

Section 1: Identifying Community-Based Organization (CBO) and/or Faith-Based Organization (FBO) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Volunteers

Learning Objectives: Participants will learn how CBOs and FBOs can contribute to their communities by serving as pre-disaster mitigation volunteers. **Suggested time:** 3 hours, or two 1.5-hour sessions

Introduction to Partnerships in Pre-Disaster Mitigation



Instructor's Note: Discuss the following introduction with participants to establish an understanding of why emergency managers should work with CBOs and FBOs on pre-disaster mitigation. This workshop overlaps with the introductory workshop, so both workshops should not be conducted for the same participant groups.

When it comes to disaster, emergency managers and community-based and faith-based organizations (CBOs and FBOs) have long operated within certain traditional roles. Emergency managers are typically focused on emergency operations and technical solutions. They are burdened with too much to do and too few resources. In many cases, emergency managers have their hands full maintaining a decent state of preparedness and responding when disaster occurs. They generally work with volunteers in well-defined circumstances during and after disasters.

CBOs and FBOs are accustomed to deploying volunteers and services in disaster relief and recovery. Food, shelter, blankets, the organization of volunteer resources, and the provision of human warmth and comfort are their areas of expertise.

There is a growing trend around the country for emergency managers to cooperate with CBOs and FBOs in a different kind of partnership. Community-based mitigation programs concentrate on ongoing efforts that can lessen the impact disasters have on people and property. These programs capitalize on the distinct and separate strengths that emergency managers and CBOs/FBOs offer.

Emergency managers provide access to:

- Funding available through government mitigation grant programs
- Government-based expertise and technical know-how
- Deep understanding of local risks and mitigation needs
- Current status of mitigation within the community
- Access to government expertise and resources at the local, state, regional and federal levels

CBOs and FBOs offer:

- Immense volunteer capacity
- Understanding of community needs and awareness of the most vulnerable populations
- Built-in credibility with the community
- Access to social and population groups that may avoid interaction with government officials
- The power of persuasion and community influence
- The ability to make decisions outside of government processes

The benefits of emergency management and CBO/FBO partnerships are enormous. They include the following:

- Emergency management and CBO/FBO partnerships support the reduction of disaster risk, even in highly resource-constrained situations.
- Mitigation activities can keep experienced volunteers active and enthusiastic even in times when their special disaster response and recovery skills are not needed.
- Opportunities exist to bring a whole new group of volunteers into play.
- Program activities maintain community interest and increase awareness regarding disaster risk reduction and preparedness.
- Community members acquire a sense of empowerment through reducing their disaster risk. They buy in at the grassroots level.
- The partnerships and relationships built through such programs further strengthen community bonds.
- When disaster does strike, response and recovery efforts are likely to proceed more smoothly because people know each other, damage and loss are reduced due to mitigation activities, and citizens are apt to be more prepared as a result of their increased disaster consciousness.

Both emergency managers and CBOs/FBOs will be challenged by cultural and organizational differences when they step beyond traditional roles to form these new partnerships. Leadership and operational styles may vary widely. The mission of each group will vary distinctly, both within the CBO and FBO community, and between emergency managers and CBOs/FBOs. For example, emergency managers generally operate within a command-and-control, fairly hierarchical decision-making and leadership framework. On the other hand, CBOs and FBOs are likely to have decision processes that are less structured and potentially more consensus-based. For any partnership to succeed, it is important for each group to understand the cultural values and viewpoints of their partners, and to honor and respect them.

A Caveat on Community-Based Mitigation Programs



Instructor's Note: Discuss the following with participants to assure they understand the importance of CBO/FBO coordination with emergency managers and communication regarding official Community Mitigation Plans.

If your community chooses to either establish a community-based mitigation program – or to enhance an existing partnership between emergency managers and CBOs/FBOs – it's critical that CBOs/FBOs understand the importance of ongoing coordination and consistent communication with emergency managers.

