

Hazard mitigation planning is most effective when it reflects current risk information and is strategically focused on the most significant hazards. In Colorado, state agencies and partner organizations maintain subject matter experts who continuously collect and analyze hazard data across a wide range of risks. These efforts support a strong foundation for understanding risk and guiding mitigation strategies across jurisdictions.

Critically, risk assessment data tends to remain relatively stable over a five-year period. The current federal requirement to fully update Hazard Mitigation Plans (HMPs) on this fixed interval places undue resource burdens on jurisdictions while diverting focus away from implementation. A more effective policy framework would support the adoption of dynamic, living HMPs centered around an annually updated mitigation action plan, with regular maintenance reviews conducted both annually and following disaster events. This would allow FEMA to increase the lifetime of the HMP from five years to at least seven, if not ten, years. This approach would reduce the number of resources required to keep HMPs current while not allowing plans to stagnate during the five-year lifespan. It would significantly extend the functional lifespan of plans, keeping them relevant and actionable while better aligning with the actual pace of risk evolution and mitigation progress.

Additionally, the current requirement for jurisdictions to identify at least one mitigation action per hazard is overly prescriptive and often leads to lengthy lists of actions that are infeasible or lack local support. A risk-based planning framework—which encourages jurisdictions to identify and commit to a limited number of high-impact, feasible mitigation actions—would result in more realistic, implementable strategies. When integrated into an annual and post-disaster review cycle, these strategies would remain flexible, responsive, and aligned with changing conditions and capacities over time.

In summary, FEMA should modernize its hazard mitigation planning requirements by embracing a dynamic planning model and regular maintenance cycles built around actionable priorities. These changes would reduce administrative burden, support timely and targeted implementation, and ensure that HMPs evolve in tandem with the risks they are intended to address.