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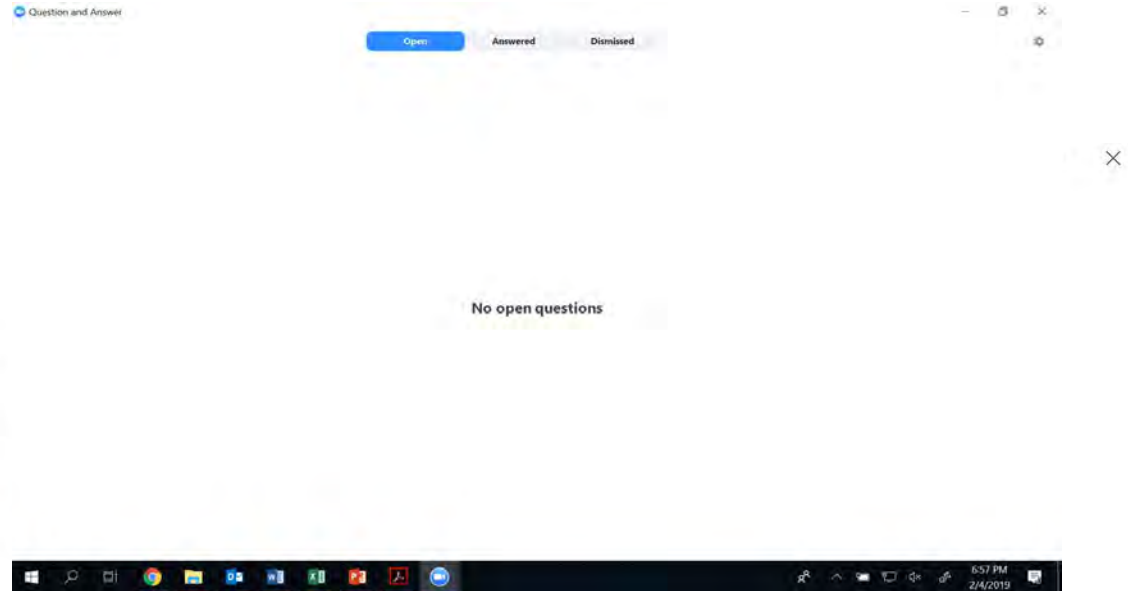
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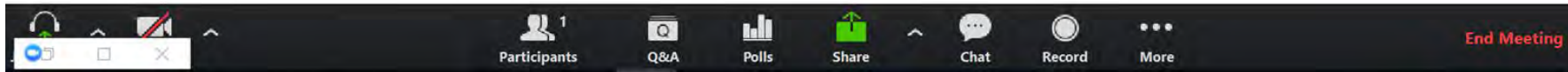
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Policy Research from the Mitigation Matters Award Program



Qiong Wang,
Virginia Tech

Sherri Brokopp Binder,
BrokoppBinder Research
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Ronnie Schumann,
University of
North Texas

Divya Chandrasekhar,
University of Utah

Presentations will examine the adoption of FEMA's property buyout program in Virginia; small business recovery programs after Hurricanes Sandy, Matthew, and Harvey; and wildfire mitigation in California. This work is relevant to federal, state, and local government, nonprofits that work with homeowners and small businesses after disasters, land use planners, floodplain managers, wildfire professionals, and many others.

Speaker bios: <https://hazards.colorado.edu/training/webinars/policy-research-mitigation-matters-award-program>



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From the Ashes: Mitigation Policy After Wildfire in California

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Publication Date: 2022

Abstract

Wildfires that destroy whole communities are increasingly prevalent, yet few studies examine long-term recovery after wildfire. This is a pivotal time when communities can use rebuilding and restoration efforts to enhance fire adaptation measures. Recently, California communities have been impacted by wildfires that are unprecedented in scale. Human communities and ecosystems struggle to recover quickly and in ways that reduce future wildfire vulnerability. In the absence of federal wildfire risk governance standards, interactions between state and local policies are crucial to understanding



FEMA defines mitigation as the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of disasters. Effective mitigation requires that we all understand local risks and invest in long-term planning to reduce risks and enhance community well-being.