Because emergency managers are charged formally with the task of community disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation, volunteer efforts must dovetail with the official plans either in place or underway. Volunteer support should be viewed as the asset it is. Emergency managers need to stay in the loop to forestall misunderstandings or even a situation in which volunteer activities impede progress. CBO and FBO volunteers can achieve optimum results when working in partnership with emergency managers and in accordance with official Community Mitigation Plans.



This icon appears next to brainstorming activities.



This icon appears with special notes to the instructor.



This icon appears when additional material is available in the Resource Guide.

Section 1.A: Understanding our Risk of Disaster

1. How capable are we as a community of either eliminating or reducing our risk from the natural hazards we face?



Instructor's Note: Discuss the community's emotional/psychological perception and understanding of the severity of the risk and the need for concern. Ask for personal anecdotes and examples.



Instructor's Note: Facilitate brainstorming on individuals and groups that are particularly prone to disaster risk and how they might be affected in the event of disaster.

Examples include:

- The elderly
- Disabled
- Latchkey children
- Group homes
- Daycare centers
- Schools
- Houses of worship
- Any other location where large groups gather



Ask participants to identify people they know who might be particularly affected. Examples include:

- Family members (young children, disabled, elderly)
- Members of various organizations to which they belong, friends, etc.
- Low-income families
- Geographically at risk, i.e., live next to river

2. Who is most vulnerable to disaster in our community?

Section 1.B: Can we Help Make our Community Safer?

1. Mitigation is one of the ways we can reduce our disaster risk. What is mitigation and how can we describe it so that CBO/FBO volunteers understand? Why should we mitigate?



Instructor's Note: Review the information on mitigation vs. preparedness with participants.

As an interactive exercise, have the group brainstorm "before the disaster" activities and categorize them as either mitigation or preparedness. Lead a discussion on why the activities were placed in the specific categories.

Lead participants in a brainstorm of the benefits of mitigation, using the examples of mitigation activities provided in the list. For example, ask them to discuss what could happen as a result of anchoring outdoor items that can become projectiles in hurricanes and high winds. Select examples that apply most to the natural hazards faced in your community. Challenge participants to come up with additional mitigation ideas that address the natural hazards common to your area. The focal point of this discussion is to emphasize the ongoing lessening of impacts to property and human lives that results from mitigation.



Mitigation is defined as ongoing efforts that can lessen the impact disasters have on people and property. There is a distinction between community preparedness and mitigation activities. Community disaster preparedness gets people and communities ready for a disaster that almost certainly will occur.



Instructor's Note: The focus of these training materials is on pre-disaster mitigation, even though preparedness and mitigation go hand-in-hand in making communities safer.

Examples of preparedness activities include:

- Knowing how to drop, cover, and hold on when an earthquake happens
- Warning sirens
- Emergency communication systems
- NOAA weather radios
- Evacuation plans
- Emergency supplies kit
- Sandbags
- Smoke alarms

On the other hand, disaster mitigation activities will actually prevent or reduce the impact of the hazard. Examples of mitigation activities are:

- Installing hurricane shutters

- Strengthening roofs
- Installing fire-resistant shingles
- Installing shatter-resistant window film
- Anchoring outdoor items that can become projectiles in hurricanes and high winds
- Implementing vegetation management – for example, removing fire-prone dry plant material from gutters and around residences and other buildings, or trimming tree limbs that overhang roofs to avoid roof damage during hurricanes, tornadoes, or high straight-line winds
- Clearing streams
- Adopting and enforcing stricter building codes
- Installing hail-resistant shingles
- Conducting a needs assessment – determining the level and type of mitigation needs present in the community; for example, identifying clogged drainageways and streams that could cause flooding during periods of high rainfall; can include specific details on the number of areas that need clearing and a prioritization of which areas need to be cleared first based on the severity of the problems that could result if the stream or drainageway remains uncleared
- Bolting bookshelves to walls
- Installing backflow valves – special valves that prevent toilet overflows when the household sewer system is infiltrated with floodwater
- Developing mitigation plans – specific plans for mitigation activities to address one or more hazards faced by a community
- Building safe rooms – specially designed rooms built to withstand high winds generally associated with tornadoes; these are available in modular, pre-built form or are built using specified materials to pre-engineering specifications

