

Urgent News Release #1

Richland County Emergency Management

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RICHLAND COUNTY BEGINS HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

(**Richland Center, WI**) Richland County, like the rest of the State of Wisconsin, is vulnerable to a variety of disasters. Wisconsin has incurred disaster-related damages totaling \$3 billion in the last three decades but future losses can be reduced through mitigation activities. A recent study by the Multi-hazard Mitigation Council shows that each dollar spent on mitigation saves society an average of four dollars. Since 1993 more than 400 disasters have occurred in the United States, affecting communities in all 50 states, costing the country over \$500 million dollars per week and killing over 24,000 people.

Mitigation actions reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from hazards. These preventative actions can be as simple as elevating a furnace in a basement that sometimes has water on the floor. Mitigation can also have a comprehensive approach such as relocating buildings out of the floodplain or strengthening critical facilities to prevent wind damage and provide stronger shelter.

In an effort to better prepare Richland County to manage its vulnerability to disaster, Darin Gudgeon, Richland County Emergency Management Director, applied for and

received a Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) plan update grant. This goal of this project is to complete an approvable plan update, which will serve as a roadmap that outlines potential cost-effective hazard mitigation activities, some of which might be available for future grant funding. Hazard mitigation plans and projects reduce overall risks to the population and structures while also reducing reliance on funding from actual disaster declarations. For example, the rigorous building standards adopted by 20,000 communities across the country are saving the nation more than \$1.1 billion a year in prevented flood damages.

The plan is designed to look at the risks and vulnerabilities that the county faces from natural disaster and to develop mitigation strategies that might reduce future losses. As part of this planning process, Gudgeon is assembling a workgroup to review and guide the planning activities. The workgroup is reviewing initial background information about Richland County and has begun identifying strategies that might help.

Gudgeon stated, “I am very excited about this part of the planning process. The input from the workgroup can have long-lasting impacts, making Richland County safer and more disaster-resistant.”

FEMA has recognized the importance of having members of the community involved in the process and Gudgeon would like to ensure that all interested members of the community have an opportunity to provide input into the plan. If you are interested in more information about the plan or would like to provide input into the plan, please contact Darin Gudgeon at (608) 647-8187.