

Lackawanna County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update 2021 Executive Summary

Hazard mitigation helps to reduce or eliminate potential losses from future disasters.

Hazard mitigation planning helps to establish and maintain a process that leads to the implementation of hazard mitigation actions. Lackawanna County is familiar with the impacts of hazards on its residents, visitors, infrastructure, and economy. This 2021 update to the Lackawanna County Hazard Mitigation Plan (Plan) again reaffirms the county's commitment to continual improvements to its countywide and municipal mitigation strategies and program.

The 2021 hazard mitigation planning process began with the identification of a broad-reaching County Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee, led by the Lackawanna County Dept of Planning & Econ Dev which guided the development of the updated plan. Since the 2016 Plan was approved, the county has been subjected to two major Federal Disaster Declaration, and many other smaller hazard occurrences, a challenge in any operating environment. But 2020 presented a new hurdle, the challenges brought on by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19 response, which necessitated a shift from an in-person approach to a completely virtual approach to the update, something never before attempted. The steps involved in plan development included the detailed identification of natural, technological, and human-caused hazards that can impact Lackawanna County and an assessment of the vulnerability, and ultimately the risk, presented by those hazards. Next steps included a thorough evaluation of the county's and each municipality's current mitigation capabilities, followed by an update to the county's and individual municipal mitigation strategies.

This strategy identified five overarching Mitigation Themes, and related Mitigation Objectives, that define Maryland's path forward to implementing hazard mitigation.

Overarching themes of the *2021 Lackawanna County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update* include:

- Identifying natural hazards that are most likely to impact Lackawanna County now and, in the future, providing an opportunity for a focused risk analysis and prioritization of mitigation strategies and resiliency efforts to include:
 - Minimizing the loss of life and personal injuries from all-hazard events;
 - Reducing losses and damage to county and local governments and private assets; and
 - Decreasing federal, state, local, and private costs of disaster response and recovery.
- Supporting mitigation initiatives and policies that promote disaster resiliency, nature-based solutions, historic preservation, and climate adaptation strategies.
- Verifying critical facilities and county assets data.
- Maximizing opportunities for collaboration and excitement between stakeholders over future hazard mitigation opportunities to ensure the safety of the county's citizens, protection of property, environmental sustainability, and community resiliency.

The final and most important piece of the Plan is defining the path forward. The planning process defined a clear direction for implementation and maintenance. Finally, the county has developed this Plan update to proactively support the new FEMA Hazard Mitigation program and will submit, as necessary, applications for mitigation projects that will support the goals and priorities of the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program.

Federal Compliance

The Plan was prepared pursuant to the requirements of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA) (Public Law 106-390) and the implementing regulations set forth by the Interim Final Rule (2 CFR§201.6).

While the Act emphasizes the need for mitigation plans and coordinated mitigation planning and implementation efforts, the regulations established requirements that hazard mitigation plans must meet in order for a county jurisdiction to be eligible for certain federal disaster assistance and hazard mitigation funding under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288). The 2021 Plan falls under assurances proclaimed in this Plan. Lackawanna County assures that it will comply with all applicable federal statutes and regulations in effect with respect to the periods for which it receives grant funding in compliance.