

# Chapter 5

## Keeping the Plan Current

### Introduction

This chapter describes the regional process for how the plan participants will monitor, evaluate, and update the core plan, and afford the public the means to participate in the process. Additionally, it outlines the Washington State and Federal review and approval processes that lead to plan adoption.

### Plan Monitoring and Maintenance Overview

The multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan is an integral component of the Thurston Region's public safety, emergency management, and disaster recovery strategies. Plan monitoring allows the participating jurisdictions to recognize changes in hazards or changes to the built or natural environments that could alter their communities' risks. The plan participants must adapt local and regional mitigation strategies to reduce risks and strengthen their resiliency. Plan participants should afford the public opportunities to provide feedback whenever consideration is given to reprioritizing actions or revising the plan's goals and policies.

A monitoring and maintenance strategy should be responsive to changes in leadership and staffing to provide continuity in planning and coordination among the participants to keep the hazard mitigation plan relevant. Successful plan implementation relies on the participants' commitment to attend coordination meetings, participate in training, and strengthen interdepartmental and interagency staff relationships. Investing in hazard mitigation as a regular work program strengthens opportunities to implement both the plan's regional and jurisdiction-specific mitigation initiatives.

### Previous Plan Monitoring Challenges

Oversight to monitor the region's hazard mitigation plan from 2018 to 2021 was dormant until funding became available in 2021 to update the plan. The monitoring process described in the 2017 *Hazards Mitigation Plan for the Thurston Region* specified that the Emergency Management Council would perform an annual evaluation during its regularly scheduled October meeting. Plan participants would be invited to a special work

session to perform a region wide assessment of the plan. A monitoring work session was never convened since the plan was adopted in late 2017. In addition, most of the plan participants didn't convene internally to monitor or assess the plan's progress. However, some jurisdictions did actively pursue federal mitigation assistance program grant funds for their projects.

### **Explanation for Challenges**

There are several factors that contributed to the absence of plan monitoring:

- There were major changes in the representation of the Emergency Management Council members who were familiar with the plan and hazard mitigation planning principles.
- There were several staff retirements, departures, and agency/department reorganizations
- COVID-19 disruptions forced changes in communities' priorities, especially in emergency management departments.

### **Impacts**

The absence of regular plan monitoring resulted in:

- Little progress made on several regional mitigation initiatives
- A lack of monitoring performed by plan participants at the local level
- A loss of the plan participants' familiarity with the plan's purpose and goals
- A loss in the continuity of staff hazard mitigation planning expertise and capacity building

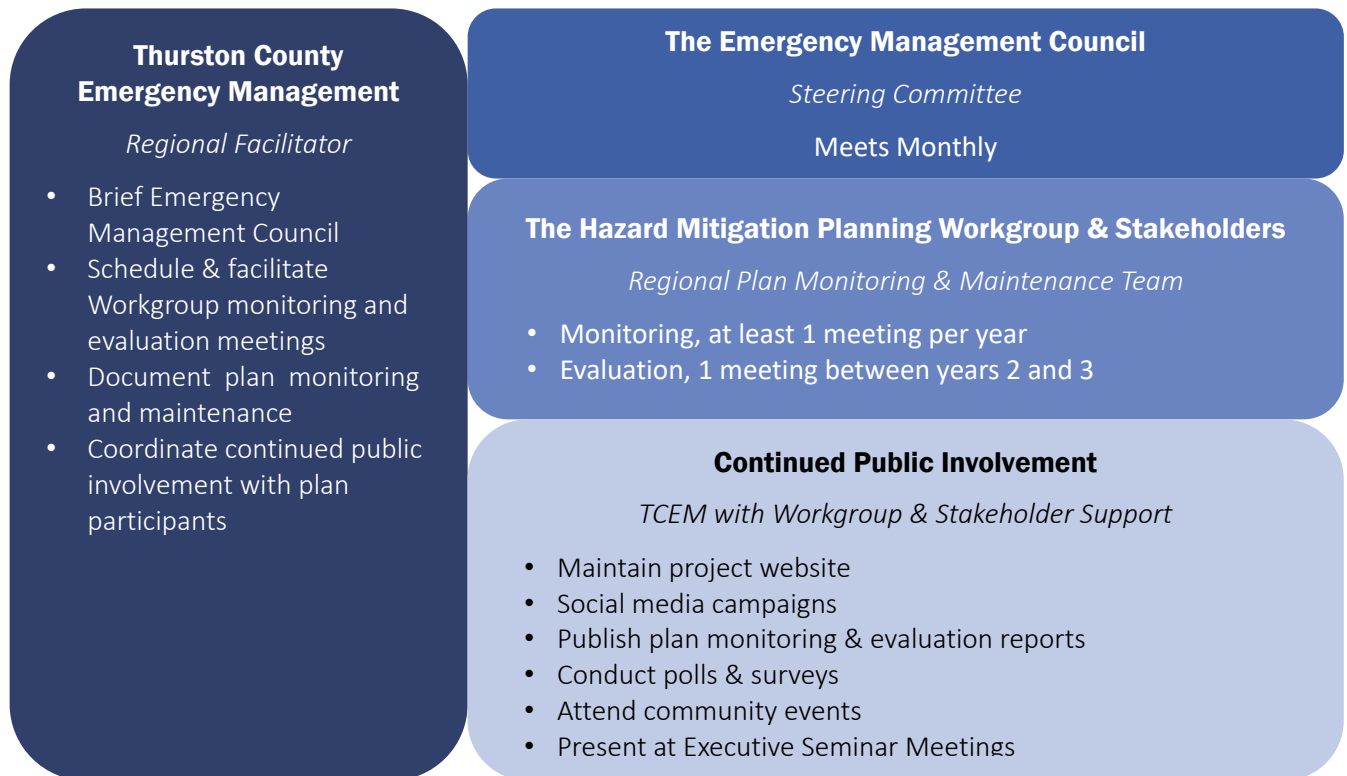
## Updated Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

