

5.4.7 Severe Winter Storm

The following section provides the hazard profile (hazard description, location, extent, previous occurrences and losses, probability of future occurrences, and impact of climate change) and vulnerability assessment for the severe winter storm hazard in Rockland County.

5.4.7.1 Profile

Hazard Description

A winter storm is a weather event in which the main types of precipitation are snow, sleet or freezing rain. They can be a combination of heavy snow, blowing snow, and/or dangerous wind chills. There are three basic components needed to make a winter storm. Below freezing temperatures (cold air) in the clouds and near the ground are necessary to make snow and ice. Lift, something to raise the moist air to form clouds and cause precipitation, is needed. Examples of this is warm air colliding with cold air and being forced to rise over the cold dome or air flowing up a mountainside. The last thing needed to make a winter storm is moisture to form clouds and precipitation. Air blowing across a body of water, such as a large lake or the ocean (National Severe Storms Laboratory 2014).

Some winter storms are large enough to immobilize an entire region while others may only affect a single community. Winter storms are typically accompanied by low temperatures, high winds, freezing rain or sleet, and heavy snowfall. The aftermath of a winter storm can have an impact on a community or region for days, weeks, or even months; potentially causing cold temperatures, flooding, storm surge, closed and/or blocked roadways, downed utility lines, and power outages. In Rockland County, winter storms include blizzards, snow storms, Nor'Easters and ice storms. Extreme cold temperatures, wind chills and Nor'Easters are also associated with winter storms; however, based on input from the Planning Committee, these events are further discussed in Sections 5.4.3 (Extreme Temperature) and 5.4.6 (Severe Storms).

Heavy Snow

According to the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC), snow is precipitation in the form of ice crystals. It originates in clouds when temperatures are below the freezing point (32°F), when water vapor in the atmosphere condenses directly into ice without going through the liquid stage. Once an ice crystal has formed, it absorbs and freezes additional water vapor from the surrounding air, growing into snow crystals or a snow pellet, which then falls to the earth. Snow falls in different forms: snowflakes, snow pellets, or sleet. Snowflakes are clusters of ice crystals that form from a cloud. Snow pellets are opaque ice particles in the atmosphere. They form as ice crystals fall through super-cooled cloud droplets, which are below freezing but remain a liquid. The cloud droplets then freeze to the crystals. Sleet is made up of drops of rain that freeze into ice as they fall through colder air layers. They are usually smaller than 0.30 inches in diameter (NSIDC 2013).

Blizzards

A blizzard is a winter snowstorm with sustained or frequent wind gusts of 35 mph or more, accompanied by falling or blowing snow reducing visibility to or below 0.25 mile. These must be the predominant conditions over a 3-hour period. Extremely cold temperatures are often associated with blizzard conditions, but are not a formal part of the definition. The hazard, created by the combination of snow, wind, and low visibility, significantly increases when temperatures are below 20°F. A severe blizzard is categorized as having temperatures near or below 10°F, winds exceeding 45 mph, and visibility reduced by snow to near zero. Storm systems powerful enough to cause blizzards usually form when the jet stream dips far to the south, allowing cold air from the north to clash with warm, moister air from the south. Blizzard conditions often develop on the

northwest side of an intense storm system. The difference between the lower pressure in the storm and the higher pressure to the west creates a tight pressure gradient, resulting in strong winds and extreme conditions caused by the blowing snow (The Weather Channel 2012).

Ice Storms

An ice storm describes those events when damaging accumulations of ice are expected during freezing rain situations. Significant ice accumulations are typically accumulations of 0.25-inches or greater (NWS 2013). Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees, power lines and utility poles, and communication towers. Ice can disrupt communications and power for days. Even small accumulations of ice can be extremely dangerous to motorists and pedestrians (NWS 2008).

Location

Snow and Blizzards

On average, New York State receives more snowfall than any other states within the United States, with the easternmost and west-central portions of the State most likely to suffer under severe winter storm occurrences than the southern portion. Average snowfall in the State is about 65 inches, but varies greatly in the different regions of the State. Between 1960 and 2012, Rockland County had a total average snowfall of less than 60 inches (New York State HMP 2014).

