



LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE NEWS RELEASE

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Public Input Wanted as Leech Lake Reservation Updates Hazard Mitigation Plan

Leech Lake Reservation residents, community leaders, business owners, area agencies and organizations now have an opportunity to share how severe weather events impact their property and lives. There is also an opportunity to share their ideas on how to reduce local impacts in the future.

The Leech Lake Reservation Office of Emergency Management is working with U-Spatial at the University of Minnesota Duluth to update the tribe's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). The plan assesses the natural hazards that pose risk to the reservation, such as tornadoes, straight line winds, ice storms, blizzards, wildfire, flooding, and extreme temperatures and identifies ways to minimize the damage of future events. As the tribe works to update the plan, it wants to hear from the public.

The Leech Lake Reservation Hazard Mitigation Plan is a plan that covers all of Leech Lake Reservation, and includes considerations for other stakeholders within the tribal planning area. The plan will be updated by a planning team made up of representatives from tribal government and departments in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions and related agencies or organizations. When completed, the plan will be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for approval.

“Hazard mitigation planning is a central part of our emergency management program,” said Duane Oothoudt, Leech Lake Reservation Emergency Management Director. “Understanding the kinds of hazards that can cause serious impact to our residents, natural and cultural resources, economy, and identifying how to take action to reduce future impacts 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 within the reservation.”

Examples of hazard mitigation include:

- Conducting public outreach on severe weather awareness and preparedness
- Improving stormwater management systems to better handle high-rain events
- Removing existing buildings from flood or erosion prone hazard areas
- Increasing defensible space around homes in high-risk wildfire areas
- Constructing tornado safe rooms in vulnerable areas such as mobile home parks

- Burying overhead powerlines that may fail due to heavy snow, ice, or windstorms

Some mitigation activities may be eligible for future FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance grant funding.

Public input is an essential part of the plan update. As part of the planning process, Leech Lake Reservation is seeking feedback from residents and businesses to incorporate into the plan. Your input will be recorded and incorporated into the planning process:

- **What are the natural hazards you feel pose the greatest risk to the Leech Lake Reservation?**
- **Are there specific populations or assets (including natural or cultural resources) within the reservation that you feel are more vulnerable to future storm events?**
- **What concerns do you have, and what sorts of actions do you feel would help to reduce damages of future hazard events in your area or the reservation as a whole?**

Your feedback is wanted. Comments, concerns, or questions regarding natural disasters and your ideas for mitigation projects should be submitted to Leech Lake Reservation Emergency Management by phone, email, or in person.

There will be additional opportunities for public feedback throughout the planning process. A draft of the plan will be made available 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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