

Minutes of the
Nevada Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee
23 May 2007

The Nevada Hazard Mitigation Planning Committee met from 9:45 until 12:12 p.m. on Wednesday, May 23, 2007 in the Mayor's Conference Room, Henderson City Hall, Henderson, Nevada. These minutes and related documents are posted on the Web site for the committee (<http://www.nbmgs.unr.edu/nhmpe/nhmpe.htm>).

Attendees included:

Elizabeth Ashby, Nevada Division of Emergency Management (DEM), who also held the proxy for Gale Fraser*, Clark County Regional Flood Control District
Bob Ashworth*, Nevada Division of Forestry
Curt Chandler, City of Henderson
Press Clewe*, Washoe County resident
Mike Cyphers*, Henderson Emergency Management
Gary Dunn*, City of Sparks
Terri Garside, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology
Margie Gunn Nutman*, Lincoln County Emergency Management
Elwood Nutman, Lincoln County Resident
Werner Hellmer, Department of Development Services, Clark County Building Department, who also held the proxy for Ron Lynn* Department of Development Services, Clark County Building Department
Glade Myler, Office of the Attorney General
Jonathan Price*, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology
Jim Reagan*, Sierra Pacific and Nevada Power
Jeanne Ruefer*, Washoe County Department of Water Resources
Christine Springer, UNLV
Jim Walker*, Nevada Department of Transportation

* indicates a member of the Board of Directors.

Members of the Board of Directors of the Committee who were unable to attend include:

Rick Diebold*, Las Vegas Fire Department
Christine James*, Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Division of Water Resources

A quorum of directors (seven of the 13) was present.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Jon Price chaired the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM February 1, 2007

The minutes of the 1 February 2007 meeting of the committee were unanimously approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Proposal Review Subcommittee

Elizabeth Ashby reported that the proposals reviewed and approved for passing forward at the meeting held on February 1st were sent to FEMA. The only exception was the proposal from the City of Reno for installing seismic guards on the elevator in the Reno City Hall. That proposal was not forwarded to FEMA because the required benefit-cost analysis (BCA) was not provided with the proposal. We should

hear back from FEMA soon whether the proposals that were forwarded will receive funding, and the formal award notification for the approved proposals should be received by the end of July.

There will be another grant proposal cycle starting at the end of October to the first of November, 2007. Elizabeth Ashby will send out the notification, hopefully by the end of July, so people can start working on their proposals and BCAs.

Marge Gunn, Rick Martin, Cathy Ludwig, Rick Diebold, and Curt Chandler attended the March 2007 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant National Evaluation Panel held in Landsdowne, VA. Curt and Marge reported that, because of conflict issues, they did not review proposals from Nevada. Curt said the review process “was kind of a subjective feeling based on the overall gut reaction on how clearly the proposal was written and how likely it was to achieve the objective.” Curt said that his advice to those preparing proposals is to:

- be very specific as to how each of the measures being used will be met
- demonstrate that there are sufficient staff and resources to achieve the goal
- demonstrate you’ve thought through the process
- state who is going to be involved in the project and what their role will be.

Some of the proposals he reviewed had been prepared by consulting firms, but the consultants’ references weren’t known. Those proposals weren’t ranked as high by the reviewers because they didn’t know if the consultants were qualified to prepare the proposals.

Marge Gunn reported that the proposals were reviewed by teams comprised of federal, state, and local officials, with up to ten members. Proposals were given to teams of two within that group. Marge said she was paired with someone from FEMA to review a planning proposal submitted by a very small rural fire department. After she and her teammate each reviewed the proposal, it turned out that their ratings were quite different. When it was time to report on their individual ratings, Marge went first and said that she gave it 60 out of 100 available points. Her FEMA teammate responded that she gave the proposal only 20 points. Marge explained that she felt, coming from a rural community herself, she understood the process the fire department went through in putting their proposal together and felt she understood the applicant’s needs better because it was a proposal dealing with a rural area, whereas the other team member didn’t have the same knowledge and understanding. Marge said that, with her justification, the group rated the proposal at 60 points, but the FEMA representative stuck by her rating of 20.

