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CASS COUNTY NEWS RELEASE

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Public Input Wanted as County Updates Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

Tornadoes, straight-line winds, ice storms, blizzards, flooding, wildland fires and droughts are the kinds of natural disasters most likely to cause widespread economic loss and personal hardship in Cass County. Taking steps to minimize the damage from a natural disaster is key to the County's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan (MHMP); and, as the County works to update the plan, we want to hear from the public.

The Cass County Office of Emergency Management is currently working with U-Spatial at the University of Minnesota Duluth to update the County's plan. Also working on the update is a planning team of representatives from County Departments, local municipalities, school districts and other key stakeholders, such as utility providers.

The Cass County MHMP is a multi-jurisdictional plan that covers Cass County, including the cities of Backus, Bena, Boy River, Cass Lake, Chickamaw Beach, East Gull Lake, Federal Dam, Hackensack, Lake Shore, Longville, Pillager, Pine River, Remer and Walker. The plan additionally covers the portion of the City of Motley that is located within Cass County. The Cass County MHMP also incorporates the concerns and needs of townships, school districts, and other stakeholders participating in the plan.

"Hazard mitigation planning is a central part of our emergency management program," said Chad Emery, Cass County Emergency Management Director. "Understanding the natural hazards that can cause serious impact to our communities and taking action to reduce or eliminate the impact of future disasters makes us more resilient. Hazard mitigation helps us to break the cycle of damage and repair caused by things like flooding, ice storms and severe wind events that can damage property, stress economies and threaten life safety in our county."

Examples of hazard mitigation include improvement of roads and culverts that experience repetitive flooding; construction of safe rooms at campgrounds, public parks, mobile home parks or schools to protect lives in the event of tornados or severe wind events; burying powerlines that may fail due to heavy snow, ice or wind storms; ensuring timely emergency communication to the public through warning sirens and mass notification systems, and conducting public awareness and education campaigns to help people to be prepared to take safe action before, during, or following a hazard event. Some mitigation activities may be eligible for future FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant funding.

As part of the planning process, Cass County is seeking feedback from residents and businesses from across the County to incorporate into the plan:

- What are the natural hazards you feel pose the greatest risk to your community?
- Have you experienced a previous disaster event?

- What concerns do you have, and what sorts of mitigation actions or projects do you feel would help, to reduce the damages of potential future events for your personal property, your community and/or the County as a whole?

Comments, concerns and/or questions regarding natural disasters and potential mitigation actions to be included into the plan update process should be submitted to Cass County Emergency Management.

There will be additional opportunities for public feedback throughout the planning process. A draft of the plan will be posted on the County website for public review prior to submission of the plan to the State of Minnesota. Future news releases will be shared with the media to notify the public of these opportunities.

The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) requires counties to update their plan every 5 years to maintain eligibility for FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant programs.

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