

Chapter 3

ISSUES

The Luce County Hazard Mitigation Analysis Committee met to discuss the hazard analysis for Luce County, the issues that face the County, and the possible solutions to those issues identified.

Once issues were identified for the County, the Hazard Analysis Committee developed goals and objectives to reflect the priorities of Luce County with consideration of the impact of each natural hazard that can affect the County. These goals and actions are discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 discusses the goals and actions that would be eligible for FEMA funding under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) or Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (PDMP). Chapter 5 discusses the goals and actions that can be taken but are not necessarily eligible for the above mentioned grant programs. Chapter 6 breaks out the administrative actions that should be taken to implement this plan.

Protection of life is considered the top priority for the County. Not only those that live in the County but also tourists or other visitors. Secondary to protection of life is to protect property or the key facilities and infrastructure that are vital in emergencies. The third goal is to identify projects or areas that need improvement or that would mitigate damage before it occurs. And finally, to encourage and educate people on self-help and protection measures.

The following issues were identified by the Hazard Analysis Committee (not in any particular order):

Issue 1: Infrastructure in the Village of Newberry – Two groundwater wells currently supplies the Village of Newberry’s water system, one well as the primary water source and the other as an emergency back-up. The primary well is infiltrated by iron bacteria. This organism cannot be completely eradicated. The short term solution requires flushing the entire water system every 30 days to ensure that safe drinking water standards are met. The emergency well has protozoa as well as iron bacteria contamination. As a result, it can only be operated under a “boil water initiation”. Most of the water distribution lines are cast iron or ductile iron pipes which have severe rusting and leaking problems which is exacerbated under the stress of annual extreme temperature change, ground freezing and heaving. The water quality in one case in point has led to a local laundromat business being affected and the owner having to find solutions in order to keep his business in operation. The water system leakage is so great that over 42 percent of the water being pumped from the well is lost.

The waste water distribution system also has the same type of problems with stress of winter temperatures and heaving ground. Over 80 percent of the sewer mains need to be replaced and situated below freezing level.

The storm sewer system also is in desperate need of replacement. The storm water runoff to a large wetland area immediately north of the Village periodically contaminates the wetland

which runs into a branch of the Tahquamenon River, especially during spring thaw, when water tables are high or heavy rains saturate and stress the system.

Issue 2: Emergency Operations Center – the County has designated the Luce County Government Building as an emergency operations Center. An emergency generator is needed. As a back-up or on-site emergency operations center the County OEM needs a large trailer outfitted with necessary equipment to have a mobile unit.

Issue 3: Snow drifts/blowing debris across M-28 in open areas – open areas along Hwy. M-28 could use snow fencing to prevent blowing and drifting snow in winter and blowing dust and debris during times of drought.

Issue 4: Shoreline erosion along Lake Superior – a significant historical site, the Crisp Point Lighthouse, is on the verge of collapse due to shoreline erosion. In order to save this important historical structure, measures need to be taken now.

Issue 5: Flood Insurance – Luce County is not designated as a flood prone area although there are many rivers, lakes and wetland areas and is not eligible for flood insurance.

Issue 6: Wildfires in remote areas – Luce County has many recreational campgrounds and trails throughout the northern part of the County. Response time and accessibility are issues that have to be considered.

Issue 7: Transportation of hazardous materials by rail/highway – the vulnerability of the County to environmental contamination and the stress on emergency response.

Issue 8: Communications/Warning Sirens – telephone/radio communication is vital to Luce County's response operations as there is a reliance on multi-agency cooperation. There is only one warning siren located in the Village of Newberry that can be heard within a 1-mile radius for fire callout only. Cellular phone use is sporadic when traveling through the County.

Issue 9: Volunteers/Equipment – Luce County relies on volunteer fire fighters from the Village of Newberry and Columbus Township. The County needs to ensure the volunteers have the best training and equipment that funding allows. The County has some GIS capabilities but require additional equipment to be able to provide in-house information to emergency responders.

Issue 10: Flooding issues– Luce County has several areas where major river or tributaries cross the transportation network. A historical Logging Museum is located near the Tahquamenon River. Should flooding occur that affects the museum, priceless historical artifacts could be destroyed.

Issue 11: Critical Facility overload – depending upon the emergency the local capabilities may be stretched to the maximum therefore reliance on cooperation with neighboring counties is essential.

Issue 12: Environmental Contamination – there are still several areas designated by the State as Sites of Environmental Contamination as well as 14 leaking underground storage tank sites in and around Newberry that are still on the Department of Environmental Quality’s “open” list. This designation means that although, underground tanks may have been removed, there are remaining levels of contamination in the soils. The pollutants range from hazardous chemicals to common place materials such as iron, zinc and salt.

Issue 13: Storm ditch on Vulcan St. and McMillan Ave. - this ditch gets very deep during spring thaw and wet weather posing a safety hazard and an erosion problem.

Issue 14: Back-up Computer System/County Records – there is no off-site computer system or back-up of County records.

Issue 15: Accidents in remote areas- the County’s many recreational trails provide the community and visitors with hundreds of miles to use snowmobiling, 3 or 4 wheel atvs, motor cross bikes, bicycling, horseback riding, dog sledding, etc. With cell phone use sporadic and response time critical, this becomes an issue for the County OEM.

Issue 16: Protection of Critical Assets from natural hazards - all measures that can be taken to reduce the risks from natural hazards should be taken.

Issue 17: Public Participation – The County should make every effort to keep the public informed, interested, and willing to participate in hazard mitigation planning efforts.

Issue 18: Plan Implementation, Monitoring, and Maintenance – a Hazard Analysis Committee should be designated by the County Board to monitor and report implementation of the actions. The Plan should be updated every five years with annual reviews, keeping the Plan a living document.

Issue 19: Coordination with County’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance - hazardous prone areas within the County should be taken into consideration when updating the Comprehensive Plan and/or Zoning Ordinance. If measures, such as establishing special zones, can be taken to better protect the floodplains, the Great Lakes shoreline, fragile, environmental areas the County should incorporate such measures into their planning process.