

The Role of the State in Building Local Capacity and Commitment for Hazard Mitigation Planning

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Abstract: State governments play an important, but little understood, role in hazard mitigation through the use of a number of capacity building initiatives intended to assist communities develop hazard mitigation plans and policies. The passage of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 more than 10 years ago provides a baseline from which to assess the degree to which states have developed and applied the tools, funding mechanisms, programs, and policies to help communities achieve this important objective. In this article, several state-level measures are analyzed and discussed relative to the degree to which they facilitate an enhanced local capacity to engage in hazard mitigation activities, including planning. The measures include: state hazard mitigation staffing; state hazard mitigation funding, policies, and programs; state cost-sharing of hazard mitigation programs; and state delivery of hazard mitigation technical assistance. The findings suggest that states maintain a wide variation in state capacity and commitment to support local hazard mitigation activities, including that which is influenced by disaster-based funding. They also tend to emphasize building local governments' capacities to gain access to project funding rather than focusing on helping them identify and establish a comprehensive, proactive, and sustained risk reduction strategy grounded in land use policy. In addition, state land use policies are not well integrated into state hazard mitigation plans and capacity building initiatives. Finally, state mitigation officials believe that most local governments do not possess the capacity or commitment necessary to develop sound hazard mitigation plans or administer hazard mitigation grants.

Keywords: State hazard mitigation planning and policy, building local capacity and commitment, Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000.

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