### Monitoring Strategy

Plan monitoring provides the means for staff, policy makers, and community members to track the plan's progress over time. This includes any activities to implement the plan's mitigation initiatives, integrate hazard mitigation into organizational plans or functions, fulfill the plan's goals, and engage the public. Monitoring needs to occur at two levels:

1. **Local Plan Monitoring.** Each plan participant is responsible for internally tracking and reporting on their jurisdiction's mitigation actions and their risk assessment. A description of each participating jurisdiction's processes for monitoring and continued public involvement is documented in their respective annex.
2. **Regional Plan Monitoring.** A greater level of coordination among the plan participants and stakeholders is required to monitor the core plan's regional mitigation strategy, goals and policies, and the planning area's risk assessment. The roles and responsibilities of the entities involved in regional plan monitoring are described in detail in the section that follows (see figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1 Regional Plan Monitoring and Maintenance Roles and Responsibilities



## Regional Plan Monitoring and Maintenance Roles and Responsibilities

### ***Thurston County Emergency Management Council – Steering Committee***

The Thurston County Emergency Management Council (EMC) is composed of the region’s municipal and tribal emergency managers. The EMC is the plan’s Steering Committee (see Chapter 6, Plan Process and Development). The EMC’s monthly meetings include a standing agenda item for hazard mitigation. During a plan update cycle, staff brief the EMC members on the plan update process, survey

results, and seek general direction on the planning process. Between plan updates, staff, EMC members, and guests are afforded opportunities to report on variety of hazard mitigation information such as:

- Grant notices
- Upcoming trainings
- Progress on mitigation initiatives
- Planning for biannual Executive Seminars
- Staff introductions

### **The Hazard Mitigation Planning Workgroup – Regional Plan Monitoring and Maintenance Team**

During the plan update process, the Hazard Mitigation Planning Workgroup (referred to as the Workgroup) identified a new initiative for the existing Workgroup to maintain ongoing coordination to foster plan monitoring and implementation (CW-MH-13: Ongoing Hazard Mitigation Planning Workgroup Coordination).

The Workgroup will serve as the principal team to perform the regional plan monitoring and keep the plan current. The Workgroup will convene at least once a year to monitor the plan (see Figure 5.2). Momentum on plan progress is more effective when the Workgroup meets regularly. It provides the plan representatives a peer network to exchange information, maintain interagency staff relationships, build local and regional hazard mitigation planning skills, and communicate updates on best practices from agencies that provide grant funding and mitigation planning resources. Relevant and interested stakeholders will be invited to participate in the monitoring meeting.

