

# Suggestions Related to S.185 – Statewide Climate Change Response Plan & Regional Public Health Risks Communications Plan

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## ***Bill Purpose Summary***

The bill proposes the development of a response plan to mitigate public health risks caused by climate change in Vermont, and related actionable strategies specific to both rural and urban communities in the state. The bill also proposes that a mitigation and response communications plan be developed by the Department of Health in conjunction with the regional planning commissions.

## ***Existing Tools Related to Bill Purpose***

### **Report: Climate Change and Health in Vermont**

Jared Ulmer, Climate & Health Program Manager, Vermont Department of Health

This white paper provides a summary of current and expected impacts of climate change on health in Vermont along with discussion of adaptation and mitigation actions that can be taken to reduce Vermont's contribution to climate change while improving the health and well-being of Vermonters. Key impacts identified in the Vermont Climate & Health Profile Report include:

- Hot weather
- Extreme storm events
- Tickborne and mosquito-borne diseases
- Mental health
- Waterborne and foodborne diseases
- Cyanotoxins
- Pollen and air pollution

The report also identifies:

- population groups and locations at elevated risk for each health impact
- adaptation strategies for addressing each health impact
- health benefits of certain climate mitigation strategies

### **Resource Links**

- Climate Change & Health in Vermont Report:  
[https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ENV\\_CH\\_WhitePaper.pdf](https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ENV_CH_WhitePaper.pdf)

### **State Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Contact: Erica Bornemann, Director, Vermont Emergency Management

“The 2018 Vermont State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP) presents the hazard impacts most likely to affect Vermont and a mitigation strategy to reduce or eliminate our most significant vulnerabilities. This SHMP is a complete rewrite of the 2013 Plan, both in the content of the Plan document and its mitigation actions. Vermont Emergency Management, along with key stakeholders, completed a thorough review of the 2013

SHMP at the beginning of the update process to ensure that nothing developed in previous versions would be lost in this rewrite process.”

VISION: Vermont will be safe and resilient in the face of climate change and natural disasters.

MISSION: To protect life, property, natural resources and quality of life in Vermont by reducing our vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters.

GOALS:

- Protect, restore and enhance Vermont’s natural resources to promote healthy, resilient ecosystems.
- Enhance the resilience of our built environment - our communities, infrastructure, buildings, and cultural assets.
- Develop and implement plans and policies that create resilient natural systems, built environments and communities.
- Create a common understanding of – and coordinated approach to – mitigation planning and action.

Resource Links:

- State Hazard Mitigation Plan Page: <https://vem.vermont.gov/plans/SHMP>
- State Hazard Mitigation Plan Executive Summary: <https://vem.vermont.gov/sites/demhs/files/documents/2018%20SHMP%20Executive%20Summary%20-%20Adoption.pdf>

### **State of Vermont Individual and Family Needs Recovery Plan (part of State Emergency Management Plan)**

Contact: Jason Gosselin, Emergency Management Director, Vermont Agency of Human Services

“This Individual and Family Needs Recovery Task Force (“IFNRTF”) Plan establishes guidelines for coordinating immediate and long-term recovery efforts to meet the basic housing and subsistence needs of affected individuals and families following a natural or human-caused disaster.

Whether an incident is small and localized or catastrophic, individuals and families need support. When disasters occur that result in large numbers of casualties, property damage, power and phone outages, evacuations, and high levels of media coverage, local municipalities can quickly become overwhelmed. Data collection is critical for successful transition from “Response Phase” to “Recovery Phase” in order to provide the best level of services in a timely manner. Experience shows that for individuals and families the recovery begins almost immediately. Finding replacement housing, buying basic household supplies, needing crisis counseling services and support, finding help to repair property damages, knowing what assistance is available during recovery is overwhelming. Emergency managers need to be operating at a similar time scale in order to best capture the true needs of those affected as well as ensure their optimal recovery.

A comprehensive Individual and Family Needs Recovery Task Force Plan will help mitigate the burden of beginning to support the high volume of requests to assist those impacted by disaster. The IFNRTF is a work group which organizes and integrates recovery resources for people impacted by disaster and represents key organizations whose aim is to provide Individual and Family Assistance recovery operations in Vermont

This IFNRTF Plan describes support when individuals and families are impacted by disaster and local resources are overwhelmed. It provides guidance for managing and supporting multi-agency activities and resources within a coordinated structure that supports the beginning stages of Individual Assistance in Vermont following disaster and includes workgroup activation “triggers” to identify when this group will convene.”

Resource Links:

- Vermont State Emergency Management Plan: <https://vem.vermont.gov/plans/state>

## **Local Hazard Mitigation Plans**

Contact: Erica Bornemann, Director, Vermont Emergency Management

“The purpose of mitigation planning is to identify policies and actions that can be implemented over the long term to reduce risk and future losses. Mitigation Plans form the foundation for a community's long-term strategy to reduce disaster losses and break the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage.

Local governments benefit from Mitigation Planning by:

- Identifying cost effective actions for risk reduction that are agreed upon by stakeholders and the public
- Focusing resources on the greatest risks and vulnerabilities
- Building partnerships by involving people, organizations, and businesses
- Increasing education and awareness of hazards and risk
- Communicating priorities to state and federal officials
- Aligning risk reduction with other community objectives”

### Resource Links:

Local Hazard Mitigation Planning: <https://vem.vermont.gov/plans/LHMP>

## ***Legislation Suggestions***

- S.185 could amend § 4345a. Duties of regional planning commissions to add the following:

*Consult with and assist the Vermont Department of Health, the Vermont Agency of Human Services, and Vermont Emergency Management in the incorporation of public health and safety concerns related to climate change into state and local emergency and hazard mitigation, response, and recovery plans.*

Relevant statutes that relate to these agencies should be amended to mirror this directive.

- H.688, the Global Warming Solutions Act, would establish the Vermont Climate Council. A purpose of the Council is to, “identify, analyze, and evaluate strategies and programs to...build resilience to prepare the State’s communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change” per §591(b)(1). §591(b)(2) requires the development of a Vermont Climate Action Plan, which is to include provisions to “build resilience to prepare the State’s communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.” §591(c) establishes Council subcommittees to assist in the preparation of the plan. §591(c)(1)(E) would require the Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee to, “utilize Vermont Emergency Management biennial reports to recommend program, policy, and legislative changes that will enhance municipal resilience to increased hazards presented by climate change.” This section could be amended to also require input from the Department of Health and Agency of Human Services.

NOTE: Regional planning commissions are not given a place on the Council in the House bill. Because regional planning commissions are at the nexus between myriad local and state policies and actions referenced in the bill, regional planning commissions should have a place on the Council.