Marge said what helped her in the rating process was that FEMA provided the reviewers with a criteria sheet to assist them in rating the proposals. She said that the most difficult part was trying to fill in the blanks that aren’t filled in. Often the applicants don’t give the full picture in the proposal’s supporting documentation, and that makes it difficult to fully-understand the proposal. Marge said that her team reviewed a total of 26 proposals.

Marge also said that she feels it is very important that those on the NHMPC Proposal Review Subcommittee know Nevada and the urban and rural Nevada issues. Having members from both the urban and rural areas allows the proposals to be reviewed fairly.

Elizabeth Ashby explained that the review process is comprised of three groups that reviewed specific areas of the proposals. Those groups were the panel reviewers, special technicians that reviewed the BCAs to make sure they met FEMA’s financial criteria, and engineers that looked at the feasibility of the projects.

Marge Gunn also reported that FEMA told the group that of the 92 people attending the review panel the week that she attended, they had consumed, in addition to other snack provided, 96 lbs of M&Ms.

Jon Price requested that, during the next proposal review process, at least two people that attended the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant National Evaluation Panel, pre-review the proposals submitted by Nevada before they are submitted to the NHMPC and FEMA. He felt that since we now have experienced people on the NHMPC, the proposals can be pre-reviewed in order to make sure they are more competitive at the national level and that they will meet the criteria for the National Evaluation Panel.

Jim Reagan suggested that those that attended the National Review Panel provide a bulleted-list of important items to keep in mind while preparing the proposals so they won't miss any important information.

ACTION ITEM: The minutes of this meeting will serve as the start of the bulleted list of important items to include in the preparation of proposals. Elizabeth Ashby will forward the list to those that attended the National Review Panel and ask them to include any items they feel are missing. The bulleted list will then be made available at the beginning of the new proposal process to assist those in their proposal preparation.

Planning Subcommittee

Jim Walker reported that Section One of the revised State Hazard Mitigation Plan has been updated, and they are now working on Section Two. They are planning on revising one section at a time. It is being revised following the crosswalk that FEMA prepared. FEMA is included in the Plan updates so DEM can make sure it is following FEMA's guidelines.

The updated section and the sections that they are currently working on are posted on DEM's Web site (dem.state.nv.us) under the heading "mitigation." The updated Plan should be completed in plenty of time to meet FEMA's deadline of the end of September 2007.

The next meeting of the Subcommittee is scheduled for June 1, 2007 and will be teleconferenced.

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Elizabeth Ashby updated the Committee on the following FEMA grant programs:

HMGP 1540 – Waterfall fire funding

HMGP 1583 – S. Nevada Floods awards

HMGP 1629 – Final applications submitted and funding distribution

PDM 04/05 – HAZUS Database update

PDM 06 – Elko Band Council Plan development

PDM 07 – FEMA selected applications

EARTHQUAKE HAZARD IN NEVADA – Jon Price, State Geologist

Jon Price gave a presentation on the earthquake hazard in Nevada. Jon said that the risk we have is actually the hazard times what is at risk. The probability of a Magnitude 6.5 or greater earthquake in the next 50 years in the Reno-Carson City-Minden, Nevada area is between 50 and 60%. The risk for this area is as high as the Santa Barbara, California area. The U. S. Geological Survey's probability information can be found at earthquake.usgs.gov/. Earthquakes have occurred throughout Nevada. There is a good chance that residents in the Reno-Carson City area will feel a large earthquake.

Hazards include ground shaking, ruptures of the ground, fires, liquefaction, landslides, problems with communications, power outages, hazardous waste spills, etc.

FEMA's HAZUS Loss Estimation model projects that, on the average, Nevada could have about 55 million dollars of earthquake damage a year. Since Nevada doesn't experience a large earthquake every year, it's estimated that the actual cost of a large earthquake in the Reno-Carson City or Las Vegas area could cost in the billions of dollars.

The Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (NBMG) prepared HAZUS runs for each of the Nevada county seats. The runs were based on the most likely earthquake that could occur in that county. The results can be found in NBMG Open File Report 06-1, which can be obtained at www.nbmg.unr.edu.

The Genoa Fault, in the Carson City area, has the potential of producing a magnitude 7.1 earthquake, which could result in up to 2.5 billion in economic losses.

There are active faults nearly everywhere in Nevada. It would be rare to find a place in Nevada that didn't have a damage-producing fault. The lowest hazard appears to be in the southern tip of Nevada, near Laughlin. However, they are subject to the affects of earthquakes on the San Andreas Fault in California.