### **Workgroup Member Expectations**

Workgroup members are expected to report on their jurisdiction's mitigation plan progress and should meet with their local planning teams prior to the Regional Plan Monitoring meetings. Alternate Workgroup members should be identified by the plan participants to represent their jurisdiction when the primary Workgroup representative is unable to attend the meetings. Plan participants should notify TCEM if there are any changes to their Workgroup representatives. Stakeholders may be invited to provide presentations on risk reduction activities their organizations are pursuing.

### **Workgroup Monitoring Activities**

Workgroup will be involved in the following monitoring activities:

- Exchange information and progress about the plan participants' integration of hazard mitigation in local plans, policies, and programs
- Share information about each jurisdiction's progress on their mitigation strategy

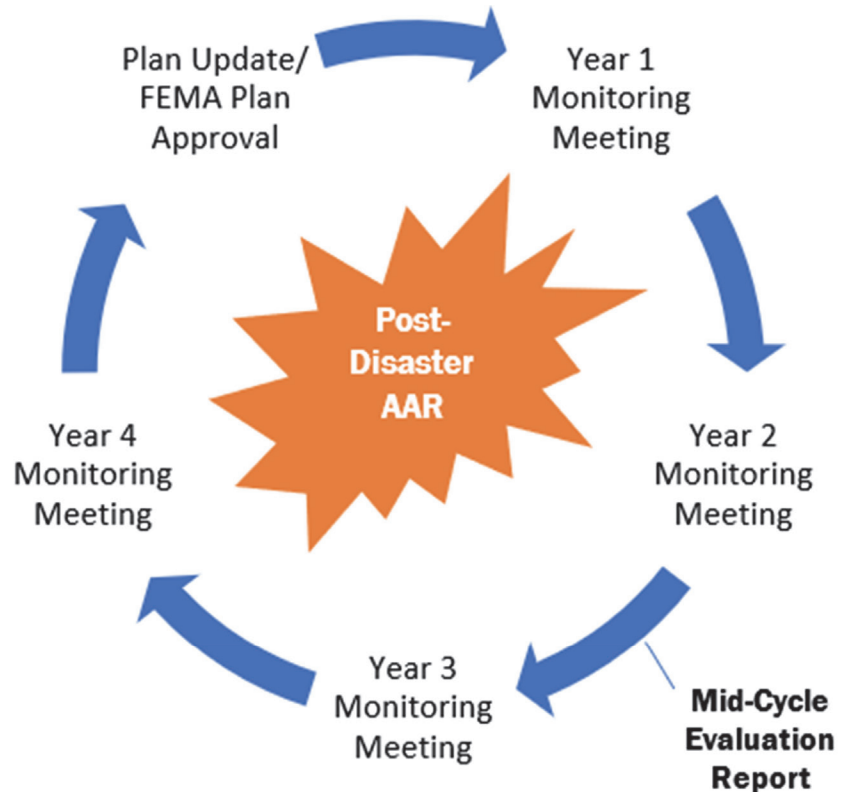
- Refine scopes of work and coordinate implementation strategies for the regional mitigation initiatives in concert with other leads and stakeholders
- Review progress on the regional mitigation initiatives
- Assess the plan's risk assessment for accuracy and provide feedback to the EMC for revisions, as necessary
- Identify opportunities to promote public awareness and conduct public outreach in support of plan maintenance activities and implementation strategies
- Obtain stakeholder feedback

### Benefits for Plan Participants

The Regional Plan Monitoring Meetings will increase members' awareness of the following:

- Hazard mitigation planning best practices and upcoming training events
- Funding notices and opportunities to implement mitigation actions
- Inter-jurisdictional peers – creating opportunities to strengthen working relationships

**Figure 5.2 Regional Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy**



### **Thurston County Emergency Management – Coordinator and Convener**

Thurston County’s Emergency Management (TCEM) department leads the region’s efforts to secure funding for each five-year plan update. TCEM also regularly provides staff, resources, and logistical support to the region’s multi-jurisdictional mitigation planning and other emergency management activities. A full-time emergency management coordinator manages the county’s mitigation and recovery programs. In this role, TCEM staff will be responsible for coordinating and facilitating the plan’s Regional Plan Monitoring and maintenance activities.