Ice Storms

The Midwest and Northeast United States are prime areas for freezing rain and ice storm events. These events can occur anytime between November and April, with most events occurring during December and January. Based on data from 1948 to 2000, the average annual number of days with freezing rain for Rockland County is between four and five days (Midwest Regional Climate Center 2016).

Extent

The magnitude or severity of a severe winter storm depends on several factors including a region’s climatological susceptibility to snowstorms, snowfall amounts, snowfall rates, wind speeds, temperatures, visibility, storm duration, topography, time of occurrence during the day and week (e.g., weekday versus weekend), and time of season.

The extent of a severe winter storm can be classified by meteorological measurements and by evaluating its societal impacts. NOAA’s National Climatic Data Center (NCDC) is currently producing the Regional Snowfall Index (RSI) for significant snowstorms that impact the eastern two-thirds of the United States. The RSI ranks snowstorm impacts on a scale from 1 to 5. It is based on the spatial extent of the storm, the amount of snowfall, and the interaction of the extent and snowfall totals with population (based on the 2000 Census). The NCDC has analyzed and assigned RSI values to over 500 storms since 1900 (NOAA-NCDC 2011). Table 5.4.7-1 presents the five RSI ranking categories.

Table 5.4.7-1. RSI Ranking Categories

Category	Description	RSI Value
1	Notable	1-3
2	Significant	3-6
3	Major	6-10
4	Crippling	10-18

Category	Description	RSI Value
5	Extreme	18.0+

Source: NOAA-NCDC 2011

Note: RSI = Regional Snowfall Index

The NWS operates a widespread network of observing systems such as geostationary satellites, Doppler radars, and automated surface observing systems that feed into the current state-of-the-art numerical computer models to provide a look into what will happen next, ranging from hours to days. The models are then analyzed by NWS meteorologists who then write and disseminate forecasts (NWS 2013).

The magnitude of a severe winter storm can be qualified into five main categories by event type:

- Heavy Snowstorm – accumulations of four inches or more of snow in a six-hour period, or six inches of snow in a 12-hour period
- Sleet Storm – significant accumulations of solid pellets which form from the freezing of raindrops or partially melted snowflakes causing slippery surfaces, posing a hazard to pedestrians and motorists
- Ice Storm – significant accumulation of rain or drizzle freezing on objects (trees, power lines, roadways, etc.) as it strikes them, causing slippery surfaces and damage from sheer weight of ice accumulations
- Blizzard – wind velocity of 35 mph or more, temperatures below freezing, considerable blowing snow with visibility frequently below one-quarter mile prevailing over an extended period of time
- Severe Blizzard – wind velocity of 45 mph, temperatures of 10°F or lower, a high density of blowing snow with visibility frequently measured in feet prevailing over an extended period of time (Rockland County HMP 2010).

The NWS uses winter weather watches, warnings and advisories to ensure that people know what to expect in the coming hours and days. A winter storm watch means that severe winter conditions (heavy snow, ice, etc.) may affect a certain area, but its occurrence, location and timing are uncertain. A winter storm watch is issued when severe winter conditions (heavy rain and/or significant ice accumulations) are possible within in the next day or two. A winter storm warning is issued when severe winter conditions are expected (heavy snow seven inches or greater in 12 hours or nine inches or greater in 24 hours; ice storm with ½ inch or more). A winter weather advisory is used when winter conditions (snow, sleet and/or freezing rain/ice) are expected to cause significant inconvenience and may be hazardous (snow and/or sleet with amounts of four to six inches; freezing rain and drizzle in any accretion of ice on roads but less than ½ inch). A blizzard warning is issued when snow and strong winds will combine to produce a blinding snow, visibility near zero/whiteouts, and deep snow drifts (NWS 2015).

Previous Occurrences and Losses

Many sources provided winter storm information regarding previous occurrences and losses associated with winter storm events throughout Rockland County. With so many sources reviewed for the purpose of this Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), loss and impact information for many events could vary depending on the source. Therefore, the accuracy of monetary figures discussed is based only on the available information identified during research for this HMP.