WHAT DRIVES HAZARD MITIGATION POLICY ADOPTION? FEMA'S PROPERTY BUYOUT PROGRAM IN VIRGINIA COUNTIES

SUMMARY

Recurrent flooding has resulted in repeated property damage in the United States. The property buyout program was introduced several decades ago as a hazard mitigation strategy to move properties out of harm's way.



Water covers the road in the Cambridge Crescent neighborhood of Norfolk, Virginia, during King Tide. ©Virginia Sea Grant/Allen Devlin, 2021

This study surveyed local floodplain managers to explore factors that influenced the adoption of the Federal Emergency Management Agency property buyout program in Virginia counties. A new theoretical framework involving logistic regression models was used to analyze the 59 survey responses and various secondary data. The survey participants were from inland and coastal Virginia cities and counties with riverine and coastal flooding risk. The factors that were investigated included: flooding problems, social vulnerability, institutional capacity (including individual professional capacity, organizational management capacity, and system capacity), policy diffusion, and upper-level policy environment.

KEY FINDINGS

The results indicated that the individual capacity of local floodplain managers—for instance, their hazard mitigation experience, ability to innovate, and awareness of flood risks and the benefits of buyouts—is a significant factor that influences local government adoption of property buyout policies. Repetitive loss from flooding is a moderate trigger for counties to adopt buyouts. Findings suggest that experienced floodplain managers who are enthusiastic about buyouts programs are more likely to generate community buy-in and political will.

The individual capacity of local governments is a strong predictor of adoption outcomes. Local governments that employ floodplain managers with high levels of flood mitigation experience, policy innovation, and an understanding of flood buyout benefits will be more likely to add property buyout programs to their agendas. Since local governments carry the major functional responsibility for hazard mitigation, floodplain managers are key in advocating for the introduction of buyouts.

Repetitive loss from flooding is also an important factor in motivating counties to take up property buyout programs and reduce financial losses. This is because it is not effective to use flood mitigation funds to address continually damaged properties.



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DOES POST-DISASTER RECOVERY FUNDING PROMOTE MITIGATION IN SMALL BUSINESSES?

SUMMARY

Small businesses play an important role in the local economy, but they can be highly vulnerable to disasters. Small business recovery programs can break the cycle of vulnerability in small businesses by promoting mitigation before the next disaster. The United States attempts to address some of this vulnerability by offering disaster aid through the Small Business Administration.



This research examined small business recovery programs offered after three recent disasters—Hurricane Sandy (2012), Hurricane Matthew (2016), and Hurricane Harvey (2017)—to assess the extent to which they promoted mitigation. Data was collected using archival analysis and in-depth interviews with key program officials in New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, and Texas and analyzed using thematic content analysis techniques. Results showed that most recovery programs (75%) did not list mitigation actions in their program guidelines. Small business recovery programs did not typically promote mitigation practices that increase the overall disaster resilience of small businesses.

KEY FINDINGS

While the importance of mitigation is recognized across the federal, state, and local level agencies, there are also challenges at each level that make pursuing mitigation during recovery difficult. Coordinating across disaster and business support programs in non-disaster times, as well as creating cross-sectoral partnerships, can provide ways to work around challenges and build business resilience to upcoming disasters.

- Small business recovery programs have the potential to help small businesses fund and implement mitigation practices aimed at the next disasters, but they rarely do.
- The main reasons for this oversight range from funding and policy constraints to differences in the extent to which mitigation is considered a part of recovery by program administrators.

Levels of Mitigation Focus in Recovery Programs

	Disaster Recovery	Post-Disaster Recovery	Mitigation	Total	Percentage
Mitigation not mentioned	22	20	22	64	75
Mitigation mentioned	7	6	7	14	18
Mitigation required	0	4	0	4	5

STAKEHOLDERS

This study indicates that federal, state, and local agencies would benefit from more communication about the importance of mitigation through recovery programs. Nonprofit leaders that work with small businesses after disasters will also find this work useful.

Full report: Kim, S., & Chandrasekhar, D. (2022). Does Post-Disaster Recovery Funding Promote Mitigation in Small Businesses? Natural Hazards Center Mitigation Matters Grant Report Series, 14. Boulder, CO: Natural Hazards Center, University of Colorado Boulder.

