

VENANGO COUNTY 2020 HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

Once approved by Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), communities that adopt the 2020 Venango County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) will be eligible for FEMA disaster grants. This HMP could improve a community's bond rating when considering future conditions. Over the past year, Venango County representatives formed a Steering Committee and Hazard Mitigation Planning Team – inviting each community, neighboring counties, and many partner agencies like the Oil Region Alliance and the Bureau of Forestry. The HMP includes a review of hazards and the self-reported capabilities and resources communities possess to address those risks. The risk assessment weights probability and impact, and communities in Venango County anticipate Winter Storms to be their highest risk hazard. Each community, the County, and partner agencies were asked to submit actions intended to decrease the communities' risk to the identified hazards. As you review this plan, please reach out to Jason Ruggiero at jruggiero@co.venango.pa.us with any questions.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1955, 32 Presidential disasters have been declared in Venango County ranging from floods, severe winter storms, droughts, fires, and most recently, pandemic. These and other natural and human-made hazards have led to costly response and recovery efforts in the County. Hazard mitigation is defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as “sustained action taken to reduce and eliminate long-term risk to people and property from hazards and their effects”. Hazard mitigation planning is considered essential to breaking the disaster cycle of damage.

As population changes, industry shifts, technology advances, and climate changes, the list of hazards to which the County is at risk is evolving. A great deal of mitigation has been accomplished since the last HMP Update in 2015.

Mitigation Progress Highlights

- Municipalities across Venango County completed stormwater management projects along flood prone roadways.
- Several communities were able to complete projects focused on acquisition and demolition of flood prone properties.
- Various communities were able to complete improvement projects for high-risk structures including bridges and roadways.

These successes, among others, have been considered and incorporated into the development of the 2020 Venango County HMP Update. This update was a collaborative effort by the Venango County Hazard Mitigation Planning Team. Community leaders, agency and organizational stakeholders, and the general public, were invited to participate in the HMP Update process.

PLANNING PROCESS

The 2010, 2015, and 2020 Venango County HMPs represent the work of government officials, business leaders, community members and non-profit organizations in developing a blueprint for protecting community assets, preserving the economic viability of the community, and saving lives.

The input required to guide the HMP update process was collected through virtual coordination with stakeholders. Through a collaborative approach to integrate mitigation planning efforts across local agencies, the 2020 HMP update can address a diverse set of hazards.

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Assessing and ranking hazards helps communities set goals and priorities for mitigation based on their vulnerabilities. Based on previous plan updates, stakeholder input, research, data collection, and information from the Pennsylvania Hazard Mitigation Plan, 12 hazards were profiled in the 2020 HMP. Hazard profiles include information on location, magnitude, past and future occurrence, and vulnerability of each hazard including potential loss estimates. All hazards identified in the 2015 HMP were expanded on in the 2020 HMP. Increased vulnerability from the impacts of Climate Change has been considered and incorporated into the 2020 HMP particularly regarding drought, flood, and winter storm. Of the 12 hazards profiled, the two highest-risk hazards include winter storm and environmental hazards.



- Venango County averages 50 inches of snowfall annually
- Precipitation levels in the county are expected to rise as a result of climate change.



- Nearly 1,500 conventional and unconventional oil and gas wells
- Close to 250 miles of gas pipeline run through the county.

CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

Assessing community capabilities helps to determine the ability of the County and its municipalities to implement a comprehensive

mitigation strategy, and to identify potential opportunities for establishing or enhancing specific mitigation policies, programs, and projects.

The assessment has two primary components: an inventory of relevant plans, laws, regulations, policies and programs already in place, and an analysis of capacity to carry them out. These mitigation capabilities include laws and regulations; funding and technical assistance; development and construction management; and planning and programmatic support.

MITIGATION STRATEGY

The Mitigation Strategy serves as the blueprint for reducing or eliminating hazard vulnerabilities. The basis for the Mitigation Strategy is the following seven mitigation goals.

2020 Venango County HMP Goals

1. Increase Public Awareness regarding natural and manmade hazard risks, preparedness and mitigation.
 2. Ensure that adequate shelter is available to current and future populations.
 3. Identify all repetitive loss structures throughout the county.
 4. Develop better hazard data for Venango County and the municipalities.
 5. Attempt to reduce the current and future risk of flood damage in Venango County.
 6. Reduce or redirect the impact of natural disasters (especially floods) away from at-risk population areas.
 7. Protect existing natural resources and open space, including parks and wetlands, within the floodplain and watershed to improve their flood control function.
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These goals are supported by 20 objectives and 50 mitigation actions, which are detailed in the 2020 HMP.

Mitigation actions can be categorized into four main types of mitigation techniques:



Plans and
Regulations



Natural
Systems
Protection



Structure and
Infrastructure
Projects



Education and
Awareness
Programs

“All of us – from individuals, to families, to businesses and institutions, to governments – must be responsible to protect the lives and property of those who depend on us from whatever emergencies may arise. By their very nature, emergencies are chaotic. A planning process will reduce this chaos and ensure that we can provide that protection.” *Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency*