To support the regional plan monitoring and maintenance process, TCEM will:

1. Maintain a working copy of the Hazard Mitigation Plan and its data sources
2. Maintain a roster of the Workgroup members and their alternates and key mitigation stakeholders
3. Establish meeting schedules, set agendas, and invite participants and stakeholders to the monitoring and evaluation meetings
4. Document, distribute, and publish the notes and key findings from monitoring activities
5. Distribute notices for funding opportunities, training events, webinars, and other information that supports plan monitoring, maintenance, and implementation

6. Provide monthly briefings to the EMC
7. Perform any necessary revisions to the core hazard mitigation plan that are recommended by the Workgroup and approved by the EMC
8. Plan and coordinate public engagement activities with the plan participants

TCEM will distribute the meeting notes to Workgroup Members, stakeholders, and the EMC. TCEM will brief the EMC on the outcomes of the meeting.

### **Evaluation Strategy**

The evaluation process examines the overall effectiveness of the plan in meeting its goals. The same roles, responsibilities and relationships identified for Regional Plan Monitoring applies to the plan’s evaluation process. The Workgroup will serve as the principal team to evaluate the plan and provide feedback to TCEM staff who will prepare the Mid-Cycle Evaluation Report. Between plan update cycles, there are two touch points when the plan will be evaluated:

1. **Mid-Cycle Evaluation Report** – performed between the second and third years after FEMA approves the updated plan.
2. **Post-Disaster After-Action Review** – performed 45 to 60 days after a federal disaster declaration or following a major hazard event.

## Mid-Cycle Evaluation Report

A Mid-Cycle Hazard Mitigation Plan Evaluation Report will summarize key findings about the plan's progress that the plan participants or Workgroup Members can readily share with their boards, commissions, and councils. Messaging about mitigation success stories and challenges can be shared with communities through news releases, social media, and presentations to community organizations.

TCEM will convene the Workgroup and stakeholders near the first quarter of the third year after the plan is approved. The Mid-Cycle Evaluation process will evaluate the following areas:

1. Hazard events that occurred during the reporting period
2. Changes in risks for the hazards that are profiled in the risk assessment
3. A review of the Regional Mitigation Strategy and the status of each initiative
4. Mitigation success stories
5. Changes in capabilities or conditions that impact the plan's implementation
6. Progress toward achieving the plan's goals
7. Recommendations for changes to the plan

TCEM will draft the Mid-Cycle Hazard Mitigation Plan Report following the template shown in Appendix D. The draft report will be distributed by email to Workgroup members and stakeholders for review and feedback.

Upon completion of the draft report, TCEM will present the final report to the EMC during their next available meeting. If there are recommendations for plan changes, staff will seek direction from the EMC to revise the plan. A copy of the final report and any subsequent actions will be made available as follows:

- Distribution by email to Workgroup members, stakeholders, and EMC members
- Publication on the project website

## Post-Disaster After-Action Review (AAR)

Information about disasters while it is fresh in the minds of first responders, emergency managers, public works personnel, transit operators, and others can benefit hazard mitigation planning efforts. This information can be used to make revisions to the current plan or referenced for the next plan update.

Major disasters that result in a federal disaster declaration, or a major hazard event that activates the Thurston County Emergency Coordination Center warrant an assessment of the conditions and documentation of lessons learned. When post-disaster conditions allow (approximately 45-60 days after an event), TCEM will schedule a joint AAR Meeting with the EMC, the Workgroup, other staff members involved in the event, and stakeholders to assess future mitigation planning needs. Alternatively, Workgroup members and stakeholders could be invited to another AAR

to assess mitigation needs. A neutral entity may be invited to facilitate the discussion among the meeting participants. The AAR will assess relevant mitigation issues about the event with the following types of questions:

1. Did the disaster conditions or intensity of the hazard event require a change in the plan's risk assessment?
2. What community assets were lost or impacted by the event?
3. Did the event reveal unknown vulnerabilities for community assets?
4. Did any implemented mitigation measures produce the desired outcomes to reduce losses?
5. What types of additional hazard mitigation actions should be considered to reduce future losses?

TCEM or the facilitator will take notes and summarize the findings in an AAR report. Like the Mid-Cycle Report, the AAR report should be circulated for feedback among the meeting participants and the final report shared with the Workgroup, EMC, stakeholders, and affected parties.