2. How does mitigation get done?

- The role CBOs and FBOs can play in mitigation



Instructor's Note: Discuss the definitions of CBOs, FBOs, and emergency managers provided as a resource in your guide and the Student Manual. Refer back to the introductory material provided in Section 1.A. Discuss how CBOs/FBOs traditionally have worked with emergency managers in disaster response and recovery. Use the brief history provided as a resource in your guide and the Student Manual. Have participants share experiences regarding CBO/FBO involvement in disaster response and recovery.

Brief Definitions of Mitigation Partner Organizations

- Community-based Organization (CBO): Non-commercial grassroots organization for community support; has visibility and influence; grounded in the community culture; may include politically focused organizations
- Faith-based Organization (FBO): A group that bases its gathering on a unifying faith or belief system; is visible and involved in the community; has formal or reputational influence
- Emergency managers: Government employees who have the knowledge, skills, resources and ability to effectively manage a comprehensive emergency management program, including:
 - Working knowledge of all the basic tenets of emergency management, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery
 - Experience and knowledge of interagency and community-wide participation in planning, coordination, and management functions designed to improve emergency management capabilities

Brief History of CBO/FBO Involvement in Disaster Mitigation

Traditionally, CBOs/FBOs have been involved in the disaster response and recovery phase – providing shelter, food, clothing, and emotional support to victims of disaster. However, during the 1970s, researchers and government officials began to shift their thinking about disasters away from a simple emphasis on immediate response. Disasters began to be seen from a more continuous perspective, rather than as independent single events.

These ways of thinking stressed the need for disaster preparation and awareness – to be ready for disasters before they occurred rather than simply reacting afterward. Accordingly, how the conception of people who might be affected by disasters changed as well.

Rather than passive “victims” of disasters dependent upon government assistance in the wake of a disaster, residents of affected communities began to be seen as potentially empowered to actively affect their own environment by taking action to mitigate the potential effects of disasters.

The knowledge of potential disasters faced by a community came to be seen as an incentive for communities to better plan and prepare for their occurrence. For example, hurricanes will always occur, but the amount of damage they cause will be determined in large part by where and how people choose to build, and how well-prepared they are to deal with the hurricane and its aftermath. Inherent in a number of these new ways of thinking about disasters was a realization that disasters could be effectively dealt with on a local level. This approach emphasized that local grassroots involvement was crucial to addressing the challenges that planning for a potential disaster posed to local communities. From these changes in thinking about disasters arose great interest in the concept of disaster mitigation.

The goal of involving CBOs and FBOs in local disaster mitigation can clearly be traced back to a number of these developments in thinking regarding disasters. As locally based organizations with strong networks within communities, CBOs and FBOs are well situated to bring about grassroots involvement in disaster mitigation. They can provide a truly “bottom-up” approach to mitigation, featuring an emphasis on social, rather than technological, solutions and empowerment of the local community.

Mitigation activities occur, first and foremost, at the local or individual level. Because of circumstances that are unique to individual communities, disaster mitigation must necessarily take place at a local level. Accordingly, the status of CBOs and FBOs as locally based organizations makes them excellent candidates to undertake or be involved in disaster mitigation activities.

Section 1.C: Establishing Mitigation Partnerships Between Emergency Managers and CBOs/FBOs

1. Communities like ours have been able to create beneficial mitigation partnerships.



Instructor's Note: Review "show-and-tell" examples of successful emergency management/CBO/FBO mitigation partnerships in similar communities that face disaster risks common to your community. Discuss the qualities that made these partnerships successful and the benefits that the communities derived.



Use the case studies provided here to stimulate discussion. Additional resources are available in the Resource Guide and through the FEMA library.

