHMC who were responsible for participating in the development of the Plan. Council members are listed in alphabetical order by last name.

TABLE 2.1: MEMBERS OF THE MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION COUNCIL

NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT / AGENCY
Dudley, Ben*	Director	Kemper County EMA
Farmer, Dinah	Administrative Officer	Lauderdale County EMA
Goodman, Al	Principal	AWG Consulting
Harper, Brenda	City Clerk	Town of Decatur
Ivy, Eddie*	Director	Clarke County EMA
Jordan, Tina	District 6 Area Coordinator	MEMA
Lucas, Mike*	Director	Jasper County EMA
Malone, Tommy*	Director	Leake County EMA
Mayo, Jeff*	Director	Neshoba County EMA
McDaniel, Kandace	Intern	MEMA
McKinney, Carolyn	Planner	MEMA
Patrick, Bill	Bureau Director	MEMA
Seaney, Alvin*	Director	Scott County EMA
Seaney, Sheila	Deputy Director	Scott County EMA
Smith, Scott*	Director	Newton County EMA
Spears, Scott*	Director	Lauderdale County EMA
Thornton, Annette	Administrative Assistant	Smith County EMA
Warren, Brian*	Director	Smith County EMA

* Served as the county's main point of contact

Some of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Council Members listed above were designated to represent more than one jurisdiction. Specifically:

- ❖ Eddie Ivy represented Clarke County and the Town of Enterprise, Village of Pachuta, City of Quitman, Town of Shubuta, and Town of Stonewall
- ❖ Mike Lucas represented Jasper County and the City of Bay Springs, Town of Heidelberg, Town of Louin, and Town of Montrose.
- ❖ Ben Dudley represented Kemper County and the Town of DeKalb and Town of Scooba.
- ❖ Scott Spears represented Lauderdale County and the Town of Marion and City of Meridian.
- ❖ Tommy Malone represented Leake County and the City of Carthage, Town of Lena, and Town of Walnut Grove.
- ❖ Jeff Mayo represented Neshoba County and the City of Philadelphia.
- ❖ Scott Smith represented Newton County and the Town of Chunky, Town of Decatur, City of Newton, and Town of Union.
- ❖ Alvin Seaney represented Scott County and the City of Forest, Town of Lake, City of Morton, and Town of Sebastopol.
- ❖ Brian Warren represented Smith County and the Town of Mize, Town of Polkville, Town of Raleigh, Village of Sylvarena, and Town of Taylorsville.

This authorized representation is documented in signed letters that were provided to MEMA from each of these municipalities that designated these persons as their representatives. Copies of these letters can be obtained by contacting MEMA.

Each of the municipalities participated in the planning process through county-level meetings and calls with their respective county's emergency management agency director, who discussed the risk assessment with them and helped them update their mitigation actions accordingly.

Additional participation and input from other identified stakeholders and the general public was sought by the MEMA District 6 counties during the planning process through phone calls and the distribution of e-mails, advertisements, and public notices aimed at informing people of the development of the Hazard Mitigation Plan (public and stakeholder involvement is further discussed later in this section). It should be noted that many neighboring communities were offered the opportunity to participate in the planning process through phone conversations and in-person discussions. Among those invited to participate were representatives from Emergency Management offices in several of the counties that surround the MEMA District 6 Region including Covington, Winston, and Noxubee Counties. During these discussions, no major comments or suggestions were received concerning the plan.

2.4.1 Multi-Jurisdictional Participation

The MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan includes nine counties and thirty incorporated municipalities. To satisfy multi-jurisdictional participation requirements, each county and its participating jurisdictions were required to perform the following tasks:

- ❖ Participate in mitigation planning workshops or designate a representative to do so;
- ❖ Identify completed/new mitigation projects, if applicable; and
- ❖ Develop and adopt (or update) their local Mitigation Action Plan.

Each jurisdiction participated in the planning process and has developed a local Mitigation Action Plan unique to their jurisdiction. Each jurisdiction will adopt their Mitigation Action Plan separately. This provides the means for jurisdictions to monitor and update their Plan on a regular basis.

2.5 COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

The preparation of this Plan required a series of meetings and workshops for facilitating discussion, gaining consensus and initiating data collection efforts with local government staff, community officials, and other identified stakeholders. More importantly, the meetings and workshops prompted continuous input and feedback from relevant participants throughout the drafting stages of the Plan. The following is a summary of the key meetings and community workshops held during the development of the plan update.⁴ In many cases, routine discussions and additional meetings were held by local staff to accomplish planning tasks specific to their department or agency, such as the approval of specific mitigation actions for their department or agency to undertake and include in the Mitigation Action Plan.