### Process for Plan Revisions

Periodic revisions can also make the five-year plan update less difficult. Changes to the mitigation plan are initiated based on outcomes that are realized as part of Regional Plan Monitoring, the Mid-Cycle Evaluation, or from information collected during an AAR following a major disaster.

Changes can also be made as needed to reflect the needs of the jurisdictions. For example, changes are made when a new planning partner joins the region's hazard mitigation planning process and adopts their plan after the five-year update is approved by FEMA. Each jurisdiction is responsible for maintaining their annex. TCEM is responsible for overseeing all revisions to the core plan.

### Minor Revisions

Adding new maps, data, or making minor corrections will be handled by the Thurston County Emergency Management.

### Major Revisions

Substantive revisions to the mitigation plan would include changing the plan's goals, adding new mitigation initiatives, revising the risk rating of a hazard, or adding a new hazard profile. These are most likely to occur during a plan update process. Between plan update cycles, substantive changes to the core plan that are recommended by the Workgroup should be approved by the EMC. The public should also be afforded an opportunity to provide feedback.

Major changes to a plan participant's annex are the responsibility of the affected jurisdiction. Depending on a plan participant's approval process, such revisions may require approval by the jurisdiction's governing body.

## Distribution of Revisions

Thurston County Emergency Management staff will maintain a master copy of the plan and distribute updates to all plan participants with adopted plans. Copies of revisions made to the plan and any correspondence from the state or FEMA will be shared with the plan participants. Any local agency that makes changes to the contents of its local annex should provide Thurston County Emergency Management a copy of updated annex and any supporting documentation that was used to revise its annex.

When possible, plan updates will be sent by email or by other electronic file sharing services. A current version of the plan will be available online at [co.thurston.wa.us](http://co.thurston.wa.us). Alternate plan formats may be requested through Thurston County Emergency Management.

## Procedure to Add a Community to the Plan

All local governments and special districts were encouraged to participate in the regional hazard mitigation plan update process. Plan participants that attended Workgroup meetings have up to one year, following FEMA approval of the plan, to prepare and adopt an annex to the hazards mitigation plan through the region's planning framework.

The following steps outline the process that the region's tribes, local governments, and state colleges can follow to develop and adopt a hazard mitigation plan, if they are an active participant to the process.

1. Interested communities should contact Thurston County Emergency Management.
2. Thurston County Emergency Management will notify the EMC of the community's intent to join the regional plan. County staff will direct the community to resources for building a plan including a copy of current plan, the most current FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Handbook, online resources, and contact information for state and federal mitigation technical support staff, and the necessary templates and instructions for developing an annex.
3. The community is responsible for meeting all the federal plan requirements that are consistent with 44 CFR Section 201.6 (201.7 for tribes).
4. The community submits their draft plan to Thurston County Emergency Management for review to ensure conformance with the regional plan.
5. The community follows the steps described in the "Plan Review Process" and "Adoption Process" sections that follow.

## The Plan Update Process

Hazard mitigation planning is a multi-step process that may take between one to two years to complete. Sufficient time must be allotted to educate plan participants about the purpose of hazard mitigation planning and the requirements for developing a plan. Multijurisdictional plans are costly to produce,

local funding is scarce, and the availability of federal mitigation grants to update plans are highly competitive and often insufficient. It may take 12 months or more to secure funding to perform a plan update and local governments need to establish work programs and approve budgets prior to starting work on a plan.

To accommodate this need, the EMC and the Workgroup will use the following schedule to guide a future plan update:

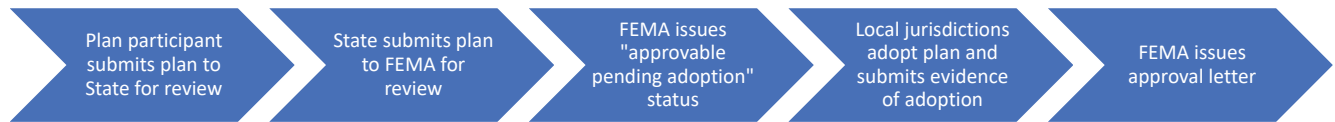
1. In the second year after FEMA approves a plan, the EMC will coordinate with partners to apply for planning grants.
2. Assuming funds are secure by the third year, the plan partners will identify the lead staff, establish work programs, refine the scope of work, and approve budgets to develop their plans.
3. At the beginning of the fourth year, the EMC and the plan partners will initiate the planning process.
4. In the latter half of the fifth year, a draft plan will be available to the public, and submitted to the state and FEMA for review.
5. The plan partners will adopt the updated plan within one to two months following a FEMA review where no revisions are necessary.

