

CHAPTER SIX:

NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION

The Borough has recently finalized the Matanuska-Susitna Borough Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), to meet requirements of the Hazard Mitigation Act of 2000. The plan is intended as a guide for reducing losses, both human and economic, due to natural disasters. The document follows the required processes of identification of hazards, mapping the potentially impacted areas, tallying risks and vulnerabilities, and presenting mitigation strategies. The primary goals of the plan are:

- Minimize injuries and loss of life;
- Minimize damages;
- Facilitate post-disaster restoration of public services; and
- Promote economic development.

To attain the goals, the MSB HMP includes measures to:

- Save lives and reduce injuries;
- Prevent or reduce property damage;
- Reduce economic losses;
- Minimize social dislocation and stress;
- Maintain critical facilities in functional order;
- Protect infrastructure from damage; and
- Protect legal liability of government and public officials.



*Wildfire Photo by
Alaska Fire Service*

The Chickaloon Village Traditional Council has recently completed an extensive Eco System Based Plan which inventoried the area's environment and produced maps that will be helpful in identifying areas of potential natural hazards. The community should use all available tools, including maps from this plan, in their hazard mitigation planning efforts.

In the event of certain natural disasters, Sutton has the potential of being "cut off" from Palmer and Wasilla should there be damage to the Moose Creek Bridge. Additionally, Granite Creek, Eska Creek, and Kings River also pose potential transportation challenges to Sutton and communities beyond, should any of those bridges be damaged. The community should be

prepared with an alternate emergency transportation plan, should the need arise. See the transportation chapter for further discussion on emergency aviation accommodations.

The potential natural disasters in the Sutton area identified by planning team members include:

- Rock slides
- Snow slides
- Wildfire
- Flooding
- Earthquakes
(Castle Mt. Fault runs north of the Glenn Highway through Sutton)
- Volcanic ash
- Erosion
- Severe weather conditions



The Matanuska River forms the southern boundary of the Sutton Community Council. The

river moves actively across its wide braid plain, changing channels and causing erosion of land and loss of property and

structures. Recently, the Borough (using funds from the Natural Resources Conservation Service) acquired property and removed structures from three at-risk parcels along the river in the Sutton area. Similar erosion actively occurs further down river, in the Butte area as well. Recommendations in this chapter identify how the community should monitor and address this natural hazard.

*Matanuska River Photo provided
by Jessica Dryden-Winnestaffer*

Recommendations:

- **Work with MSB emergency services to ensure the community is prepared to respond to any of these natural disasters.**
- **Work with MSB emergency services to identify appropriate natural hazard mitigation measures and a cost/benefit analysis of each measure.**
- **Incorporate natural hazard information into the community's long term planning efforts.**
- **Identify alternate transportation options should there be damage to any bridges in the Sutton area.**

- **Identify opportunities for funding to implement hazard mitigation measures for potential natural disasters.**
- **Develop and disseminate information about natural hazard areas to inform property owners of at-risk areas.**
- **The community should actively participate in efforts to address river erosion at the local, state and federal level in order to bring resources to community members in at-risk areas.**