Between 1954 and October 2016, FEMA included New York State in 24 winter storm-related major disaster (DR) or emergency (EM) declarations classified as one or a combination of the following disaster types: severe winter storm, snowstorm, snow, ice storm, winter storm, blizzard, and flooding. Generally, these disasters cover a wide region of the State; therefore, they may have impacted many counties. Rockland County was included in four of these declarations.

For this plan update, winter weather events were summarized from 2009 to 2016. For events prior to 2009, refer to the 2010 Rockland County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Known severe winter storm events, including FEMA disaster declarations, which have impacted Rockland County are identified in Table 5.4.7-2. For detailed information on damages and impacts to each municipal, refer to Section 9 (jurisdictional annexes). Please note that not all events that have occurred in Rockland County are included due to the extent of documentation and the fact that not all sources may have been identified or researched. Loss and impact information could vary depending on the source. Therefore, the accuracy of monetary figures discussed is based only on the available information identified during research for this HMP Update.

Table 5.4.7-2. Severe Winter Weather Events in Rockland County, 2009 to 2016

Dates of Event	Event Type	FEMA Declaration Number	County Designated?	Losses / Impacts
December 26-27, 2010	Severe Winter Storm and Snowstorm (Nor'Easter)	DR-1957	Yes	A major Nor'Easter brought significant snow and blizzard conditions to much of the northeast United States, including the New York City area. Bands of heavy snow with snowfall rates of one to three inches an hour occurred across the region. Strong, gusty winds were also associated with this storm. Wind gusts across the region ranged from 35 to 45 mph with gusts of 50 to 70 mph reported across southeastern New York State, Connecticut and eastern Massachusetts. In the New York City area, strong winds pushed the falling snow into drifts of up to four feet. There were major transportation delays as airports and rail shut down across the city and Long Island. This was one of the worst blizzards in history for New York City and its surrounding areas. Snowfall totals in Rockland County exceeded 18 inches.
October 29-30, 2011	Nor'Easter / Snowstorm	N/A	N/A	A historic October Nor'Easter brought snow, heavy rain and strong winds from the Mid-Atlantic Region to New England on October 29 th . In New York State, snowfall rates were as high as two to four inches per hour. Power outages occurred due to downed trees and wires. New York State governor declared a state of emergency for 13 counties. More than 400,000 customers lost power across the State, with the greatest damage in Westchester, Putnam, Rockland and Orange Counties. In Rockland County, there was widespread tree damage and power outages. Between four and eight inches of snow fell, with greater amounts in the higher elevations. In New City, downed trees blocked lanes on Route 304. Numerous trees and tree limbs were downed in Tallman and Pomona as well.
February 8-9, 2013	Winter Storm	N/A	N/A	Heavy snowfall, blizzard conditions and winter storm conditions moved across southeast New York State. In Rockland County, snowfall totals ranged from nine inches in Nyack to 13 inches in New Hempstead, New City (Town of Clarkstown) and the Village of Suffern.
November 26-27, 2014	Nor'Easter / Snowstorm	DR-4204	No	An early season winter storm impacted eastern New York State during Thanksgiving. The storm began the morning of the 26 th and once the snow began, it increased in intensity, falling at rates at or greater than one inch per hour. Temperatures dropped to or below freezing across the entire region. There were heavy bands of snow occurring in some locations, especially across the Taconics, Mohawk Valley and southeastern Adirondacks. Snowfall totals ranged from six to 12 inches, with up to 15 inches in the southeastern Adirondacks. Snowfall totals in Rockland County ranged from three to five inches along and north of Interstate 287.
January 18, 2015	Freezing Rain	N/A	N/A	Freezing rain fell throughout the day and into the evening. This led to widespread motor vehicle accidents and numerous falls and injuries in Rockland County.
January 24, 2015	Heavy Snow	N/A	N/A	Heavy snow fell over southeast New York State, including Rockland County. Snowfall totals for the county were around seven inches.
February 1-2, 2015	Heavy Snow	N/A	N/A	A wintery mix which changed over to snow fell across southeast New York State, with totals ranging from five to 10 inches and up to a quarter inch of ice. In Rockland

Table 5.4.7-2. Severe Winter Weather Events in Rockland County, 2009 to 2016

Dates of Event	Event Type	FEMA Declaration Number	County Designated?	Losses / Impacts
				County, snowfall totals ranged from six to 8.5 inches across the county. The highest amount of 8.5 inches was reported in New City (Town of Clarkstown).
January 22-23, 2016	Blizzard	N/A	N/A	Heavy snow, strong winds and blizzard conditions impacted southeast New York State. New York governor declared a state of emergency for the impacted areas. Snowfall totals in Rockland County ranged from 16 inches in Valley Cottage (Town of Clarkstown) to 17 inches in the Town of Stony Point.