Project Kickoff Meeting

June 9, 2015

Forest, MS

Following the contractual Notice to Proceed, Atkins staff arranged for a project kickoff meeting. The MEMA District 6 Area Coordinator helped to arrange a meeting location. An email was distributed which invited representatives from the participating counties and municipalities, external stakeholders, and other local organizations to the meeting. The regional participants are collectively known as the Regional Hazard Mitigation Council (“RHMC” or “Council”). The meeting was held at the Scott County Emergency Management Office and was attended by a range of stakeholders.



June 9, 2015 MEMA District 6 RHMC Meeting

Tina Jordan, MEMA District 6 Area Coordinator, started the meeting by welcoming the representatives from each county, participating municipal jurisdictions, and other stakeholders. Ms. Jordan then introduced Ryan Wiedenman, Project Manager from the project consulting team, Atkins.

Mr. Wiedenman led the kickoff meeting and began by providing an overview of the items to be discussed at the meeting and briefly reviewed each of the handouts that were distributed in the meeting packets (agenda, project description, and presentation slides). He then provided a brief overview of mitigation and discussed the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and NC Senate Bill 300.

He gave a list of the participating jurisdictions for the regional plan, noting that nearly every local government in the region is participating in an existing hazard mitigation plan. These plans expire at various times in mid to late 2016, so the planning team will plan to develop a draft to submit to FEMA by early 2016.

Mr. Wiedenman then explained the six different categories of mitigation techniques (emergency services; prevention; natural resource protection; structural projects; public education and awareness; and property protection) and gave examples of each. This explanation culminated with an Ice Breaker Exercise for the attendees.

⁴Copies of agendas, sign-in sheets, minutes, and handout materials for all meetings and workshops can be found in Appendix D.

Mr. Wiedenman instructed attendees on how to complete the exercise. Attendees were divided into small groups and given an equal amount of fictitious FEMA money and asked to spend it in the various mitigation categories. Money could be thought of as grant money that communities received towards mitigation. Attendees were asked to target their money towards areas of mitigation that are of greatest concern for their community. Ideally, the exercise helps pinpoint areas of mitigation that the community may want to focus on when developing mitigation grants. Mr. Wiedenman also presented the Ice Breaker Exercise results which were:

- ❖ Emergency Services \$138
- ❖ Public Education \$41
- ❖ Property Protection \$35
- ❖ Natural Resource Protection \$35
- ❖ Prevention \$26
- ❖ Structural \$18



“Icebreaker” Exercise

Mr. Wiedenman then discussed the key objectives and structure of the planning process, explaining the specific tasks to be accomplished for this project, including the planning process, risk assessment, vulnerability assessment, capability assessment, mitigation strategy and action plan, plan maintenance procedures, and documentation. The project schedule was presented along with the project staffing chart, which demonstrates the number of experienced individuals that will be working on this project. The data collection needs and public outreach efforts were also discussed.

Mr. Wiedenman then reviewed the roles and responsibilities of Atkins, participating jurisdictions, and stakeholders. The presentation concluded with a discussion of the next steps to be taken in the project development, which included discussing data collection efforts, continuing public outreach, and the next meeting for the HMPT.

The meeting was opened for questions and comments, but nothing of note was brought up.

Mr. Wiedenman thanked everyone for attending and identified himself as the point of contact for any questions or issues. The meeting was adjourned.

**Mitigation Strategy Meeting
October 8, 2015**

Ms. Tina Jordan with MEMA welcomed everyone to the meeting and went over safety and administrative topics. She then passed the meeting over to Mr. Ryan Wiedenman to discuss the findings and information that Atkins pulled together.



October 8, 2015 MEMA District 6 RHMC Meeting

Mr. Wiedenman initiated the meeting with a review of the meeting handouts, which included an agenda, presentation slides, proposed goals for the plan, mitigation actions from the region’s existing

plan, and mitigation action worksheets for collecting information for any new mitigation actions. Mr. Wiedenman reviewed the project schedule and stated that a draft of the Hazard Mitigation Plan would be presented to the Hazard Mitigation Planning team at the end of November.

He then presented the findings of the risk assessment, starting with a review of the Presidential Disaster Declarations that have impacted the region. He then explained the process for preparing Hazard Profiles and discussed how each hazard falls into one of five categories: Flood-related, Fire-related, Geologic, Wind-related, and Other. He indicated that each hazard must be evaluated and then profiled and assessed to determine a relative risk for each hazard.

