



King County

Shannon Braddock

King County Executive

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September 18, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

This letter transmits a proposed Ordinance that, if enacted, would approve and adopt an update to the King County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan (RHMP). Adoption of this plan update by the King County Council, and approval by both the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is required to ensure access to future federal mitigation project grant and federal Public Assistance Program post-disaster relief funding.

The King County Council adopted the County's initial RHMP in October 2004 by Ordinance 15038. Updates were made in December 2009 by Ordinance 16715, March 2015 by Ordinance 17996, and September 2020 by Ordinance 19160.

The current plan is due to expire on September 30, 2025, and I am asking the Council to expedite its review and approval of this plan so that we can maintain the County's ability to obtain certain disaster-related federal grant. Notably, FEMA instituted a pause on RHMP reviews in March of 2025. King County notified by the Washington State Emergency Management Division of FEMA's "approval pending adoption" in August.

The enclosed 2025 Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is a full rewrite of the 2020 plan. The RHMP looks at the natural and human-caused hazards that can affect King County and develops strategies to reduce risk and protect people, property, the economy, the environment, and King County operations. The RHMP is our chance to reassess our assumptions about risk and vulnerability, and to identify our best opportunities to build a more resilient county. For this update, the planning team focused on developing comprehensive hazard mitigation strategies in order to expand on existing mitigation work,

and to more fully integrate equity, social justice, and the impacts of climate change to each identified risk profile.

This plan is written to meet or exceed the relevant elements of the *Emergency Management Standard* (ANSI standard) by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP); this will help ensure that the County's current EMAP accreditation remains intact, and that King County can successfully pass reaccreditation in 2027.

The likelihood of future earthquakes in King County is inevitable, with a 100 percent certainty that one will occur eventually, however, predicting the magnitude and exact location is not possible. According to the U.S. National Seismic Hazard Model (NSHM), the King County region has between a 75 percent to greater than 95 percent chance of damaging shaking in the next hundred years. A disaster of this magnitude would affect every facet of life. Among other hazards, King County is inherently vulnerable to flooding, due to its distinctive geography and heavy precipitation patterns; as a result, flooding is an annual reality for the region. On average, major floods occur every two to five years, and projections indicate that both the frequency and severity of these events will likely increase due to the broader impacts of climate change. Surviving and recovering from incidents of all magnitudes require sustained investment in stronger buildings, infrastructure, and other assets. The RHMP includes a prioritized list of strategies and actions to reduce risk and build resilience.

The RHMP promotes programs and projects that build a foundation of resilience before, during, and after disasters. The plan's overarching goal is to create a framework that reduces the impact of and susceptibility to the identified hazards on people, property, and the environment, prioritizing historically underserved communities. Equity and social justice are embedded throughout the plan, shaping both risk assessments and mitigation priorities. The RHMP also aligns with other key King County initiatives, including the 2024 Flood Management Plan, 2024 Comprehensive Plan, and 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan, to promote integration and cross-sector solutions to help break down planning silos.

The RHMP was developed in partnership with subject matter experts, local jurisdictions, King County departments, and the public. Representation on the planning team included experts in climate change, comprehensive planning, equity and social justice, floodplain management, geological hazards, homeland security, and emergency management. Public outreach was carried out through the King County Office of Emergency Management (OEM), through online surveys and in person events, with exposure to more than 3,000 individuals during plan development; the semi-annual ALERT King County test in September 2024 included a questionnaire as well, garnering close to 1,200 responses about hazards.

If your staff have any questions, please feel free to contact Brendan McCluskey, Director, King County Office of Emergency Management, at 206-205-4060.

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

September 18, 2025

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Braddock', with a stylized flourish at the end.

for

Shannon Braddock

King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Stephanie Pure, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

Lorraine Patterson-Harris, County Administrative Officer, Department of Executive Services (DES)

Brendan McCluskey, Director, Office of Emergency Management, DES