

Major Storm and Community Resilience Module

Final Policy Position Paper Guidelines

Overview of Position Paper

Each team is required to undertake writing a policy memorandum from the perspective of their assigned stakeholder position. This should be at least five pages and no more than seven pages double-spaced. The brief will require that the team evaluate the [assigned community's] Hazard Mitigation Plan and local geoscience data specific to [assigned storm type]; for example: severe winter weather (snow, blizzard, ice storm, extreme cold, etc.).

Each team must create their own recommendations for [the assigned community], taking into consideration their evaluation. Finally, each team is also required to make recommendations for more effective risk mitigation and community resilience strategies that would address the critiques raised in the position paper.

Overview of Position Paper “Talking Points”

In order to prepare for the in-class Town Hall Meeting on [date], teams must prepare and share talking points for their eventual position paper. This document will form the foundation of the team's presentation in the Town Hall Meeting to be held in class, as well as the final version of the position paper, which is due [date].

DEADLINES:

- *Talking points must be shared with the class 24 hours before the Town Hall Meeting.*
Each team is expected to familiarize themselves with the other stakeholders' main points, in order to be ready to debate the different positions and to defend their own.
- *Final position papers must be submitted.* [Instructors may decide how much time to give teams to complete final papers following in-class debate; authors recommend 2–3 days].
Teams should take the additional time between participating in the Town Hall Meeting and submitting the final paper to reflect on any new positions or information that became apparent during discussion.

Policy Paper Requirements:

Policy memos must follow the specific structure outlined here.

MEMORANDUM TO: [appropriate government officials/entities that you have selected]

From: [team stakeholder name]

Date:

Subject: Name of the issue or situation about which you are writing.

Problem definition: Describe the issue that you would like to be addressed in the Town Hall Meeting. In this section, you must clearly define the problem, explain why it is a public problem that needs to be addressed at this level of government, and how the issue should be framed in terms of risk, hazard, and vulnerability.

Background: Describe the causes of this problem, the history of the situation, and any important considerations about the political, social, and economic context that must be known in order to make a decision. Papers should demonstrate that team has collected and evaluated relevant weather-related and community data to determine community vulnerabilities and preparedness.

Reminder: Although each team has been assigned a particular stakeholder groups, successful proposals will show evidence of a systems thinking approach to major storms.

Key Actors: Identify the key stakeholders, organizations, and individuals in this situation. What are their interests and views? How much power and influence do they have in this issue area and the risk communication process? How might they be able to contribute to hazard mitigation and community resilience for major storms? Are there groups that are particularly vulnerable to the assigned hazard? Do they have a voice in the policymaking process?

Recommendations & Alternatives: List at least two feasible strategies for improving risk mitigation and community resilience for major storms in your community. What are the pros and cons of each? What steps are required to implement the recommendations you have proposed? What criteria do you propose for evaluation and assessment of your suggested strategies? Include data/evidence to support your recommendations.

Tables/Graphs (optional; not included in page count): You *may* include any tables or graphs that support or illustrate your position.

Bibliography (not included in page count): You **must** include a bibliography of your references in [assigned citation style]. You should have at least three news sources and three academic and/or government sources. Excellent papers will include additional sources, indicating a more comprehensive treatment of the issue.

Note: Teams are encouraged to review the Policy Paper Rubric before submitting their final paper.

Talking Points Format: Each team's talking points must include the following sections:

MEMORANDUM TO:

From:

Date:

Subject:

Problem Definition:

Recommendations & Alternatives:

The Problem Definition *must* be in complete sentences, but can be brief (5-7 sentences). The Recommendations & Alternatives section may be in complete sentences or bullet points. See example below.

Example of Talking Points from “domestic animals” as stakeholder group for extreme heat.

MEMORANDUM TO: Mayor Joseph Petty, City of Worcester, MA

From: Domestic animals of Worcester, MA

Date: April 24, 2016

Subject: Extreme heat in summer months

Problem Definition: Extreme heat is a weather-related event that occurs most often during the summer months in Worcester, MA. The State of Massachusetts Hazard Mitigation Plan defines extreme heat as: “a period of three or more consecutive days above 90°F, but more generally a prolonged period of excessively hot weather, which may be accompanied by high humidity” (2013). Although the MA State HMP notes that “heat waves cause more fatalities in the U.S. than the total of all other meteorological events combined” (2013), it does not provide any specific mitigation plans – or attention to – nonhuman, living beings. Domestic animals (house pets) are also victims of extreme heat, suffering from dehydration, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, heat strokes, or even death, just like humans. Canines in particular are at risk when owners leave their dogs outside during the day without proper shade, sun protection, or water, or in motor vehicles without proper ventilation for too long. We are thus faced with the public problem of (potentially fatal) risk when domestic animals are subjected to the natural hazard of extreme heat.

Recommendations & Alternatives:

1. **Pet-friendly cooling centers:** Allow pets into Worcester's cooling centers when heat waves strike.
 - a. **Pros:** Mitigate risks of extreme heat for domestic animals; reduce number of pet ailments or death due to dehydration, heat stroke, and heat exhaustion; encourages pet owners who may be reluctant to leave their animals at home to come to cooling centers – thus helping humans too.
 - b. **Cons:** Would not be feasible for all centers, so concerns of accessibility; how to maintain human and animal safety (dog bites, dog fights, allergies); most likely inclusive to only dogs – other animals (cats, birds, hamsters, etc.) left at home.
2. **Awareness campaign:** Promote the risks of extreme heat for pets through a media campaign.
 - a. **Pros:** It's proactive – helps reach pet owners before animal suffers.
 - b. **Cons:** It will be expensive to implement.

Formatting Requirements for Final Policy Memo

1. Title page

- a. The title page should include the team's assigned stakeholder group, the professor's name, the course title, the date, and the subject of your position paper.

2. Page layout

- a. Margins should be one inch, all the way around.
- b. Font should be Times New Roman, 12 pt.
- c. Text should be double-spaced.
- d. Policy brief should be 5-7 pages, not including bibliography or figures.

3. Section headings

- a. Each section must have the appropriate heading, as listed in the requirements.
- b. Each heading should be in **bold** type.

4. Bibliography

- a. *Sources must be in alphabetical order.*
- b. The bibliography should include all sources you have come across in your research: the six required sources and any other articles, books, or government documents that you have used.