Mr. Wiedenman reviewed the Hazard Profiles and the following bullets summarize the information presented:

Flood-Related Hazards

- ❖ FLOOD. There have been 237 flood events recorded in MEMA District 6 since 1997, resulting in \$208.3 million in property damage per NCDC. There have been 263 NFIP losses since 1978 and approximately \$4.2 million in claims. 40 repetitive loss properties in the region account for 101 of the recorded losses. Future occurrences are likely.
- ❖ EROSION. There have not been any instances of major erosion reported, however, some HMPT members noted that erosion has occurred to some degree as part of the land subsidence hazard.
- ❖ DAM/LEVEE FAILURE. There have been 8 recorded dam failures in the region according to the State HMP. There are 37 high hazard dams in the region. Future occurrences are possible.
- ❖ WINTER STORM. There have been 90 recorded winter weather events in the region since 1996 resulting in \$12.8 million in reported property damages. Future occurrences are likely.

Fire-Related Hazards

- ❖ DROUGHT. There have been eleven years (out of the past fifteen, 2000-2014) where drought conditions have been reported as moderate to extreme in the region and future occurrences are likely.
- ❖ HEAT WAVE. There have been 45 recorded extreme heat events reported by the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) since 2007. Heat extents of 106 degrees indicate that extreme heat is a hazard of concern for the region. Future occurrences are likely.
- ❖ WILDFIRE. There is an average of 3,270 fires per year reported in the region. These burn an annual average of 3,723 acres. Future occurrences are highly likely.

Geologic Hazards

- ❖ EARTHQUAKES. There have been 8 recorded earthquake events in MEMA District 6 since 1886. The strongest had a recorded magnitude of V MMI. Future occurrences are possible.

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- ❖ **LANDSLIDE.** No known occurrences of landslides and USGS mapping shows a very low risk for most of the region, though there are some areas of moderate risk. Future occurrences unlikely.
- ❖ **LAND SUBSIDENCE.** There were no major recorded past events and in general the region has a low susceptibility. Future occurrences unlikely.

Wind-Related Hazards

- ❖ **HURRICANES AND TROPICAL STORMS.** NOAA data shows that 57 storm tracks have come within 75 miles of the region since 1885. Future occurrences are likely.
- ❖ **THUNDERSTORM/HIGH WIND.** There have been 2,110 severe thunderstorm/high wind events reported since 1955 with \$53.9 million in reported property damages. Two deaths have been reported. Future occurrences are highly likely.
- ❖ **HAILSTORM.** There have been 1,072 recorded events since 1960. Future occurrences are highly likely.
- ❖ **LIGHTNING.** There have been 17 recorded lightning events reported by the National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) since 1998. Future occurrences are highly likely.
- ❖ **TORNADOES.** There have been 379 recorded tornado events reported in the region since 1950. \$855.8 million in property damages. 35 deaths and 450 injuries have been reported. Future occurrences are likely.

Other Hazards

- ❖ **HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENTS.** There have been 532 reported hazardous materials events reported in the county since 1971. 45 serious events were reported with 0 deaths and 16 injuries. Future occurrences are likely.

The results of the hazard identification process were used to generate a Priority Risk Index (PRI), which categorizes and prioritizes potential hazards as high, moderate or low risk based on probability, impact, spatial extent, warning time, and duration. The highest PRI was assigned to Thunderstorm/High Wind followed by Tornado, Flood, Hurricane/Tropical Storm, and Hailstorm.

Hazard Mitigation Planning Team members recommended raising the relative risk level for Tornado to the highest priority hazard, noting that several counties had experienced higher level tornadoes than what was reported.

In concluding the review of Hazard Profiles, Mr. Wiedenman stated if anyone had additional information for the hazard profiles, or had concerns with any of the data presented, they should call or email him.

Mr. Wiedenman presented the Capability Assessment Findings. Atkins has developed a scoring system that was used to rank the participating jurisdictions in terms of capability in four major areas (Planning and Regulatory; Administrative and Technical; Fiscal; Political). Important capability indicators include National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) participation, Building Code Effective Grading Schedule

(BCEGS) score, Community Rating System (CRS) participation, and the Local Capability Assessment Survey conducted by Atkins.

