

Jefferson Parish Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan 2025 Update Meeting Minutes

Hazard Mitigation Committee Meeting #2: Problems and Risk

April 23, 2024 - 10:00AM to 12:00PM

JEDCO Conference Center

701A Churchill Pkwy, Westwego, LA 70094

Jamelyn Trucks, project principal with AtkinsRéalis, opened the meeting by welcoming those in attendance both in person as well as online via Microsoft Teams. She then offered a brief overview of the agenda items and had everyone give a brief introduction of themselves. Mrs. Trucks then refreshed the committee on AtkinsRéalis' role in the planning process and introduced her team members. Afterwards, she gave a recap of the first committee meeting and provided photos from the first public meeting, which had occurred the previous month. Mrs. Trucks also announced that the website is now up and running and shared a link to the public survey with the group.

The committee was then briefed on the progress being made in the planning process, including the commencement of the site visits for the Repetitive Loss Area Analysis update. A call for projects had also begun for the Coastal Strategic Action Plan that will be incorporated in this planning process. Mrs. Trucks then clarified for the group the meaning of a Repetitive Loss or Severe Repetitive Loss property. She showed the group a graphic depicting the different steps in the planning process, emphasizing the fact that the group is currently in the mitigation phase. At this point, committee member Bob Bales of Kenner asked how this informed a company like Entergy being part of this plan. Mrs. Trucks answered by talking about raised standards and building codes, emphasizing that Entergy is a critical entity and is responsible for many critical facilities. Jimmy Aitken with Entergy furthered this by talking about the substation just built in the Town of Grand Isle being a preventative measure being taken by Entergy. Kyle Galloway, proxy for O'Neil Marlborough, then asked about the distinction between prevention and mitigation, to which Mrs. Trucks clarified that mitigation applies to new construction, whereas prevention focuses on elements of the environment which do not yet exist.

Moving forward in the agenda, Lindsey McCoy, lead planner with AtkinsRéalis, joined via Microsoft Teams to explain the hazard ranking and hazard identification process. Mrs. McCoy described the four categories used to group hazards, and how each hazard must include a discussion of each of these five factors: previous occurrences, probability of future occurrences, location, extent, and impact/vulnerability. She explained that the team will decide which hazards pose the greatest threat based on committee feedback received during today's activity. She provided the group with a brief overview of the Priority Risk Index (PRI), explaining how it is used to get a numeric ranking for how large of a threat a hazard is to the community. Mrs. McCoy went on to explain that at the end of this process, the committee will decide on weighting these factors (e.g., warning time can be weighted the highest), so that the PRI can be altered to fit the committee's specific priorities. Finally, she gave an overview of the hazard ranking table that the group will be working on today, as well as a preview of the worksheet.

Mrs. Trucks then further clarified the three categories of risk (high, moderate, and low) and explained where the hazards were ranked during the last planning cycle. She encouraged the committee to think

about whether the risk has increased since then, and if so, how. She added that this information is based on high level data collection, not localized, but that is the purpose of this meeting, since we know that national data sets do not always capture everything.

Mrs. Trucks went on to provide an overview of each hazard and their previous ranking during the last planning cycle. At this point, Mr. Bales announced that after the conversation at the previous committee meeting about the effects of the Mississippi River running exceptionally low, he had a conversation with a gentleman about the effects on port infrastructure and its relationship to sea level rise as a hazard. Mrs. Trucks clarified that this instance would most likely play more into the drought and subsidence hazards, but that conversation will absolutely be a part of the process further down the line.

When discussing hailstorms, Mrs. Trucks raised the question of its classification as a moderate risk level given the recent increase in local frequency. She also pointed out Louisiana's location-based vulnerability to lightning in contrast to the fact that there was only one reported death due to lightning since the last plan update. She then highlighted that the area has already experienced a greater prevalence of tornadoes compared to previous rankings and brought up the discussion of earthquake fault lines that was had at the first public meeting. Mrs. Trucks then opened the floor and began the discussion on the potential for adding three new hazards to the plan: fog, levee failure, and saltwater intrusion.