## State and Federal Hazard Mitigation Plan Review Process

Prior to adoption, jurisdictions must first submit their plans to Washington State Emergency Management Division (WAEMD) and FEMA for review to ensure compliance with the Disaster Mitigation Act planning requirements in 44 CFR Section 201.6. The review also provides an opportunity for the state and FEMA reviewers to offer feedback that supports the development of effective mitigation strategies (See Figure 5.3).

Each jurisdiction performs an internal review of their plan using FEMA’s Local Mitigation Plan Review Checklist. If a community believes the plan satisfies all the planning requirements, the community submits the plan for the review.



**Figure 5.3 Hazard Mitigation Plan State and Federal Review Process and Approval**

## Washington State Review

- The State Hazard Mitigation Strategist has up to 30 days to review the plan and provide feedback.
- If no substantive revisions are required, WAEMD will forward the plan to FEMA Region X for review.

## FEMA Review

- FEMA may take up to 45 days to review the plan and provide feedback.
- If no revisions are necessary, FEMA issues an “approvable pending adoption” status meaning that the plan is ready for federal approval.
- After a plan participant officially adopts the plan and provides FEMA evidence of adoption, FEMA will approve the Plan.

## Unmet Requirements

- If WAEMD or FEMA identify unmet planning requirements, they notify the community and indicate what part of the plan requires additional process or documentation to satisfy the unresolved requirements.

## Adoption Process

Adoption by a jurisdiction’s governing body demonstrates the community’s commitment to fulfilling the plan’s mitigation goals, their mitigation strategies, and their public engagement activities. Adoption legitimizes the plan and authorizes designated individuals or departments to implement the plan’s recommendations. Each participant will follow their established processes including adequate public notice for their governing body to adopt the plan. Through the multi-jurisdictional planning process, participants have one year to adopt the plan after receiving an “approvable pending adoption” notification from FEMA.

## Adoption Requirements

All participants to the Hazards Mitigation Plan for the Thurston Region, or an update thereof, must adopt the core plan including chapters 1 through 6 and the appendices. In addition, each agency must adopt their annex. The core plan plus the jurisdiction’s annex constitutes a complete plan.

## Federal Approval and Plan Expiration

The final step for approval involves submitting evidence of adoption to WAEMD and FEMA. FEMA certifies the plan and issues an approval letter which includes the date of approval. The first jurisdiction to formally adopt the plan initiates the five-year approval period and sets the expiration date for all the plan participants' plans, regardless of when they adopt their plan. The approval letter is amended each time one or more communities submit evidence of adoption.

## Continued Public Involvement

During the plan update process, the workgroup highlighted the importance of the Regional Hazard Mitigation Public Outreach Strategy initiative. This was the highest scoring action among the regional initiatives assessed through the benefit-cost review process. The action will continue countywide outreach and education activities to inform all sectors of the community about natural hazards and steps people and organizations can take to reduce their risks. Attention will focus on socially vulnerable populations who are at higher risk. The plan participants and the Emergency Management Council will continue engaging plan stakeholders, residents, property owners, and businesses about the risks the region faces from the hazards identified in this plan. The Workgroup and TCEM will explore opportunities

to educate and involve the public about the region's mitigation strategy. Ongoing public outreach activities will occur regularly at the following annual activities:

- Summer Weather Hazards Webinar
- The Fall/Winter Weather Hazards Webinar
- Thurston County Fair
- Thurston County Emergency Preparedness Expo
- Thurston County Flood Bulletin
- Executive and Management Seminars

TCEM and the Workgroup will consider additional opportunities to promote and educate the public about hazard mitigation within existing emergency preparedness education and outreach programs. Additional activities could include:

- Developing a multijurisdictional online hazards information portal
- Conducting an annual short survey or series of polls
- Social media campaigns
- Attend other community events
- Share information through utility inserts and e-newsletters

Copies of the plan will be maintained online at Thurston County Emergency Management's website at [co.thurston.wa.us/em](https://co.thurston.wa.us/em) and at Thurston Regional Planning Council's website at [www.trpc.org/hazards](https://www.trpc.org/hazards).