

**COTTONWOOD COUNTY NEWS RELEASE**

February 11, 2026

**Public Input Wanted as Cottonwood County
Updates Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Cottonwood County 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 Cottonwood County Office of Emergency Management is working with U-Spatial at the University of Minnesota Duluth to update the county's Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). The plan assesses the natural hazards that pose risk to the county, such as flooding, tornadoes, windstorms, winter storms, extreme temperatures, wildfire, and drought. The plan further identifies local vulnerabilities and ways to minimize damage from future events. As the county works to update the plan, it wants to hear from the public.

The Cottonwood County HMP is a multi-jurisdictional plan that covers Cottonwood County, including all cities and townships within the county. The Cottonwood County HMP also incorporates the concerns and needs of school districts, watershed districts, and other related agencies, organizations, or businesses participating in the planning process. The plan will be updated by a planning team made up of representatives from county departments, local municipalities, and other key stakeholders. When completed, the plan will be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for approval.

"Hazard mitigation planning is a central part of our emergency management program," said Paul Johnson, Cottonwood 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:

- 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.

As part of the planning process, gathering input from the public is an important and required step. Residents of cities and townships, local businesses, and other stakeholders are encouraged to share feedback on the following to incorporate into the plan:

- **What are the natural hazards you feel pose the greatest risk to your community?**
- **Are there specific populations or assets in your community 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 community or the county as a whole?**

To provide your feedback, please contact Cottonwood County Emergency Management or submit your comments via the online [HMP public feedback form](#).

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.

Contact

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The following QR code may be used to directly access the HMP public feedback form:

