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February, 2018

## **Help Lessen the Impact of the Next Disaster**

There's no predicting when the Lehigh Valley will see the kind of damaging floods it saw in 2006, or the punishing winds that Superstorm Sandy brought in 2012, but being prepared requires planning now—and your help is needed.

The first public meeting to help update the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan is scheduled for 7 p.m. February 20, at Pinebrook Family Answers, 402 N. Fulton St., Allentown.

“We want people to tell us about the experiences they've had during these times of emergency,” said Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Environmental Planning Director Geoff Reese, who is project manager for the Hazard Mitigation Plan update. “What do they think we need to know to do this plan right?”

With help from a federal grant, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, in partnership with the state and Lehigh and Northampton counties, last September launched a more than yearlong effort to update a two-county plan that will spell out how each of the Valley's 62 municipalities and both counties should prepare and respond to both natural and manmade disasters. The process includes input from community leaders and emergency management officials, and people get their chance to weigh in later this month during the first of three public meetings.

The plan is designed not only to provide a roadmap of how to prepare for disaster before it happens, but to make the region's municipalities eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency disaster relief funding.

A second public meeting will be held at 7 p.m., April 25, at the Nurture Nature Center in Easton.

The new plan is scheduled to be in place in October.