



Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center

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“Unleashing the Power of Planning to Create Disaster-resistant Communities.”

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Even though there's been a large national effort to reduce the toll from natural disasters, catastrophic and chronic losses have both been rising instead of falling considering the increases in population and gross national product. Human suffering and loss of life and property in natural disasters can be reduced with proper planning for hazardous areas. Federal policies dealing with these problems still haven't recognized the importance of planning as the foundation for successful local hazard reduction. Huge exposures to risk is the direct result of the failed policies by the federal government and federal policy is a major obstacle in efforts in risk reduction.

Findings

This article explains why federal policies have failed and offers suggestions for changes that will encourage states and localities to use land use planning as a hazard mitigation tool. The key to building commitment is with local planning programs that work with citizens to educate them about natural hazards by involving them in all parts of the planning process. Policy choices at all levels of government are the cause for huge losses experienced in natural disasters and the exposure to even more losses in the future. The article explains that state and local governments have failed to hold back the strong development of areas that are at risk from several different natural disasters. Local governments and public and private decision makers benefit in the short-term, from the current system.

Implications

Local governments can do a lot with the assistance of both federal and state government to reduce losses from natural disasters through land use planning and management. Their efforts can be ruined by federal policy, which usually promotes improper land use and development decisions by the private sector and by all levels of government. The avoidance of the federal government to support local land use planning has both supplied only some information about the risks of loss from natural disasters and has financially supported the development of and movement to hazardous areas. A new executive order and several smaller changes in federal policy can guarantee that the government's actions are better at matching the principles we believe are essential for progress in managing natural hazards.