There are actions that can be taken to mitigate injury and damage from falling items during an earthquake. A few simple actions to take are securing bookcases to the walls, strapping down computers, securing ceiling tiles, and strapping water heaters.

Jon's presentation and additional information on earthquake hazards in Nevada can be found on the Nevada Hazard Planning Committee's Web site (www.nbmg.unr.edu/nhmpc/nhmpc), at the Nevada Earthquake Safety Council (www.nbmg.unr.edu/nesc), the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology (www.nbmg.unr.edu), the Nevada Seismological Laboratory (www.seismo.unr.edu), and the Nevada Division of Emergency Management's (www.dem.state.nv.us) Web sites.

Jon reported that there was a bill submitted to the Nevada Legislature regarding Unreinforced Masonry Buildings. Glade Myler reported that it is still active and making its way through the committees.

WILD LAND AND WILD LAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRE HAZARD IN NEVADA

Bob Ashworth gave a presentation on the Nevada Division of Forestry's Urban Interface Fire Hazard Plan.

Due to climatic changes, we are probably going to see a dramatic change in our landscape over the next 40 to 50 years.

Bob reported that of the ~260 communities at some level of risk from wildfires, 218 have completed Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP). Of the 218 completed CWPPs, 16 communities are at extreme risk and 50 that are ranked at high risk. They are working at lowering the risk down to low or moderate.

What they're finding in the rural communities is that the conditions of the fire fuels have changed so significantly that, regardless of the protective structures they put in place, we can have such a significant event that it can run right through any one of the protection structures they put in place and threaten any community. They are attempting to decrease the severity of wildfires by either introducing fire (controlled burns), then cleaning them up, in areas of high fire probability or by decreasing the fuel loads by removing underbrush so they can control the severity of wild fires in that area. Some of the underbrush that is removed is utilized as biomass fuel. The Ely School District uses some of the biomass to provide heat and power.

They are seeing a large amount of mortality in vegetation. One predator is the Pinyon Pine Ips Beetle, which has left a large number of dead standing trees, thereby increasing the fire hazard. Fine fuel loads (cheatgrass), due to lack of precipitation, has increased the fire hazard in southern Nevada. Cheatgrass thrives on disturbances like wildland fire. The more a landscape burns, the more dominant cheatgrass becomes and the more acres that are converted to it over time. Bob said that they liken one pound of cheatgrass to about one gallon of gasoline. Although it may not seem like much, when you have as much as 1 to 1.5 tons per acre of cheatgrass, it has the potential to cause an incredibly intense fire burning through an area.

They took a look at the fire history, decade-by-decade in the state and the total fire activity in the 1990s surpassed all other decades of historical data. They believe that the 2000s will surpass the 1990s plus all the other decades. On the average, Nevada has about 1,200 wildland fires a year. Glade Myler reported that last year's fires in Nevada depleted the Nevada Disaster Relief Fund.

Immediately following a fire, they implement measures to mitigate conditions that threaten public safety. They attempt to stabilize stream channels to help prevent mud and debris flows and try to suppress blowing ash and dust.

The bottom line is they are trying to prepare communities as best they can. With the realization that, as fires come off larger landscapes, about all they can do is try to be well enough in front of the advancing flame front, move people out of harm's way, then do all they can to stop the fire.

Bob's presentation can be found on the NHMPC Web site (www.nbmng.unr.edu/nhmipc/nhmipc.htm).

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday, August 1, 2007 - after the NESC meeting at approximately 3:00 p.m. (Carson City at the Nevada Division of Emergency Management facility (2478 Fairview Drive))

Wednesday, November 14, 2007 – after the NESC meeting (Las Vegas)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Christine Springer, Executive Director, UNLV Department of Public Administration, distributed a brochure on UNLV's Executive Master of Science Degree in Crisis and Emergency Management program. It is an 18-month degree; 6 weeks are completed on campus, and the remaining are completed on-line. The cost of the degree is payable in three installments and totals \$26,250.

Elizabeth Ashby requested Jeanne Ruefer give a talk on flood hazards in Nevada at the August 1, 2007 NHMPC meeting. Jeanne accepted and said that either she or someone from her office would be happy to give a presentation.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Terri Garside, 11 June 2007

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