

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Preparing before a disaster strikes can save lives, lessen property damage and enable communities to recover more quickly from a disaster or emergency.

That focus is at the heart of the federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and is the basis for the *Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan*, which covers Lehigh and Northampton counties and the 62 municipalities that make up the Lehigh Valley.

The Lehigh County Emergency Management Agency and the Northampton County Emergency Management Services, in partnership with the LVPC, have led the effort to develop a regionwide commitment to that focus.

Hazard mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to life and property from 25 hazards such as floods, winter storms and drug overdose.

Across the United States, natural and non-natural disasters have led to increasing levels of deaths, injuries, property damage and interruption of business and government services. The time, money and effort needed to recover from these disasters exhausts resources, diverting attention from important public programs and private agendas. Since 1955, there have been 59 presidential disaster declarations and emergency declarations in Pennsylvania, 23 of which have affected the Lehigh Valley.

The emergency management professionals, citizens, elected officials and other stakeholders in the region recognize the impact of disasters on their

community and support proactive efforts needed to reduce the impact of natural and non-natural hazards.

Beyond those benefits, hazard mitigation helps planning and municipal leaders better manage land use, environmental resources and population to help lessen the effects of disaster.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) have issued guidelines for how hazard mitigation plans should be developed, and those guides provided the foundation for how this Plan was built. Specifically, federal regulations require that local governments update the Plan every five years, while monitoring and evaluating the data, events and actions that make up the Plan.

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Amount FEMA estimates is saved for every community dollar spent on damage prevention through avoided post-disaster damage repair.

For this multi-jurisdictional *Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan*, the Lehigh County Emergency Management Agency and Northampton County Emergency Management Services worked in partnership with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to craft a plan that protects residents in every municipality in both counties. All 62 municipalities joined that partnership along with dozens of community stakeholders. The *Hazard Mitigation Plan* is the third for the region, updating plans adopted in 2006 and 2013.

1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan is to reduce the loss of life, property and resources caused by natural and non-natural hazards. This Plan is designed to achieve:

- An increased understanding of hazards faced in the Lehigh Valley by local governments, stakeholders and the general public.
- A more sustainable, disaster-resistant and resilient community.
- Financial savings through partnerships that support planning and mitigation efforts.
- Focused use of limited resources on hazards that have the biggest impact on the community.
- A blueprint for reducing property and infrastructure damage and saving lives from the effects of future disasters.
- Making county and local municipalities eligible for pre-disaster and post-disaster grant funding.
- Commitment for monitoring and updating the Plan.

1.3 SCOPE

The *Lehigh Valley Hazard Mitigation Plan* serves as a tool to help save lives and protect the economic vitality of every community in Lehigh and Northampton counties. Designed to be continuously monitored, evaluated and updated as circumstances change and communities work to become more resilient, the Plan is built on community outreach and input. Public outreach to governments and stakeholders during the planning process included the clear message that participation is required to be eligible for federal or state mitigation funding.

1.4 AUTHORITY AND REFERENCE

Authority for this document originates from the following federal sources:

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C., Section 322, as amended.
- Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, Public Law 106-390, as amended.
- Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 44, Parts 201 and 206.
- National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 4001 et seq.

Authority for this document originates from the following Pennsylvania sources:

- Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Code. Title 35, Pa. C.S. Section 101.

- Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code of 1968, Act 247, as reenacted and amended.
- Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act of October 4, 1978. P.L. 864, No 167.

The following PEMA and FEMA guides and reference documents were used to prepare this Plan:

- PEMA All-Hazard Mitigation Planning Standard Operating Guide, October 2013.
- PEMA Do It Yourself Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, 2017.
- PEMA Hazard Mitigation Planning Made Easy, 2007.
- PEMA Mitigation Ideas: Potential Mitigation Measures by Hazard Type; a Mitigation Planning Tool for Communities, March 2009.
- FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Guidance, February 2015.
- FEMA Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards, January 2013.
- FEMA Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide, October 2011.
- FEMA Plan Integration: Linking Local Planning Efforts, July 2015.
- FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Handbook, March 2013.