Mr. Wiedenman reviewed the Relevant Plans and Ordinances, Relevant Staff/Personnel Resources, and Relevant Fiscal Resources. All of these categories were used to rate the overall capability of the participating counties and jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions are in the limited to moderate range for Planning and Regulatory Capability and in the limited range for Fiscal Capability. There is variation between the jurisdictions for Administrative and Technical Capability, mainly with respect to availability staff skilled in GIS and planning. Based upon the scoring methodology developed by Atkins, it was determined that most of the participating jurisdictions have limited to moderate capability to implement hazard mitigation programs and activities.

Mr. Wiedenman also discussed the results of the public participation survey that was posted on several of the participating counties' and municipal websites. As of the meeting date, 9 responses had been received. Mr. Wiedenman explained that the survey would close on October 31, so the HMPT could make one final push to get the survey out to the public since responses were so low. Based on preliminary survey results, respondents felt that Severe Thunderstorm/High Wind posed the greatest threat to their neighborhood, followed by Tornado. 89 percent of the respondents were interested in making their homes more resistant to hazards. However, 44 percent don't know who to contact regarding reducing their risks to hazards.

Mr. Wiedenman gave an overview of Mitigation Strategy Development and presented the existing goals for the plan and explained that Atkins recommended keeping the goals as they are. The Hazard Mitigation Team accepted the existing goals for the plan. Mr. Wiedenman then provided an overview and examples of suggested mitigation actions tailored for MEMA District 6 counties and their municipalities. Mr. Wiedenman then asked each county and the municipalities to provide a status update for their existing mitigation actions (completed, deleted, or deferred) by October 31, 2015. Mr. Wiedenman also asked planning team members to include any new mitigation actions by October 31, 2015.

Mr. Wiedenman thanked the group for taking the time to attend and explained that if team members had any issues or questions about the planning process or their next steps, they could contact him. The meeting was adjourned.

2.6 INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

44 CFR Requirement
44 CFR Part 201.6(b)(1): The planning process shall include an opportunity for the public to comment on the plan during the drafting stage and prior to plan approval.

An important component of the mitigation planning process involves public participation. Individual citizen and community-based input provides the entire Council with a greater understanding of local concerns and increases the likelihood of successfully implementing mitigation actions by developing community "buy-in" from those directly affected by the decisions of public officials. As citizens become more involved in decisions that affect their safety, they are more likely to gain a greater appreciation of the hazards present in their community and take the steps necessary to reduce their impact. Public

awareness is a key component of any community's overall mitigation strategy aimed at making a home, neighborhood, school, business or entire city safer from the potential effects of hazards.

Public involvement in the development of the *MEMA District 6 Hazard Mitigation Plan* was sought using two methods: (1) public survey instruments (hard copy and web-based) were made available, and (2) copies of draft Plan deliverables were made available for public review on county websites and at government offices. The Public was provided two opportunities to be involved in the actual plan development at two distinct periods during the planning process: (1) during the drafting stage of the Plan; and (2) upon completion of a final draft Plan, but prior to official plan approval and adoption. A public participation survey (discussed in greater detail in Section 2.6.1) was made available during the planning process at various locations throughout the MEMA District 6 Region and at various locations on the internet.

It should be noted that many local officials explained that the best way to reach members of the public in their jurisdiction was often not through the internet and that many local governments do not have official websites on which to advertise an online survey link. Therefore, Atkins provided hard copies of the survey for all local governments and these were distributed to members of the public in the way each county felt would be most conducive to receiving responses. For instance, some communities brought hard copies to local community events and encouraged citizens to fill out the survey and send it directly to Atkins or to their local Emergency Management office.

Additionally, each of the participating jurisdictions will hold public meetings before the final plan is officially adopted by the local governing bodies. These meetings will occur at different times once FEMA has granted conditional approval of the Plan. Adoption resolutions will be included in Appendix A.

2.6.1 Public Participation Survey

The MEMA District 6 Region was successful in getting citizens to provide input to the mitigation planning process through the use of the *Public Participation Survey*. The *Public Participation Survey* was designed to capture data and information from residents of the Region that might not be able to participate through other means in the mitigation planning process, such as attending a public meeting at a specific time and location.

As mentioned above, hard copies of the *Public Participation Survey* were distributed to the RHMC to be made available for residents to complete at local public offices. A link to an electronic version of the survey was also posted at various locations on the internet.

A total of 121 survey responses were received, which provided valuable input for the RHMC to consider in the development of the plan update. Selected survey results are presented below.