Sources: FEMA 2016; NOAA-NCEI 2016; SPC 2016
 DR Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA)
 FEMA Federal Emergency Management Agency
 Mph Miles Per Hour

NCEI National Centers for Environmental Information
 NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
 N/A Not Applicable

Probability of Future Occurrences

Winter storm hazards in New York State are virtually guaranteed yearly since the State is located at relatively high latitudes resulting in winter temperatures that range between 0°F and 32 °F for a good deal of the fall through early spring season (late October until mid-April). In addition, the State is exposed to large quantities of moisture from both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. While it is highly probable that a number of significant winter storms will occur during the winter and fall season, what is not easily determined is how many such storms will occur during that time frame (NYS DHSES 2014).

The 2014 New York State Hazard Mitigation Plan Update (HMP) suggests that, based on historical snow related disaster declaration occurrences, New York State can expect a snow storm of disaster declaration proportions, on average, once every three to five years. Similarly, for ice storms, based on historical disaster declarations, it is expected that ice storms of disaster proportions will occur, on average, once every seven to 10 years within the State (NYS DHSES 2014).

The New York State HMP also documents historical winter storm events by county. Between 1960 and 2012, Rockland County had 83 winter storm events and resulted in four fatalities, 32 injuries, over \$31 million in property damage and over \$9,000 in crop damage. These statistics showed that the County has a 160% chance of winter storm events occurring in the future with a recurrence interval of 0.63 (NYS DHSES 2014). However, according to the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) Storm Events Database, Rockland County experienced 59 winter weather events between 1950 and 2015, including two blizzards, 36 heavy snow events, three ice storms, 12 winter storms, and six winter weather events. The table below shows these statistics, as well as the annual average number of events and the percent chance of these individual severe winter storm hazards occurring in Rockland County in future years (NOAA NCEI 2016).

Table 5.4.7-3. Probability of Future Occurrence of Severe Winter Weather Events

Hazard Type	Number of Occurrences Between 1950 and 2015	Rate of Occurrence or Annual Number of Events (average)	Recurrence Interval (in years) (# Years/Number of Events)	Probability of Event in any given year	% chance of occurrence in any given year
Blizzard	2	0.03	33.00	0.03	3.03
Heavy Snow	36	0.55	1.83	0.55	54.55
Ice Storm	3	0.05	22.00	0.05	4.55
Winter Storm	12	0.18	5.50	0.18	18.18
Winter Weather	6	0.09	11.00	0.09	9.09
Total	59	0.91	1.12	0.89	89.39

Source: NOAA-NCEI 2016

In Section 5.3, the identified hazards of concern for Rockland County were ranked. The probability of occurrence, or likelihood of the event, is one parameter used for hazard rankings. Based on historical records and input from the Planning Committee, the probability of occurrence for severe winter storms in the County is considered ‘frequent’ (event that occurs within 25 years, as presented in Table 5.3-3).

Climate Change Impacts

New York State averages more than 40 inches of snow each year. Snowfall varies regionally, based on topography and the proximity to large lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. Maximum snowfall is more than 165 inches in parts of the Adirondacks and Tug Hill Plateau, as well as in the westernmost parts of the State. The warming

influence of the Atlantic Ocean keeps snow in the New York City and Long Island areas below 36 inches each year.

Climate change is beginning to affect both people and resources in New York State, and these impacts are projected to continue growing. Impacts related to increasing temperatures and sea level rise are already being felt in the State. ClimAID: the Integrated Assessment for Effective Climate Change in New York State (ClimAID) was undertaken to provide decision-makers with information on the State’s vulnerability to climate change and to facilitate the development of adaptation strategies informed by both local experience and scientific knowledge (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority [NYSERDA] 2011).

