

An All-Hazards Risk Framework: Fire First, But Not Fire Only

Re: Reframing the committee's work as all-hazards community resilience

Date: May 17, 2026

Status: Framing memo for the June 3 meeting

Executive summary

This memo proposes a framing decision rather than a budget item: that the committee understand its work as all-hazards community resilience, with wildfire as the urgent first application, rather than as a single-purpose fire brigade. Almost everything the fire program builds — the captain-by-road structure, the communications stack, the refuge sites, the CERT training, the equipment library — serves the community equally well in an ice storm, a derecho, a flood, an extended power outage, or a medical surge. Naming this now costs nothing and pays off in durability, recruitment, and grant eligibility.

1. Why reframe

- **The infrastructure is shared.** A road captain who can reach every household in a fire can reach them in any emergency. A NOAA radio warns of tornadoes and floods, not just fire weather. CERT training is explicitly all-hazards by design.
- **Single-purpose committees fade.** A fire committee loses urgency the year there's no fire; a resilience committee has a reason to exist every year, which sustains volunteers and institutional memory.
- **Grant eligibility broadens.** All-hazards mitigation and preparedness grants are more numerous than fire-only ones, and CERT and emergency-management funding streams assume an all-hazards posture.
- **It matches how disasters actually arrive.** Central Virginia's realistic hazard profile includes winter storms and ice, severe wind and derechos, flooding, extended outages, and heat — alongside wildfire. Planning for one while ignoring the others leaves obvious gaps.

2. The hazard profile for our community

Hazard	Likelihood	What the fire program already covers
Wildfire	High (current)	Everything — the primary design case
Ice / winter storm	High	Captains, comms, refuge w/ heat, welfare checks
Derecho / severe wind	Medium–High	Captains, comms, debris response, outage plan
Extended power outage	High	NOAA radios, Starlink comms, backup power
Flooding (localized)	Medium	Captains, evacuation routing, refuge sites
Medical surge / isolation	Medium	CERT medical basics, functional-needs registry

The point isn't to build six programs. It's to recognize that the one program we're building already serves all six, and to design the small things (the magnet, the captain roster fields, the drill scenarios) so they don't accidentally hard-code “fire only.”

3. Caution versus fear — a note on tone

An all-hazards framing risks tipping into a posture of constant alarm, which exhausts a community and breeds the opposite of preparedness. The committee should hold a clear distinction: caution is the clear-eyed assessment of real risk followed by proportionate, practical action; fear is the diffuse

anxiety that either paralyzes or drives reckless over-reaction. The whole program is an exercise in the former — we assess the hazard honestly, take the reasonable step, and then live our lives. Discernment about what is actually worth acting on, and what is not, is the discipline that keeps preparedness sustainable rather than corrosive.

4. What changes if we adopt this

- Name: “Yogaville Community Resilience Committee” (or keep “Fire Safety” as the current campaign within a resilience mandate).
- Captain roster: add fields that serve any emergency (mobility needs, medical equipment requiring power, pets/livestock, trusted relay neighbor).
- Refrigerator magnet: cover the two or three most likely scenarios, not fire alone.
- Drills: rotate scenarios across years (fire one year, winter-storm isolation the next).
- Grants: frame applications as all-hazards mitigation where the funder allows.

None of this slows the fire work — fire remains the urgent first build. It simply ensures the structure outlives this fire season.

5. Decision request

1. Adopt an all-hazards resilience framing, with wildfire as the urgent first application.
2. Decide the committee's name (resilience mandate vs. fire-safety campaign within it).
3. Direct that shared infrastructure (roster fields, magnet, drills) be designed all-hazards from the start.
4. Frame future grant applications as all-hazards where eligible.

6. Honest assessment

This is the cheapest decision in the entire memo series — it costs nothing and changes no budget — and it may be the one that most determines whether this committee still exists in five years. Fire is the reason we started; resilience is the reason we'll continue. Adopt the broader frame now, while the work is being designed, because retrofitting it later is far harder than building it in.

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