

4.4 Hazard Risk Ranking

As discussed in Section 4.2, “Hazard Identification”, a comprehensive range of natural and non-natural hazards that pose significant risk to the Lehigh Valley were selected and considered in this plan update. However it is recognized that the communities in the Lehigh Valley have differing levels of exposure and vulnerability to each of these hazards. In order to most effectively and efficiently manage hazard risk, it is important for each community participating in this plan update to recognize those hazards that pose the greatest risk to their community, and direct their attention and resources accordingly.

To this end, a relative hazard risk ranking process was conducted for each county and municipality in the Lehigh Valley using the “Risk Factor” (RF) methodology identified in Section 5 and Appendix 9 of Pennsylvania’s All-Hazard Planning Standard Operating Guide (October 2010). Per this guidance:

“The RF approach produces numerical values that allow identified hazard to be ranked against one another. The RF values are obtained by assigning varying degrees of risk to five categories for each hazard: *probability, impact, spatial extent, warning time* and *duration*.

To calculate the RF value for a given hazard, the assigned risk value for each category is multiplied by the weighting factor. The sum of all five categories equals the final RF value, as demonstrated in the example equation:

Example Equation

$$\text{RF Value} = [(Probability \times .30) + (Impact \times .30) + (Spatial \text{ Extent} \times .20) + (Warning \text{ Time} \times .10) + (Duration \times .10)]$$

Hazards identified as high risk have risk factors greater than or equal to 2.5. Risk Factors ranging from 2.0 to 2.4 are considered moderate risk hazards. Hazards with Risk Factors less than 2.0 are considered low risk.”

Table 4.4-1 identifies the five risk assessment categories, the criteria and associated indices used to quantify their risk, and the suggested weighting factor applied to each risk assessment category.

The hazard rankings for all participating jurisdictions can be found in their jurisdictional annexes in Section 9 of this plan update. The hazard risk ranking for Lehigh and Northampton counties is further presented below in Table 4.4-2. It is noted that the relative hazard risk rankings for both Lehigh and Northampton Counties were found to be the same.

Table 4.4-1. Summary of Risk Factor (RF) Approach

Summary of Risk Factor (RF) Approach				
Risk Assessment Category	Degree of Risk			Weight Value
	Level	Criteria	Index	
PROBABILITY <i>What is the likelihood of a hazard event occurring in a given year?</i>	UNLIKELY	LESS THAN 1% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	1	30%
	POSSIBLE	BETWEEN 1 & 10% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	2	
	LIKELY	BETWEEN 10 & 100% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	3	
	HIGHLY LIKELY	100% ANNUAL PROBABILITY	4	
IMPACT <i>In terms of injuries, damage, or death, would you anticipate impacts to be minor, limited, critical, or catastrophic when a significant hazard event occurs?</i>	MINOR	VERY FEW INJURIES, IF ANY. ONLY MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE & MINIMAL DISRUPTION ON QUALITY OF LIFE. TEMPORARY SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES.	1	30%
	LIMITED	MINOR INJURIES ONLY. MORE THAN 10% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR MORE THAN ONE DAY.	2	
	CRITICAL	MULTIPLE DEATHS/INJURIES POSSIBLE. MORE THAN 25% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR MORE THAN ONE WEEK.	3	
	CATASTROPHIC	HIGH NUMBER OF DEATHS/INJURIES POSSIBLE. MORE THAN 50% OF PROPERTY IN AFFECTED AREA DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF CRITICAL FACILITIES FOR 30 DAYS OR MORE.	4	
SPATIAL EXTENT <i>How large of an area could be impacted by a hazard event? Are impacts localized or regional?</i>	NEGLIGIBLE	LESS THAN 1% OF AREA AFFECTED	1	20%
	SMALL	BETWEEN 1 & 10% OF AREA AFFECTED	2	
	MODERATE	BETWEEN 10 & 50% OF AREA AFFECTED	3	
	LARGE	BETWEEN 50 & 100% OF AREA AFFECTED	4	
WARNING TIME <i>Is there usually some lead time associated with the hazard event? Have warning measures been implemented?</i>	MORE THAN 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	1	10%
	12 TO 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	2	
	6 TO 12 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	3	
	LESS THAN 6 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	4	
DURATION <i>How long does the hazard event usually last?</i>	LESS THAN 6 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	1	10%
	LESS THAN 24 HRS	SELF-DEFINED	2	
	LESS THAN 1 WEEK	SELF-DEFINED	3	
	MORE THAN 1 WEEK	SELF-DEFINED	4	

Source: Pennsylvania's All-Hazard Planning Standard Operating Guide (October 2010)

Table 4.4-2. Risk Ranking for Lehigh and Northampton Counties

HAZARD RISK	NATURAL HAZARDS	RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY					RISK FACTOR (RF)
		PROBABILITY	IMPACT	SPATIAL EXTENT	WARNING TIME	DURATION	
HIGH	Winter Storm	3	2	4	1	3	2.7
	Flood	3	2	2	3	3	2.5
MODERATE	Radon Exposure	4	1	2	1	4	2.4
	Extreme Temperatures	4	1	2	1	3	2.3
	Drought	2	1	4	1	4	2.2
	Wildfire	3	1	2	3	3	2.2
	Hailstorm	3	1	3	2	1	2.1
	Wind, incl. Tornado	1	3	2	4	1	2.1
	Lightning	4	1	1	2	1	2
LOW	Earthquake	1	1	4	4	1	1.9
	Subsidence / Sinkholes	2	1	1	2	1	1.4
	Landslide	1	1	1	4	1	1.3

HAZARD RISK	MAN-MADE HAZARDS	RISK ASSESSMENT CATEGORY					RISK FACTOR (RF)
		PROBABILITY	IMPACT	SPATIAL EXTENT	WARNING TIME	DURATION	
HIGH	Fire (Urban/Structural)	4	2	1	4	2	2.6
	Environmental Hazard and Explosion	3	2	2	4	3	2.6
	Levee Failure	1	3	3	4	3	2.5
	Utility Interruption	3	1	3	4	3	2.5
MODERATE	Transportation Accident	4	1	1	4	1	2.2
	Dam Failure	1	3	2	4	2	2.2
	Mass Gathering and Civil Disturbance	3	1	1	4	2	2
LOW	Terrorism	1	3	1	4	1	1.9
	Building Collapse	1	3	1	4	1	1.9
	Nuclear Incident	1	1	1	4	2	1.4