

How to Create a HAZUS User Group

HAZUS User Groups help create disaster resistant communities



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HAZUS[®]



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PURPOSE AND USE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document provides information to help you form hazard-specific or multi-hazard HAZUS User Groups. You are reading this because you are thinking about starting a HAZUS User Group. You are a “champion,” someone who believes in the power of the HAZUS tool and the potential of a HAZUS User Group. Your vision and commitment to this effort are essential to its success. This document provides you with information about how to create and maintain a HAZUS User Group, and shares lessons learned from successful HAZUS User Groups across the country.

Several icons are used throughout the document to aid you in identifying and using information that interests you.



The **HAZUS User Group** icon shows you information about how to establish and run a HAZUS User Group.



The **HAZUS** icon shows you how HAZUS has been applied as a successful risk mitigation tool.



The **BAHUG** icon identifies specific examples drawn from the experiences of the first HAZUS User Group, the San Francisco Bay Area HAZUS User Group (BAHUG).



The **Definition** icon defines key terms and acronyms.



The **Note** icon provides useful reminders and tips based upon lessons learned.

WHAT IS A HAZUS USER GROUP?

A HAZUS User Group is a cooperative venture or partnership among the public, private, and academic organizations. A HAZUS User Group combines the powerful data analysis capability of the HAZUS software and technology with the knowledge and judgment of risk managers, geographic information system (GIS) professionals, and natural hazard experts in the public and



HAZUS or Hazards U.S.

A standardized, nationally applicable, loss estimation methodology that uses PC-based geographic information system (GIS) software.



HAZUS is a multi-hazard, risk-based management tool

HAZUS currently supports earthquake loss analysis and is being expanded to address flood and hurricane hazards as well.

HAZUS data sources include:

- 1— Use of default data to create rapid impressions of natural hazard damages at a regional level,
- 2— Use of user-supplied information to achieve more refined local results, and
- 3— Use of techniques supplied by experts to study special natural hazard scenarios.

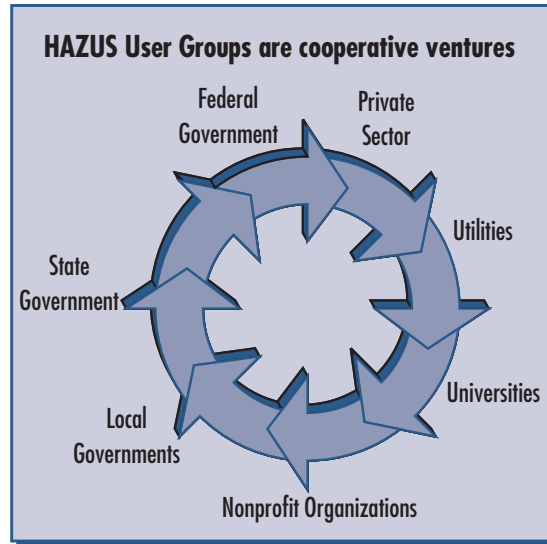


A HAZUS User Group

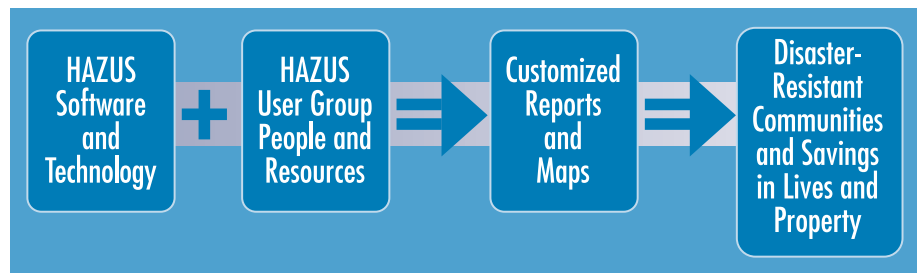
A cooperative venture between public, private, and academic organizations that uses HAZUS software and technology to build enhanced disaster-resistant communities, and save lives, time, and dollars. HAZUS User Groups can address earthquake, flood, and hurricane scenarios.

private sectors. A HAZUS User Group allocates resources, risks, and rewards to the two sectors according to their strengths and expertise. Members include representatives of:

- Private sector
- Federal, state, and local governments
- Utilities
- Universities
- Nonprofit organizations



To date, FEMA has helped form several HAZUS User Groups and others have evolved independently. Through HAZUS User Groups, communities can better use the HAZUS loss analysis and mapping



capabilities to create a greater understanding of hazards and their potential impact on the community. HAZUS User Group efforts support better informed risk management decision-making at the local, and regional levels. The results of the HAZUS User Group efforts include creating enhanced disaster-resistant communities and reducing loss of lives and property resulting from a disaster.

