

4.2 Hazard Identification

In identifying those hazards that pose significant risk to the Lehigh Valley, the planning committee that prepared the 2006 Lehigh Valley HMP reviewed information and historical records from a wide range of sources and selected the following natural hazards for consideration and profiling in the original plan (the original “hazards of concern”):

- Floods
- Winter Storms
- Tornados
- Sinkholes
- Droughts
- Wildfires
- Earthquakes

The 2006 plan further acknowledged that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 2010 Standard All-Hazard Mitigation Plan (State HMP) identified other hazards that have an impact in the state, including landslides, lightning, wind, hail, temperature extremes and radon. These hazards were considered to be of a lower priority due to their infrequency of occurrence, or lack of data on occurrences or damages, relative to the original plan’s selected hazards of concern, and noted that these hazards may be studied in greater detail in subsequent plan updates. Further, non-natural hazards were not considered in the 2006 plan

As part of the plan update process, the Steering Committee reviewed the hazards of concern detailed in the 2006 plan as well as those identified in the State HMP, and considered the history of events in the Lehigh Valley that have occurred historically as well as since completion of the 2006 plan. This review of historical events included an evaluation of all Emergency and Disaster Declarations in the Commonwealth, with a focus on those in which Lehigh and/or Northampton counties were designated for Federal assistance.

Further, all jurisdictions participating in the plan update process were provided a “Hazard Identification/Evaluation of Risk” worksheet to help identify those hazards, natural and non-natural, that each community believed posed significant risk to the Lehigh Valley, including any that may not have been considered in either the 2006 plan or the State HMP. Completed worksheets submitted by the municipalities may be found in Appendix D.

Based on all available information and input from the municipalities, the Steering Committee selected the following natural and non-natural hazards for consideration in this plan update:

Natural Hazards

- Drought
- Earthquake
- Extreme Temperatures
- Flood (including riverine, ice-jam, flash and urban stormwater flooding)
- Hailstorm
- Landslide
- Lightning Strike
- Radon Exposure

- Subsidence/Sinkholes
- Wildfire
- Wind (incl. tornado)
- Winter Storm (incl. heavy snow, blizzard and ice storms)

Non-Natural Hazards

- Building Collapse
- Dam Failure
- Environmental Hazards (incl. Explosions)
- Fire (Urban, Structural)
- Levee Failure
- Mass Gathering and Civil Disturbance
- Nuclear Incidents
- Terrorism
- Transportation Accidents
- Utility Outage/Interruption

These hazards have been profiled individually in Section 4.3 of this plan update.