Temperatures in New York State are warming, with an average rate of warming over the past century of 0.25° F per decade. Average annual temperatures are projected to increase across New York State by 2° F to 3.4° F by the 2020s, 4.1° F to 6.8° F by the 2050s, and 5.3° F to 10.1° F by the 2080s. By the end of the century, the greatest warming is projected to be in the northern section of the State (NYSERDA 2014).

Regional precipitation across New York State is projected to increase by approximately one to eight-percent by the 2020s, three to 12-percent by the 2050s, and four to 15-percent by the 2080s. By the end of the century, the greatest increases in precipitation are projected to be in the northern areas of the State (NYSERDA 2014).

Each region in New York State, as defined by ClimAID, has attributes that will be affected by climate change. Rockland County is part of Region 2, Catskill Mountains and West Hudson River Valley. In Region 2, it is estimated that temperatures will increase by 3.1°F to 6.9°F by the 2050s and 4.0°F to 10.7°F by the 2080s (baseline of 50.0°F). Precipitation totals will increase between 1 and 14% by the 2050s and 2 to 18% by the 2080s (baseline of 46.0 inches). Some of the impacts that climate change may have on this region include declines in winter recreation (NYSERDA 2011). As the century progresses, snowfall is likely to become less frequent, with the snow season decreasing in length. Possible changes in the intensity of snowfall per storm are highly uncertain, and it is unknown how the frequency and intensity of ice storms and freezing rain may change (NYSERDA 2014).

Table 5.4.7-4 displays the projected seasonal precipitation change for the Catskill Mountains and West Hudson River Valley ClimAID Region (NYSERDA 2014).

Table 5.4.7-4. Projected Seasonal Precipitation Change in Region 2, 2050s (% change)

Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
0 to +15	0 to +10	-5 to +10	-5 to +10

Source: *NYSERDA 2011*

It is uncertain how climate change will impact winter storms. Based on historical data, it is expected that the following will occur at least once per 100 years:

- Up to eight inches of rain fall in the rain band near the coast over a 36-hour period
- Up to four inches of freezing rain in the ice band near central New York State, of which between one and two inches of accumulated ice, over a 24-hour period
- Up to two feet of accumulated snow in the snow band in northern and western New York State over a 48-hour period (NYSERDA 2011)

New York State is already experiencing the effects of climate change during the winter season. Winter snow cover is decreasing and spring comes, on average, about a week earlier than it did a few years ago. Nighttime temperatures are measurably warmer, even during the colder months (NYSDEC Date Unknown). Overall winter temperatures in New York State are almost five degrees warmer than in 1970 (NYSDEC Date Unknown). The

State has seen a decrease in the number of cold winter days (below 32°F) and can expect to see a decrease in snow cover, by as much as 25 to 50% by end of the next century. The lack of snow cover may jeopardize opportunities for skiing, snowmobiling and other types of winter recreation; and natural ecosystems will be affected by the changing snow cover (Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences 2011).

Some climatologists believe that climate change may play a role in the frequency and intensity of Nor'easters. Two ingredients are needed to produce strong Nor'easters and intense snowfall: (1) temperatures which are just below freezing, and (2) massive moisture coming from the Gulf of Mexico. When temperatures are far below freezing, snow is less likely. As temperatures increase in the winter months they will be closer to freezing rather than frigidly cold. Climate change is expected to produce more moisture, thus increasing the likelihood that these two ingredients (temperatures just below freezing and intense moisture) will cause more intense snow events.

5.4.7.2 Vulnerability Assessment

To understand risk, a community must evaluate what assets are exposed or vulnerable in the identified hazard area. For the severe winter storm hazard, all of Rockland County has been identified as the hazard area. Therefore, all assets in the County (population, structures, critical facilities and lifelines), as described in the County Profile (Section 4), are vulnerable to a winter storm. The following text evaluates and estimates the potential impact of the severe winter storm hazard on the County including:

- Overview of vulnerability
- Data and methodology used for the evaluation
- Impact on: (1) life, health and safety of residents, (2) general building stock, (3) critical facilities, (4) economy, and (5) future growth and development
- Change of vulnerability as compared to that presented in the 2010 Rockland County HMP
- Effect of climate change on vulnerability
- Further data collections that will assist understanding this hazard over time

Overview of Vulnerability

Severe winter storms are of significant concern to the County because of the frequency and magnitude of these events in the region, the direct and indirect costs associated with these events, delays caused by the storms, and impacts on the people and facilities of the region related to snow and ice removal, health problems, cascade effects such as utility failure (power outages) and traffic accidents, and stress on community resources.

