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Massachusetts Builds Climate Resilience



When you've seen one state, you've seen one state. While everyone working with and in state governments knows this to be true, it also applies to the impacts climate change or extreme weather will have, which can depend on a state's natural resources and environment, built environment, populations, and economy, among other factors.

In consideration of the climate change-related gaps in the hazard mitigation plan for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Governor Charlie Baker published [Executive Order 569](#), thereby requiring an integrated climate change strategy for the Commonwealth. From this effort came the State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP). The plan integrates the State Mitigation Plan with a statewide climate adaptation plan to address the impacts of climate change through adaptation and resiliency measures and policies.

As part of the SHMCAP, Massachusetts developed over 100 recommended actions in accordance with the overarching plan goals of integrating programs and building institutional capacity; developing forward-looking policies, plans, and regulations; developing risk-reduction strategies for current and future conditions; investing in performance-based solutions; and increasing education, awareness, and incentives to act to strengthen resilience. While Massachusetts is undertaking this effort through the lens of addressing climate change, each recommendation also represents good mitigation practices applicable to most any circumstance.

During this planning process, Massachusetts recognized that access to data, maps, and other tools relevant to climate change adaptation and mitigation are critical for policymakers, local planners, and the public to understand ways to plan and prepare for potential consequences. To that end, a [climate change clearinghouse](#) was created for the Commonwealth, which in the future will also include an action tracker to track the progress of the SHMCAP.

To assist with the implementation and maintenance of such an ambitious plan, the state established the Resilient MA Action Team (RMAT). Still in its first full year of existence, the RMAT is focused on both developing a statewide climate resilience design standard for projects including physical assets so that impacts of climate change and other risks in Massachusetts are

considered during the planning process and creating accompanying guidelines to implement the design standard. Another priority is to develop a tool that evaluates different benefits of resiliency, such as any cascading social or environmental benefit, that can then be used in state capital investment planning for long-term improvements to state infrastructure and other physical assets.

Implementing the SHMCAP is a cross-government effort that seeks to build resilience into every investment made by the Commonwealth. To this end, the RMAT is jointly managed by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) with Secretaries at the executive level driving the team's rapid progress. Co-lead Marybeth Groff, Hazard Mitigation and Climate Change Adaptation Coordinator for MEMA, noted that with a start made on nearly all of the SHMCAP action items in the first year alone, "[the Commonwealth] is already off to a great start and [they've] already made so many strides in just a year."

For more information on Massachusetts' climate resilience planning or to recommend state practices to highlight in this series, please contact [Lauren Goodwillie](#).

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