



5. IDENTIFICATION OF HAZARDS OF CONCERN

To provide a strong foundation for mitigation actions in this plan, Cape May County considered a full range of hazards that could impact the area and then identified and ranked those that present the greatest concern. These hazards of concern were identified based on the following:

- Input from all Planning Partners
- Review of the 2024 New Jersey State Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Review of the 2021 Cape May County HMP
- Research on the frequency, magnitude, and costs associated with hazards that have previously or could feasibly impact the region
- Qualitative information regarding natural (not human-caused) hazards and the perceived vulnerability of the study area's assets to them.

Hazards of Concern are those hazards that are considered most likely to impact a community. These are identified using available data and local knowledge.

Natural Hazards are those hazards that are a source of harm or difficulty created by a meteorological, environmental, or geological event.

Table 5-1 documents the process of identifying the hazards of concern for further profiling and evaluation.



Table 5-1. Identification of Hazards of Concern for Cape May County

Hazard	May Occur in the County?	Poses Significant Threat to the County?	Why was this determination made?	Sources
Animal Disease	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies animal disease as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider animal disease to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Civil Unrest	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies civil unrest as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider civil unrest to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County as it is addressed in other preparedness plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Coastal Erosion	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies coastal erosion as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County borders the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware Bay and is susceptible to eroding coast lines. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified coastal erosion as a hazard of concern for Cape May County; however, this hazard will be discussed in the Flood hazard profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NCEI Planning Partnership Input
Crop Failure	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies crop failure as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider crop failure to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Cyber Attack	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies cyber-attack as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider cyber-attack to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County as it is addressed in other preparedness plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Dam Failure	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Dam Failure as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County has 11 dams in its jurisdictions, 7 which are identified as significant hazard classified dams. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Dam Failure as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input USACE National Inventory of Dams



5. Identification of Hazards of Concern

Hazard	May Occur in the County?	Poses Significant Threat to the County?	Why was this determination made?	Sources
Drought	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Drought as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. New Jersey has entered periods of drought and Cape May County has experienced droughts classified in the abnormally dry and moderate categories. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Drought as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NCEI USDA U.S. Drought Monitor NDMC Planning Partnership Input
Earthquake	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Earthquakes as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Although the County has not experienced a major earthquake, and faces low risk based on the 2024 New Jersey State HMP, soils in Cape May County have a medium risk to liquefaction. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Earthquake as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NJGWS USGS Planning Partnership Input
Economic Collapse	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Economic Collapse as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider economic collapse to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Extreme Temperature	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies extreme cold and extreme heat as hazards of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County has been included in 2 Extreme Cold and 15 Extreme Heat occurrences since 1893. Cape May County's population balloons in the summer months, increasing the number of persons exposed to extreme heat. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified extreme temperature as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP NOAA Planning Partnership Input
Fishing Failure	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Fishing Failure as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider fishing failure to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input



Hazard	May Occur in the County?	Poses Significant Threat to the County?	Why was this determination made?	Sources
Flood (riverine, flash, urban/stormwater)	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Flood as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County was included in FEMA declarations where flooding may have occurred. Cape May County has been included in numerous flood and flashflood events from the NOAA database. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Flood as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. This hazard will also include coastal erosion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NCEI Planning Partnership Input
Geological Hazards	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Landslides and Land Subsidence as hazards of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County does not have soluble carbonate rock, karst soils, or many areas of high grade or steep slopes. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider geological hazards to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA USGS NJGWS Planning Partnership Input
Harmful Algal Bloom	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies harmful algal blooms as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. There are areas of freshwater lakes and streams in Cape May County which could be exposed to harmful algal blooms. According to the 2024 New Jersey State HMP there have been two instances (2020, 2021) of harmful algal blooms in Cape May County. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider harmful algal blooms to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Hazardous Substances	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies hazardous substances as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider hazardous substances to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County as it is addressed in other preparedness plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Hurricane (tropical cyclones, including tropical storms and tropical depressions)	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NJ HMP identifies hurricanes/tropical storms as hazards of concern for New Jersey. Due to its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, Cape May County is susceptible to hurricanes and tropical storms. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified hurricane as a hazard of concern for Cape May County; however, this hazard will be discussed in the Severe Weather hazard profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NHC NOAA NCEI Planning Partnership Input