Involve FEMA in your HAZUS User Group

Representatives of FEMA should be involved in all HAZUS User Groups because FEMA offers technical resources, expertise, knowledge, and experience in risk management.

HAZUS User Groups distribute the costs of mitigation and response activities and thrive on the cooperation of diverse organizations. They attract and retain participants because they provide the potential to produce a higher level of information and change than can be accomplished through the work of a single

organization. For example, access to data and the ability to model multiple hazard and loss scenarios attracted participants to the New York City HAZUS Working Group.



HAZUS can receive vital data within minutes of an earthquake in southern California

TriNet is a multi-functional seismic network for earthquake research, monitoring, and computerized alerts. The network is a cooperative project of the U.S. Geological Survey, the California Institute of Technology, and the California Division of Mines and Geology. TriNet is a collaborative project that focuses on creating an effective real-time earthquake information system for southern California. TriNet provides continuous monitoring of seismicity and ground shaking in Southern California. The monitoring produces rapid estimates of the times, locations, and magnitudes of earthquakes. The high density and quality of stations in the network provide direct estimates of the strength of ground shaking near earthquakes. In an actual earthquake event, HAZUS will automatically receive data on the event from the network and the California Office of Emergency Service (OES) and run an analysis based on those data. The results will serve as the first official estimates of damage and loss within minutes of an earthquake.

of building codes, while flood hazard mitigation focuses on land use management. Although GIS technology is used widely for land use management, GIS is a somewhat new technology for management of building codes. Because of the existence, structure, and strength of the Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) and the routine use of GIS in flood hazard mitigation, the flood community is an ideal candidate for using HAZUS. According to staff of ASFPM, the flood community should focus on how HAZUS can be used to create model scenarios that show no adverse impact. The HAZUS flood model developer encourages working through the existing networks of GIS users in the flood community when forming HAZUS User Groups.

WHAT EXISTING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS ARE IN PLACE?

Tapping into the resources of existing public and private partnerships and risk management organizations is essential to the formation and growth of a HAZUS User Group. Organizations such as the Business Recovery Managers Association (BRMA), the Bay Area Automated Mapping Association (BAAMA), and ASFPM have established networks and often are interested in supporting a HAZUS User Group. The local focus of a HAZUS User Group may be challenging to national businesses, because such businesses may not have the resources to participate in multiple local groups. Each HAZUS User Group should consider the needs of its region and stakeholders and should be ready to explain the regional benefits derived from joining a HAZUS User Group and performing a HAZUS study at a regional level.



Leverage existing relationships

Tap into resources of existing public-private partnerships and risk management organizations to further leverage current resources.

WHAT SUPPORT WILL “CHAMPIONS” RECEIVE FROM THEIR RESPECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS?

It is essential that the organization attempting to create the HAZUS User Group be prepared to commit time and resources to the effort to form and implement the group. That lead organization must have a vision for the goals and objectives of the HAZUS User Group and must convey those concepts to the HAZUS User Group through the “champion.” It is not necessary or even recommended that the lead organization have a defined mission statement or strategic plan that guides overall activities for the HAZUS User Group. HAZUS

🔑 Develop a standardized emergency management protocol for HAZUS users that addresses the production and delivery of HAZUS loss estimates. Many organizations and individuals may run HAZUS after a disaster. The accuracy of HAZUS runs depends on the quality of the data entered. An agreed-upon emergency management protocol defines which HAZUS runs will be accepted and distributed. It is imperative that you distribute accurate disaster information.

🔑 Be patient and let individuals find their niches within the partnership. Because stakeholders are volunteers, you should offer positions to individuals, but not assign roles. Remember that the partnership is based on human relationships.

🔑 Learn from other HAZUS User Groups. We will see proliferation of HAZUS User Groups as the other HAZUS applications are released (especially the HAZUS Flood module). The new organizations can learn from the experiences of existing HAZUS User Groups, such as BAHUG, especially in the areas of creating HAZUS User Groups, developing methods of archiving database resources, and displaying results on the Internet.

🔑 Spend time listening to the members of the HAZUS User Group. A public-private partnership that becomes a sustained entity thrives on the diversity of its members, all working toward a common goal. Remember that the leaders of the partnership are volunteers. They have emerged as leaders through their own initiative. They are probably strong-willed and determined individuals. Guide their energy and determination with patience; they are truly the greatest assets of the partnership.



You can learn from others

Members of the BAHUG from Southern California; Seattle, Washington; and the Midwest have begun HAZUS User Groups in their regions, drawing on the knowledge and resources they gained through their participation in the BAHUG.

🔑 Maintain frequent communications. Communicate often with the steering committee members of the HAZUS User Group, and use outreach tools to publicize your progress and success. Electronic mail and the Internet provide the best solution for internal and external communications. Press releases and brochures work well to communicate your activities to a larger audience.

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