

# TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MERION



**Police Committee**  
September 2018

# Montgomery County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2017



# ***Montgomery County 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan***

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## **Implementation Activities**

**Goal #1:** Develop a better understanding of the potential disasters that could occur in Montgomery County.

In an effort to better integrate data used by county departments for vital decision making, Montgomery County has launched an effort to develop a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Strategic Management Plan for the entire county.

In 2012, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Regional Task Force (SEPA RTF) initiated a regional Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) as required by the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As one of the members of the SEPA RTF, in 2014, Montgomery County completed an update to its high-priority Critical Infrastructure and Key Resource data along with the development of the Montgomery County Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment. In 2017, Montgomery County completed an update of their risk management program. In this effort, the county will complete a risk assessment, capability assessment, and a risk-based capability/gap analysis.

**Goal #2:** Ensure that the public understands potential hazards and is aware of which actions to be taken to minimize their risks.

MC DPS has prepared and disseminated an Emergency Management Guide.

MC DPS and MCHD provided various types of topically important outreach activities and literature to help residents and visitors better understand various risks.

**Goal #3:** Significantly reduce the risk of loss of life, injuries, economic costs, and destruction of natural and cultural resources that result from all hazards.

**Goal #4:** Encourage and promote actions to minimize the impact of floods within the county.

## Figure 4.2.1.1: Summary of Potential Hazards

### Floods, Flash Floods and Ice Jams

Floods occur in various streams throughout the county, including the Schuylkill River in Pottstown Borough (Boro), Upper Providence Township (Twp), West Norriton Twp, Norristown, Bridgeport Boro and **Lower Merion Twp**; Perkiomen Creek in Collegeville Boro; Wissahickon Creek including the Sandy Run in Abington Twp, Upper Dublin Twp, Ambler Boro, and Whitmarsh Twp; Pennypack Creek in Upper Moreland Twp, Hatboro Boro, and Lower Moreland Twp; Tookany Creek in Cheltenham Twp.

**Some floods have caused major disasters in parts of the county with severe property damage and loss of life.** Evacuations and displacement of families for significant periods of time has occurred during floods. Floods and flash floods are common.

Approximately 2.5% of the county is located in flood prone areas. It is estimated that 2,648 buildings are located in the 1% probability flood plain area.

### Hurricanes, Tropic Storms, Northeasters

The tracks of hurricanes rarely cross the county, though the impacts of hurricanes along the east coast can cause flooding and wind damage in the county.

Hurricanes can cause significant disaster, though the distance from the coast reduces the potential severity of a hurricane.

**Lower Merion Township - River Road and Belmont Hills:** There are over 40 residential properties located along River Road in Gladwyne (Lower Merion Township) that lie within the Schuylkill River floodplain. Most of these houses were constructed as seasonal dwellings with access to the river. Over the past three decades many of these homes have been rebuilt or upgraded and appear to be flood proofed. These homes all have access to the Schuylkill River and are attractive to year round residents interested in boating and water recreation. Access to the properties is along River Road which is separated from the remainder of the township by an active rail freight line. At three locations: Hollow Road, Mill Creek Road, and Waverly Road, there are underpasses that permit access to River Road. These underpasses typically flood since they are low points in the road. In addition to the houses, there is a Veteran of Foreign Wars meeting hall and township park along River Road. Both of these contain boat access facilities. The Flat Rock Dam owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is located down river from this area.



The Georgia Pacific (former Connelly Container Corp) corrugated card board plant lies within the flood plain down river from the Green Lane Bridge. Access to the plant site is gained over a private bridge across the Schuylkill River coming from Philadelphia and through Richter's Ferry Road in Lower Merion Township. This facility that sits on the old PenCoyd Iron Works site was used for the manufacture of various types of corrugated cardboard boxes. The property is proposed to be developed as 600 elevated mid-rise condominiums by O'Neill Properties.

Dramatic flooding occurred in August, 2009 along Rock Hill Run in the Belmont Hills area and several small tributaries of the Schuylkill River draining Lower Merion Township.

4.3.7.3. Past Occurrence There is very little information about past landslides in Montgomery County. A major localized landslide occurred in West Conshohocken Borough on June 27, 2015 resulting in the long term closure of Balligomingo Road between Route 23 (Front Street) and Portland Road for mud removal and slope stabilization. The mudslide was induced by heavy rains along a very steeply sloped north facing slope. As consequence of the landslide, large trees fell over further destabilizing the slope.

**Another significant landslide occurred in the county in Lower Merion Township** within the steep slopes near the Schuylkill River. Though only a small mudslide that occurred on **January 2, 2007**, it **caused the derailment of a 54-car freight train.**

Fortunately none of the train cars carrying hazardous material leaked and there were no serious injuries. Other small soil movement has occurred in isolated areas causing the overturning of walls and very localized damage.

## **Montgomery County 2017 Hazard Mitigation Plan**

One of the most horrific air crashes occurred shortly after noon on **April 4, 1991** above **Lower Merion Township**. A **plane containing Senator John Heinz and a helicopter which was checking the landing gear on the plane collided**. The debris from the collision landed on the playground at the Merion Elementary School killing two children and injuring three other children and two school employees. Five passengers in the plane and helicopter, including Senator Heinz were killed as well.