

Appendix D

Public Participation

May 6, 2003

For Immediate Release:

Disaster, whether the result of human or natural actions, can have lasting effects on a community. In addition to the potential loss of life and property, environmental and economic damage from such an occurrence can dramatically affect a community's well-being. Disasters in the form of wildfire, flooding, severe weather, and infrastructure failure can have long-lasting effects on a community.

The ability of a community to respond effectively to a disaster depends largely on actions taken before the actual occurrence. Hazard mitigation is any action taken before, during or after a disaster to permanently eliminate or reduce the long-term risk to life and property.

The current estimate of disaster losses (estimates published before September 11, 2001) in the United States is \$50 billion annually. These estimates gauge only direct costs; short and long-term economic and social impacts could more than double the figure. Natural events – primarily meteorological such as tornadoes, wildfires, drought, floods and winter storms – accounted for 90 percent of the disaster losses. In 1998, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director told Congress that better planning is needed to reduce disaster-related costs. What followed was an initiative called "Project Impact" that encourages communities to develop plans to become as disaster resistant as possible.

The **Eastern UP Regional Planning and Development Commission** has been awarded FEMA grant funding through the Emergency Management Division of the Michigan State Police to develop Hazard Mitigation Plans for Chippewa, Luce and Mackinac Counties. This plan will contain community profiles and identify existing and potential hazards. This information will then be used to assess the risk and vulnerability presented by each hazard, evaluate alternative solutions and ultimately select realistic mitigation strategies as part of the overall plan.

Local community involvement is vital to the planning process, and to achieving it's main goal of helping communities become disaster resistant. Questions, comments or suggestions concerning this project are encouraged. Contact Ellen Benoit at (906) 635-1581 or toll free at 1(800) 562-4963 or on the web at eup-planning.org for more information.

Appendix D
Public Participation