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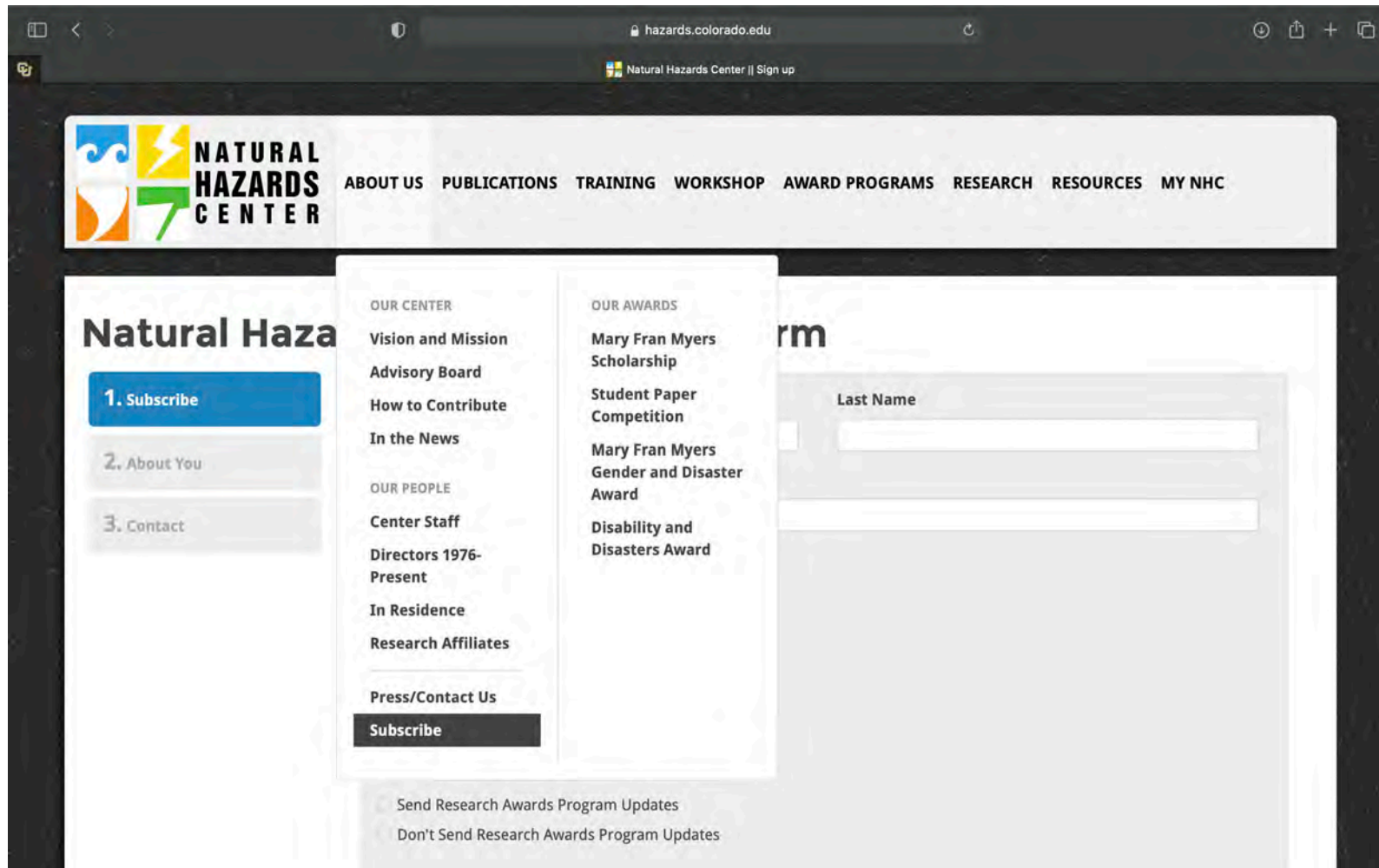
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Making Mitigation Work Webinar Series

February 14, 2023 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. MST

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