



SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

This section presents background information, describes the purpose, and defines the scope of the 2019 update of the Westmoreland County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).

1.1 Background

Across the United States, natural and human-caused disasters have led to increasing levels of deaths, injuries, property damage, and interruptions of business and government services. The time, money, and effort spent to recover from these disasters exhausts resources, diverting attention from important public programs and private agendas.

Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, has experienced a significant number of Statewide or County-specific disaster declarations since 1954. The emergency management community, citizens, elected officials, and other stakeholders in Westmoreland County recognize the impact of disasters on their community and have concluded that proactive efforts need to be taken to reduce the impact of natural and human-caused hazards. To that purpose, Westmoreland County is committed to updating and maintaining the Westmoreland County HMP.

“Hazard mitigation” describes actions taken to prevent or reduce the long-term risks to life and property caused by a hazard event. Pre-disaster mitigation actions are taken in advance of a hazard event and are essential to breaking the typical disaster cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. With careful selection, mitigation actions can be long-term, cost-effective measures taken to reduce the risk of loss.

The Westmoreland County Hazard Mitigation Working Group (HMWG) (composed of Westmoreland County officials and a few other stakeholders) and the Planning Team (composed of Westmoreland County officials, municipal representatives, emergency responders, representatives from State and federal agencies, utility companies, and other stakeholders) have updated this HMP. Westmoreland County contracted Tetra Tech, Inc. (Tetra Tech), to prepare the 2019 HMP update.

The HMP update is the result of several months of collaboration between the citizens and officials of the County and representatives from Tetra Tech to develop a pre-disaster, multi-hazard mitigation plan that will guide the County toward greater disaster resistance, while respecting the character and needs of the community.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this HMP is to minimize the effects that natural, technological, and man-made hazards have on the people, property, environment, and business operations within Westmoreland County. This document exists to provide the background information and rationale for the mitigation actions that the HMWG, Planning Team, and municipal representatives have chosen to implement across the County.

The document is governed by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) and its implementing regulations (Title 44 *Code of Federal Regulations* [CFR] §201.6, published February 26, 2002). Local jurisdictions must comply with the DMA 2000 and these regulations to remain eligible for funding and technical assistance from State and federal hazard mitigation programs.

1.3 Scope

The implementation actions outlined in this HMP apply to Westmoreland County and any municipalities within the County that adopt this plan. Only those municipalities that have participated in the plan update process may adopt this plan and will be eligible for State and federal hazard mitigation funding. For the purpose of this plan, municipal participation is defined as (1) completion and submission of an Evaluation of Identified Hazards Worksheet, Capability Assessment Survey, and/or Mitigation Strategy 5-Year Plan Review Worksheet; and (2)



attendance by an official municipal representative at a planning or public meeting, or participation in individual outreach conducted as part of the planning process.

1.4 Authority and Reference

This HMP was prepared in accordance with the following regulations and guidance:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) “Local Mitigation Planning Handbook,” March 2013
- FEMA “Integrating Hazard Mitigation into Local Planning,” March 1, 2013
- FEMA “Plan Integration: Linking Local Planning Efforts,” July 2015
- Local Mitigation Plan Review Guide, October 1, 2011
- DMA 2000 (Public Law 106-390), October 30, 2000
- 44 CFR Parts 201 and 206 (including Feb. 26, 2002, Oct. 1, 2002, Oct. 28, 2003, and Sept. 13, 2004 Interim Final Rules)
- FEMA “How-To Guide for Using Hazards U.S.-Multi-Hazards (HAZUS-MH) for Risk Assessment” (Document No. 433), February 2004
- FEMA Mitigation Planning How-To Series (FEMA 386-1 through 4), 2002
Available on-line at: <http://www.fema.gov/fima/planhowto.shtm>.
- FEMA “Mitigation Ideas: A Resource for Reducing Risk to Natural Hazards,” January 2013
- Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s All-Hazard Mitigation Planning Standard Operating Guide, October 18, 2013

A full set of references used in updating the HMP is included in Appendix A.