



Executive Summary

Introduction

The goal of Snyder County's pre-disaster hazard mitigation planning project is to make residents, businesses, property owners, operators of critical infrastructure, and municipalities less susceptible to the affects of future disasters by increasing the disaster resistance of the county and its municipalities. After suffering the effects of floods, severe winter weather, and tropical storms, the Snyder County Board of Commissioners initiated a multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation planning effort. This process identified the hazards that affect Snyder County and prioritizes mitigation strategies to reduce potential loss of life and property damage from those hazards.

This multi-jurisdictional hazard mitigation plan (HMP) serves as a framework for saving lives, protecting assets, and preserving the economic viability for the County's 21 municipalities. This planning initiative resulted in a comprehensive HMP that meets all Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) requirements established in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000). The HMP will help the County and municipalities maintain their eligibility for certain future federal funding, especially the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). A FEMA-approved HMP is also required to participate in the Emergency Management Performance Grant program (EMPG) and in projects under the Pre-Disaster Mitigation grant program (PDM).

The Planning Process

The HMP planning process consisted of:

- applying for and receiving a PDM grant to fund the planning project
- announcing the initiative via press releases and postings on the County's Web site
- involving elected and appointed County and municipal officials in a series of meetings, training sessions, and workshops
- inviting input from businesses through the Greater Susquehanna Valley County Chamber of Commerce and various Chambers of Commerce in Snyder County
- identifying hazards
- assessing risk and analyzing vulnerabilities
- identifying mitigation strategies, goals, and objectives
- developing an implementation plan
- announcing completion via press releases and posting on the County's Web site
- plan adoption at a public meeting of the Snyder County Board of Commissioners



- plan submission to FEMA and PEMA

The Plan

The HMP outlines actions designed to address and reduce the impact of a full range of natural hazards facing Snyder County, including floods, severe winter weather, severe thunderstorms, and tropical depressions. Human-caused hazards are also addressed (e.g., transportation accidents and hazardous materials incidents). A multi-jurisdictional planning approach was utilized for the Snyder County HMP, thereby eliminating the need for each municipality to devise its own approach and a separate document. Further, this type of planning effort resulted in: a common understanding of the hazard vulnerabilities throughout the County; a comprehensive list of mitigation projects; common mitigation goals and objectives; and an evaluation of broad capabilities assessment examining policies and regulations. Each municipality that elected to be part of this multi-jurisdictional planning effort adopted the HMP by resolution.

Hazard Vulnerability Analysis

A key component to reducing future losses is to first have a clear understanding of what the current risks are and what steps may be taken to lessen them. The development of the hazard vulnerability analysis (HVA) is the critical first step in the entire mitigation process, as it is an organized and coordinated way of assessing potential hazards and risks. The HVA describes each hazard in terms of its frequency, severity, County impact, and identifies the effects of both natural and manmade hazards. Numerous hazards were identified as part of the HVA process. The HVA is composed of two primary components – hazard identification and risk assessment.

Hazard Identification

A comprehensive, “all-hazards” list of disasters that have or could occur in Snyder County was developed for the HVA. The hazard identification section presents profiles and data on natural and human-caused hazards. The HMP planning team utilized national and state databases, as well as historical data for listings of hazard events. The top three hazards identified are flooding, tropical storms/depressions, and severe winter weather. Flooding is the most common natural hazard in Snyder County and presents the greatest potential for significant human and financial impact.

Risk Assessment

The risk associated with each hazard was calculated using a comprehensive risk assessment matrix. The HMP planning team provided the matrix to County officials at a HMP planning meeting for review and comment. The matrix provides a systematic method for assigning a risk factor to a hazard event, based on the impact and frequency of the event and its effect on people, critical facilities, the economy, and the environment. This task also collected and integrated data – including an inventory of certain assets that may be affected by natural hazards – such as housing units, critical infrastructure, and Superfund Amendments and



Reauthorization Act (SARA) facilities. The HMP planning team assessed potential impacts from the top three hazards using Snyder County tax parcel and repetitive loss structure data. This was accomplished by conducting extensive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping. The resulting information provides local jurisdictions with information that outlines the hazards they face and potential social impacts, damages, and economic losses.

Capability Assessment

A Capability Assessment matrix/questionnaire was provided to municipalities during the planning process at meetings of County officials. These meetings were designed to seek input from key County and municipal stakeholders on legal, fiscal, technical, and administrative capabilities. It was an important part of the planning process to gain an understanding of the general capabilities of all jurisdictions. As such, the Capabilities Assessment helps guide the implementation of mitigation projects and will help evaluate the effectiveness of existing mitigation measures, policies, plans, practices, and programs. Throughout the life of the plan, attention will be given to state, county, or local plans, regulations, and development requirements. These may include, but are not limited to, local plans, zoning ordinances, subdivision and site specific regulations, building codes, flood insurance programs, natural resources, and conservation statutes. While some of these areas were identified for improvement, none were found to preclude any municipality from minimizing or mitigating future hazards.

Mitigation Strategy Development

The HMP planning team developed a mitigation strategy for the County and identified and prioritized project planning goals following the completion of the Hazard Vulnerability Analysis. The identification and prioritization of project planning goals were based on the findings of the HVA and were specifically focused on the County's vulnerability to the profiled hazards and the potential severity (i.e., frequency and magnitude) of those hazards. These project planning goals represent the County's vision for minimizing damages caused by flooding and other likely hazards. Mitigation measures and options were developed in terms of preventative measures, property protection, emergency services measures, structural projects, natural resource protection, and public education. They are provided to help the County and local jurisdictions identify appropriate community projects. Critical project information, such as responsibility assignment, guides the implementation of these actions. A process to maintain the plan and update it at least every five years is also included. The Snyder County Planning Commission is the agency directly responsible to the County commissioners for plan implementation and maintenance.

Plan Review and Adoption

In accordance with federal and state requirements, the governing bodies of each participating jurisdiction must review and adopt by resolution, the Snyder County Multi-jurisdictional Hazard



Mitigation Plan. Copies of the adopting resolutions are included in this Plan. The entire Plan was submitted to PEMA and FEMA Region III in Philadelphia for review and approval.