Evansville, IN

In Evansville, Indiana, a project to help residents of two neighborhoods strap down their hot water heaters was done by the Disaster Resistant Community Corp. (DRC) along with CBOs/FBOs and the neighborhood's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). The local building inspector helped organize the event and train volunteers.

Materials for strapping down the hot water heaters were provided to residents in these two neighborhoods free of charge. Installation help was provided by the CERT and CBO/FBO members to residents who needed someone to do the actual work. There was no charge for this service.

Strapping down hot water heaters keeps them from falling over and causing gas leaks and possible fires, as well as providing 30 gallons of fresh water if water lines are damaged in an earthquake. In all, almost 40 water heaters were strapped down by volunteers, and kits for strapping down water heaters were distributed to another 30 households.

Polk County, MO

In Polk County, MO, a team formed to complete what became known as the "Bare Ditch Project." Various organizations, civic groups, and schools came together at 24 locations across the county to clear the drainages of debris and other obstructing items. The goal was to provide preventative maintenance by removing debris that collects and stops proper water drainage through drainage ditches, which can lead to flooding. In all, 47 community groups and 252 volunteers came out and worked 829 hours to accomplish the drainage clearing.

Ouachita Parish, LA

The Ouachita Multi-Purpose Community Action Program (OMCAP) and its community partners worked together to rehabilitate structures in a lower-income area of Monroe, LA. The Group Work Camp project consisted of a hurricane preparedness drill, the rehabilitation of 50 homes, cutting weeds and vegetation management, and the development of mitigation strategies for an encephalitis outbreak (clearing standing water). The project mitigated a number of natural and technological hazards in addition to improving the quality of life for participating families:

- Debris removal
- Weatherizing homes
- Roof repairs
- Minor structural repairs
- Disseminating educational materials

Partners included the City of Monroe (police, fire), City of West Monroe American Red Cross, United Way, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Fair Park Baptist Church Men's Group, and Ouachita Parish Civil Defense, among others.

Brattleboro, VT

In Brattleboro, VT, a group of volunteers from local agencies and CBOs worked together to retrofit local childcare centers against earthquake damage. The group contacted the Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS) for advice on how to assess the needs of these facilities to increase the safety for the children. Once the assessments were completed, it was decided that the needs included anchoring bookcases, bracketing shelves, and velcroing pictures and knick-knacks to keep them from falling.

2. As emergency managers, how could we work with CBO/FBO volunteers to reduce our risks? Do CBO/FBO volunteers have special skills or networks that could help make our mitigation programs more effective?



Instructor's Note: Brainstorm how your group and other emergency management personnel/agencies could participate effectively in partnerships with CBOs/FBOs on community-based mitigation activities.

Give an example: "Several agencies keep public areas cleared of vegetation that can contribute to wildfire risk. However, we often don't have the resources to limit the wildfire risk experienced by every resident on their own property. This is just one example of how we as emergency managers could work with CBOs/FBOs to help make our community a safer place."



Working with the group, define benefits that could result from these partnerships. Brainstorm the variety of special skills and networks that CBOs and FBOs can offer. For example, CBOs and FBOs can offer services as translators or sign language interpreters. Neighborhood organizing skills are often needed, and volunteers actually have time to do the organizing. The list is endless – encourage your participants to use their imaginations!

The cardstorming technique (see Resource Guide) can be used effectively for the brainstorming activity. If working with a group of more than 10 participants, small group breakouts can work as teams and pool their results after separate work sessions.



3. Are we interested in pursuing a community-based mitigation program?
4. Do we know others in the field of emergency management who would like to participate?



Instructor's Note: The purpose of this activity is to begin the process of forming a core group that would be interested in establishing a community-based mitigation program.

Ask those present if they would like to take a role and what they would like to do.

Proceed by asking them to build a list of five people each who might be interested in participating.

Section 2 of the curriculum concentrates on establishing a community-based mitigation organization. It includes a segment on volunteer recruitment.