



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2021

FAYETTE COUNTY HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE BEGINS

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) kicked off its Hazard Mitigation Plan update process earlier this month.

Fayette County is required by law to update its plan every five years, with the latest renewal set for September 2022.

According to EMA Director Roy Shipley, the plan is required to ensure eligibility for certain types of state and federal disaster relief funding in the event of a disaster, making municipalities' participation even more crucial.

Fayette County EMA recognizes mitigation as one of the four phases of emergency management. It is defined as methods to reduce the vulnerability of the populace and property of the county to injury and loss resulting from natural and man-made disasters.

EMA officials held a series of open house sessions at the Joseph A. Hardy Connellsville Airport, hosted by the county's mitigation planners, Madeleine Fincham and Kevin Brown of Michael Baker International.

Fayette County EMA Planner/Trainer Jim Bittner said the meeting covered:

- The planning update's overall "target actions,"
- A review of the hazards currently identified in the plan, including their vulnerabilities and changes over the last five years,
- Individual actions identified by each municipality that they'd like to participate in and build on,
- Success stories municipalities have experienced from past mitigation actions over the last planning cycle.

"It's great to see so many of the municipalities involved in this planning process. This plan, while it is the county's plan, is only successful with buy-in and input from our municipalities, as it affects them more directly than it does the county," Bittner said. "It's important because these changes allow us, as a county, to build resilience for our residents and visitors. We can make Fayette County a safer place to live and visit by taking steps to mitigate hazards and limit damages that can destroy our homes and businesses."

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) currently receives annual updates from county officials, and all that information will be compiled and updated next year for submission of the final plan.

Once approved, Fayette municipalities will once again have the option to adopt the county's new Hazard Mitigation Plan in lieu of their own.

Fayette County Commissioner Scott Dunn said having an updated plan in place is crucial to the safety and development of all communities countywide.

“In the event of a natural disaster, the emergency preparedness response could reduce the loss of life and property. The Fayette County Emergency Management Agency has proven to be essential and more than capable of taking the lead during disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic, flooding and substantial snowfalls,” Dunn said. “Continuously updating and keeping the mitigation plan - along with the everchanging municipal officials, individuals, organizations and more - current and informed is a daunting task; and it prides me to say that Director Shipley and his staff do a great job.”

Commissioner Vince Vicites said updating the plan allows officials to better plan for the future.

“Although natural disasters and other emergencies are often unpredictable, it’s important for us to plan ahead. Doing so makes us eligible for necessary funding to address those disasters,” Vicites said. “By updating our plan every five years, we maintain a level of preparedness that allows us to react accordingly in all situations. Our Emergency Management Agency does a great job and always knows what actions to take when disaster strikes.”

Commissioner Chairman Dave Lohr said Fayette County has both an “overarching” comprehensive plan, as well as a plan for addressing declared disasters, with the Hazard Mitigation Plan providing a “template” for how to correct and minimize the impact of those disasters.

“This isn’t a simple ‘how-to’ manual that proscribes how to mitigate a disaster, but rather guidelines for what to do and how to proceed. Our emergency management team works diligently to keep our plan current; always with an eye to the next iteration of the process,” Lohr said. “This is a collaborative effort, working with each of our municipalities, so everyone has the opportunity to provide input relative to their needs and concerns. Updating the plan every five years is ultimately a win-win for the county because, when disaster strikes, we already have a plan in place and we’re qualified to tap into funding opportunities to pay for mitigation.”

For more information, contact Fincham at 724-986-5806 or madeleine.fincham@mbakerintl.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

###

This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

For more information, contact Kristi Rooker Kassimer, Public Relations Specialist, at 412-691-0262, kkassimer@fayettecountypa.info or Kaylie Moore, Community Relations Coordinator, at 724-430-1200 Ext. 1611, kmoore@fayettepa.org.