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Hazard	May Occur in the County?	Poses Significant Threat to the County?	Why was this determination made?	Sources
Nuclear Hazards	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies nuclear hazards as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider nuclear hazards to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County as it is addressed in other preparedness plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input
Pandemic	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Pandemic as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County State has been identified in 2 FEMA declarations for COVID-19. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership noted that while pandemic may occur in the County, there are plans, policies, and procedures in place to reduce risks associated with this hazard. Therefore, pandemic was not identified as a hazard of concern for the 2026 HMP update. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA Cape May County Department of Health Planning Partnership Input
Severe Weather (windstorms, thunderstorms, hail, and tornadoes)	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Severe Weather as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County was included in 17 FEMA declarations between 1974-2025 in relation to severe storms. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Severe Weather as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NCEI Planning Partnership Input
Severe Winter Weather (heavy snow, blizzards, ice storms)	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Severe Winter Weather as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. Cape May County was included in 7 FEMA disaster declarations for winter weather between 1977-2025. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Severe Winter Weather as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA NOAA NCEI Planning Partnership Input
Terrorism	Yes	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Terrorism as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership do not consider terrorism to be a hazard of concern for Cape May County as it is addressed in other preparedness plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP Planning Partnership Input



Hazard	May Occur in the County?	Poses Significant Threat to the County?	Why was this determination made?	Sources
Wildfire	Yes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2024 New Jersey State HMP identifies Wildfire as a hazard of concern for New Jersey. There have been occurrences of wildfires of varying severity in Cape May County. The Steering Committee and Planning Partnership identified Wildfire as a hazard of concern for Cape May County. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey State HMP FEMA New Jersey Forest Fire Service Planning Partnership Input

- CRREL *Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory*
- DR *Presidential Disaster Declaration Number*
- EM *Presidential Disaster Emergency Number*
- FEMA *Federal Emergency Management Agency*
- NCEI *National Centers for Environmental Information*
- NRCC *Northeast Regional Climate Center*
- NYSDEC *California State Department of Environmental Conservation*
- NYS DHSES *California State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services*
- NYS HMP *California State Hazard Mitigation Plan*
- PGA *Peak ground acceleration*
- SPC *Storm Prediction Center*
- USDA *U.S. Department of Agriculture*
- USGS *United States Geologic Survey*



Based on the review of potential hazards of concern, 9 hazards of concern were identified as significant hazards affecting the entire County, to be addressed at the County level in this plan (shown here in alphabetical order):

- Dam and Levee Failure
- Drought
- Earthquake
- Extreme Temperature
- Flood
- Severe Weather
- Severe Winter Weather
- Wildfire

Other natural and human-caused hazards of concern have occurred within Cape May County, but have a low potential to occur, are addressed by other planning mechanisms, and/or do not result in significant impacts within the County. Therefore, these hazards are not addressed in this update. If deemed necessary by the County, these hazards may be considered in future plan updates.

5.1 HAZARD GROUPINGS

The Steering Committee approved use of the following hazard event groupings:

- Dam failures are any instances when a dam is damaged, destroyed or otherwise overtopped, releasing water or other liquid stored behind the dam.
- A drought is a period characterized by long durations of below normal precipitation. Drought is a temporary irregularity that can affect agriculture, water supply, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and plant life.
- An earthquake is the sudden movement of the earth's surface caused by the release of stress accumulated within or along the edge of the earth's tectonic plates, a volcanic eruption, or a man-made activities that cause geologic stresses.
- The extreme temperature hazard includes both heat and cold events, which can have a significant impact to human health, commercial/agricultural businesses, and primary and secondary effects on infrastructure (e.g., burst pipes and power failure). What constitutes "extreme cold" or "extreme heat" can vary across different areas of the country based on what the population is accustomed to.
- The flood hazard includes coastal erosion, riverine flooding, flash flooding, sea level rise, and stormwater/urban flooding. Inclusion of the various forms of flooding under a general Flood hazard is consistent with that used in FEMA's Multi-Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment guidance and the New Jersey HMP.
- The severe weather hazard includes windstorms that often entail a variety of other influencing weather conditions, including thunderstorms, hail, lightning, and tornadoes. Tropical disturbances (hurricanes, tropical storms, and tropical depressions) are often identified as a type of severe storm. For this HMP update, severe weather includes thunderstorms, hail, lightning, tornadoes, hurricanes, and tropical storms.
- The severe winter weather hazard includes blizzards, ice storms, snowstorms, sleet, and freezing rain.
- The wildfire hazard can be defined as any non-structural fire that occurs in the wildland. Three distinct types of wildland fires have been defined and include naturally occurring wildfire, human-caused wildfire, and prescribed fire. They may be highly destructive and become difficult to control. Wildfires result in the



disturbance of forest and brush and destruction of real estate and personal property and have secondary impacts on other hazards, such as flooding, by removing vegetation and disturbing watersheds.

These groupings are the same as those provided by FEMA (*FEMA 386-2 Understanding Your Risks, Identifying Hazards and Estimating Losses; Multi-Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment – The Cornerstone of the National Mitigation Strategy; Local Mitigation Planning Handbook*) and take into consideration the hazard grouping in the New Jersey HMP.