



Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Terminology

Climate: The general weather conditions prevailing in an area over a long period, from months to thousands of years.

Climate Change: A long-term shift in global or regional climate patterns, attributed directly or indirectly to human activity. Changes include change in temperature, change in precipitation, and sea level rise.

Hazard: An event or condition caused by changes in the climate that may result in loss of life, injury, negative health impacts, or damage to property, infrastructure, services, or environmental resources.

Impacts: Effects on natural and human systems caused by climate hazards.

Chronic Stressors: A challenge faced on a day-to-day basis. Chronic stressors can include financial stressors (e.g., low wages), social stressors (e.g., isolation), health stressors (e.g., chronic illness), or environmental stressors (e.g., low water quality).

Shocks: A significant event that disrupts the day-to-day and requires action.

Vulnerability: The degree to which a system is susceptible to, and unable to cope with, adverse effects of climate change.

Vulnerable Populations: Groups of individuals with high sensitivity to and low adaptive capacity to the impacts of climate change. Often includes the economically disadvantaged, elderly, youth, minorities, and the socially isolated.

Resilience: The capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of **chronic stressors** and **acute shocks** they experience. Resilience is about surviving, thriving, and “bouncing forward.”

Equity: A principal that ensures fulfillment of all basic needs and provides equal access to opportunity to all people, regardless of identity.



Heat Wave: A prolonged period of excessively hot weather relative to normal climate patterns. In Massachusetts, a heat wave is three or more days above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

Drought: A period of abnormally dry weather long enough to cause issues such as crop damage, water supply shortages, and habitat loss.

Inland Flooding: The submerging of land by water over prolonged periods due to increased precipitation and intense storms.

Coastal Flooding: The submerging of land by seawater over prolonged periods due to tides, storm surges, and sea level rise.

Intense Storms: Extreme weather events with heavy precipitation (rain or snow) and wind. This includes nor'easter, ice storms, hurricanes, and windstorms.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Greenhouse gases (GHG) provide a "blanket" in our atmosphere that trap heat and regulate the Earth's temperature. When we burn fossil fuels to power our homes, businesses, and automobiles, and place material in our landfill to decompose, we increase the level of greenhouse gases. This increase has created a much thicker "blanket" and higher global temperatures that have led to disruptions in the Earth's climate.

Adaptation: How we prepare our community for the impacts of climate change. This includes actions like having an emergency plan in place, ensuring buildings are more flood resistant, and planting trees to absorb excess heat during the summer.

Mitigation: The steps we take to reduce our contribution of GHGs into the atmosphere. This includes switching from fossil fuels to renewable sources, taking steps to reduce our energy use, and reducing the amount of waste we send to the landfill.

Preparedness planning: Taking steps to ensure our communities are ready for shock events (e.g., developing an emergency plan and training citizens for how to respond).