- ❖ Approximately 82 percent of survey respondents had been impacted by a disaster, mainly hurricanes (Katrina—2005) and tornadoes.
- ❖ Respondents ranked Tornado as the highest threat to their neighborhood (53 percent), followed by Severe Thunderstorm/High Wind (26 percent).
- ❖ Approximately 32 percent of respondents have taken actions to make their homes more resistant to hazards and 90 percent are interested in making their homes more resistant to hazards.

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- ❖ 46 percent of respondents do not know what office to contact regarding reducing their risks to hazards.
- ❖ Emergency Services and Public Education and Awareness were ranked as the most important activities for communities to pursue in reducing risks.

Public survey results were presented to the RHMC at the October 8 meeting. A copy of the survey and a detailed summary of the survey results are provided in Appendix B and Appendix D, respectively

2.7 INVOLVING THE STAKEHOLDERS

44 CFR Requirement

44 CFR Part 201.6(b)(2): The planning process shall include an opportunity for neighboring communities, local and regional agencies involved in hazard mitigation activities, and agencies that have the authority to regulate development, as well as businesses, academia and other non-profit interests to be involved in the planning process.

At the beginning of the planning process for the development of this plan, the project consultant worked with MEMA mitigation staff, the MEMA District 6 Area Coordinator, and each of the nine County Emergency Management leads to initiate outreach to stakeholders to be involved in the planning process. The project consultant sent out a list of recommended stakeholders provided from FEMA Publication 386-1 titled **Getting Started: Building Support for Mitigation Planning**. The list of recommended stakeholders is found in Appendix C of that publication (Worksheet #1: Build the Planning Team) and has been included in **Appendix B** of this plan to demonstrate the wide range of stakeholders that were considered to participate in the development of this plan. Each of the nine County Emergency Management leads used that list for reference as they invited stakeholders from their counties to participate in the planning process.

Additionally, the project consultant and the County EM leads contacted Mississippi Automated Resources Information System (MARIS), Mississippi Forestry Commission, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, representatives from each of the county-level school districts, and relevant representatives from higher education (universities, community colleges, etc.) to ask them to participate in the planning process and provide data that was used in the development of this plan.

In addition to the efforts described above, the participating jurisdictions in the MEMA District 6 plan went above and beyond the minimum requirements for stakeholder outreach by designing and distributing the *Public Participation Survey* described earlier in this section. In addition to collecting public input for the plan, the survey was generated to allow those stakeholders that could not attend Regional Hazard Mitigation Council meetings the opportunity to provide input to the plan and the planning process. All survey results were shared with the Regional Hazard Mitigation Council and represented input from citizens, local officials, businesses, academia, and other private interests in the Region. Several of these organizations contacted the consultant directly with comments as well. A list of representatives who participated from the aforementioned groups can be found in **Table 2.2**.

TABLE 2.2: MEMBERS OF THE MEMA DISTRICT 6 REGIONAL HAZARD MITIGATION COUNCIL

NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT / AGENCY
Dr. Alvin Taylor	Superintendent	Meridian

NAME	TITLE	DEPARTMENT / AGENCY
Tommy Dearing	Superintendent	Neshoba County School District
J.O. Amis	Superintendent	Newton County School District
Dr. Virginia Young	Superintendent	Newton
Dr. Gwendolyn Page	Superintendent	East Jasper School District
Charles Boyles	Conservator	Scott County
Nick Hillman	Superintendent	Smith County School District
Dr. Lundy Brantley	Superintendent	Union
Jackie Pollock	Superintendent	Kemper County School District
Randy Hodges	Superintendent	Lauderdale County School District
Warren Woodrow	Superintendent	West Jasper School District
Patrick Posey	Superintendent	Leake County School District

2.8 DOCUMENTATION OF PLAN PROGRESS

Progress in hazard mitigation planning for the participating jurisdictions in the MEMA District 6 Region is documented in this plan update. Since hazard mitigation planning efforts officially began in the participating counties with the development of the initial Hazard Mitigation Plans in the late 1990's/early 2000s, many mitigation actions have been completed and implemented in the participating jurisdictions. These actions will help reduce the overall risk to natural hazards for the people and property in the Region. The actions that have been completed are documented in the Mitigation Action Plan found in Section 9.

In addition, community capability continues to improve with the implementation of new plans, policies, and programs that help to promote hazard mitigation at the local level. The current state of local capabilities for the participating jurisdictions is captured in Section 7: *Capability Assessment*. The participating jurisdictions continue to demonstrate their commitment to hazard mitigation and hazard mitigation planning and have proven this by reconvening the Hazard Mitigation Council to update the Plan and by continuing to involve the public in the hazard mitigation planning process.