When discussing fog, Michelle Gonzales asked if it was being considered as an addition to the state hazard mitigation plan, to which Mrs. McCoy could not find any evidence of. However, Mrs. Trucks discussed the need to reach out to that committee to further clarify the matter. Madason Priore with the city of Gretna then added that the I-55 crash was caused by a combination of fog with wildfires, creating a "super fog", which begs the question of which one is really the threat. Mrs. Trucks then suggested the possibility of simply speaking specifically to it instead of making fog its own hazard depending on what the state hazard mitigation plan update committee decides to do. Randi Ezell with Jefferson Parish then posed the question of what are actual hazards and what are only consequences of hazards. Mrs. Trucks pointed out that local areas are seeing greater differentials in evening and morning temperatures and dew points, which may be contributing to the problem.

Speaking about levee failure, Angela DeSoto of Jefferson Parish Planning commented that a levee isn't going to fail simply because it is sitting there, but it would only fail as a result of an actual hazard or event such as sea level rise. Mr. Galloway then mentioned river floods and suggested that even though they are currently not listed as a separate hazard, they could be further addressed within the flood hazard discussion. Mrs. Trucks then said that the committee seemed to reach a consensus that levee failure is an outcome and not its own hazard. Ms. Gonzales further commented that levee failure may be spoken about in the storm surge section regarding Hurricane Ida, but that some proposals have been written as a specific mitigation effort to reenforce the levee itself without mentioning another specific primary hazard.

With regards to saltwater intrusion, Mrs. DeSoto expressed the opinion that it is caused by both drought and subsidence, specifically for the southern areas of the Parish. Jeff Bonura with Jefferson Parish BBEC then clarified that the main cause may in fact be droughts in other states further up the Mississippi River, and so it may not be a result of local level drought in the first place. Andrew Roubion of Gretna then questioned the consistency over time of the drought and trends of river water levels. Mrs. Trucks further questioned whether there is a pattern, and if we have had enough time to really see the long-term effects. Ms. Gonzales then suggested it may be better to include saltwater intrusion as a part of the

discussion under drought for now, and possibly revisit its inclusion as its own hazard during the next plan update based on long-term data available. Mrs. DeSoto then suggested breaking drought up into two separate hazards, with one being the cause of saltwater intrusion and one being the local drought that did not directly contribute to it. Brandon Campo of Westwego talked about the local hazard that contributed to saltwater intrusion being extreme low river conditions. Mike Chopin of Jefferson Parish suggested the importance for a further scrutiny when looking at this topic this year. The committee then took a ten-minute break before beginning the group activity.

Committee members were assigned seating using pre-placed name tents to ensure diverse viewpoints in each group for the meeting activity. Teams were given a packet of worksheets depicting blank hazard ranking tables for either inside or outside the levee systems. For a duration of twenty-five minutes, each team provided rankings for each hazard based on each of the following categories: future probability, spatial extent/location, mitigation potential, impact/vulnerability, and data availability. The history and disaster declaration fields were pre-populated using data collected by the AtkinsRéalis team. Throughout this effort, many productive conversations were had about the local impacts of each hazard. The activity sheets were then collected, and Mrs. Trucks stated she would email copies to the group for further feedback at a later date.

Mrs. Trucks then gave a brief definition and overview of the Social Vulnerability Index. Mrs. McCoy also chimed in on the lens of impact on human health as this particular index developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Mrs. Trucks then explained how this factors into FEMA mitigation project funding decisions and notices of funding opportunities. Mrs. Ezell added that those living outside of the levee system don't always participate in the decennial Census, making this particularly useful as an alternative measurement of the societal impact of a project.

Mrs. Trucks then presented an overview of Community Disaster Resilience Zones (CDRZ), clarifying that these are currently being refined by FEMA. She proceeded with an overview of the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), going over the categories of burden as well. She emphasized the importance of identifying where these exist within the Parish, as well as including it into the plan narrative.

Mrs. Trucks then announced that the next meeting will be in August to give the team time to analyze the data and incorporate the committee's feedback so far. She told the committee that there will also be a public outreach meeting in May, and though attendance is not required of committee members, she encouraged them to invite members of their communities to come and provide their feedback and learn about their risks. Some members then took photos of Mrs. Trucks' contact information. Finally, she thanked everyone for coming and promised to send out a copy of the PowerPoint presentation and links to the website and public survey. Mrs. Trucks then adjourned the meeting.