

Section 1 – Introduction

In a publication entitled *Local Hazard Mitigation Planning*, FEMA provided the following benefits of hazard mitigation:

- Protecting the public and preventing loss of life and/or injury;
- Reducing harm to existing or future development;
- Maintaining continuity and strengthening the social connections that are essential for recovery;
- Preventing damage to the community’s unique economic, cultural, and environmental assets;
- Accelerating recovery; and
- Reducing disaster response and recovery costs.

The fact is no community is immune to the risks of hazards and not all hazards can be eliminated. However, it is possible to identify potential hazards, where they may affect a community, and to formulate a plan to reduce the severity of the hazard.

FEMA defines hazard mitigation as “any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to life and property from hazards”. Furthermore, they emphasize that hazard mitigation is most effective at reducing loss when it is based on an inclusive, comprehensive, long-term plan that is developed before a disaster occurs (*FEMA IS-318, Mitigation Planning for Local and Tribal Communities*). Bradford County could see an array of mitigation projects, to include, flood mitigation or structure retrofitting.

Proper hazard mitigation is crucial to protecting the county’s critical facilities and infrastructure. The County’s critical facilities are those that are necessary for a community’s response and recovery from a hazard event. Categories of the critical facilities would include: hospitals, medical centers, emergency shelters, schools, airports, fire stations, the Sheriff’s Office, the Emergency Operations Center, waste water and water treatment plants, radio communications towers, correctional institutions, utilities, storage of critical records, financial institutions, and major government buildings, etc. Infrastructure such as bridges, roads, drainage structures, sewer lines, electric lines, telephone lines that are built in high hazard areas are subject to frequent damage and costly repair. (Bradford County LMS Plan 2016).

Legislation plays a major role in hazard mitigation. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 (DMA 2000) was developed in order to “reduce the loss of life and property, human suffering, economic disruption, and disaster assistance costs resulting from natural disasters.” This legislation required state, local, and tribal governments to develop a hazard mitigation plan.