Data and Methodology

Updated population and general building stock data were used to support an evaluation of assets exposed to this hazard and the potential impacts associated with this hazard. Additionally, as available economic losses were provided by the Planning Committee to support this vulnerability assessment.

Impact on Life, Health and Safety

According to the NOAA National Severe Storms Laboratory (NSSL); every year, winter weather indirectly and deceptively kills hundreds of people in the U.S., primarily from automobile accidents, overexertion and exposure. Winter storms are often accompanied by strong winds creating blizzard conditions with blinding wind-driven snow, drifting snow and extreme cold temperatures and dangerous wind chill. They are considered deceptive killers because most deaths and other impacts or losses are indirectly related to the storm. People can die in traffic accidents on icy roads, heart attacks while shoveling snow, or of hypothermia from prolonged exposure to cold. Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees and power lines, disabling electric power and communications for days or weeks. Heavy snow can immobilize a region and paralyze a city, shutting down

all air and rail transportation and disrupting medical and emergency services. Storms near the coast can cause coastal flooding and beach erosion as well as sink ships at sea. The economic impact of winter weather each year is huge, with costs for snow removal, damage and loss of business in the millions (NSSL 2006).

Heavy snow can immobilize a region and paralyze a city, stranding commuters, stopping the flow of supplies, and disrupting emergency and medical services. Accumulations of snow can collapse buildings and knock down trees and power lines. In rural areas, homes and farms may be isolated for days, and unprotected livestock may be lost. In the mountains, heavy snow can lead to avalanches. The cost of snow removal, repairing damages, and loss of business can have large economic impacts on cities and towns (NSSL 2006).

Heavy accumulations of ice can bring down trees, electrical wires, telephone poles and lines, and communication towers. Communications and power can be disrupted for days while utility companies work to repair the extensive damage. Even small accumulations of ice may cause extreme hazards to motorists and pedestrians. Bridges and overpasses are particularly dangerous because they freeze before other surfaces (NSSL 2006).

For the purposes of this HMP, the entire population of Rockland County (311,68 people) is exposed to severe winter storm events (U.S. Census, 2010). Snow accumulation and frozen/slippery road surfaces increase the frequency and impact of traffic accidents for the general population, resulting in personal injuries. Refer to Section 4 (County Profile) for population statistics for each participating municipality.

The elderly are considered most susceptible to this hazard due to their increased risk of injuries and death from falls and overexertion and/or hypothermia from attempts to clear snow and ice. In addition, severe winter storm events can reduce the ability of these populations to access emergency services. Residents with low incomes may not have access to housing or their housing may be less able to withstand cold temperatures (e.g., homes with poor insulation and heating supply).

Impact on General Building Stock

The entire general building stock inventory is exposed and vulnerable to the severe winter storm hazard. In general, structural impacts include damage to roofs and building frames, rather than building content. Table 5.4.7-5 presents the total exposure value for general building stock for each participating municipality.

Current modeling tools are not available to estimate specific losses for this hazard. As an alternate approach, this plan considers percentage damages that could result from severe winter storm conditions. Table 5.4.7-5 below summarizes percent damages that could result from severe winter storm conditions for the Planning Area’s total general building stock. Given professional knowledge and the currently available information, the potential loss for this hazard is many times considered to be overestimated because of varying factors (building structure type, age, load distribution, building codes in place, etc.). Therefore, the following information should be used as estimates only for planning purposes with the knowledge that the associated losses for severe winter storm events vary greatly.

Table 5.4.7-5. General Building Stock Exposure and Estimated Losses from Severe Winter Storm Events

Municipality	Total (All Occupancies)	1% Damage Loss Estimate	5% Damage Loss Estimate	10% Damage Loss Estimate
Airmont, Village of	\$1,147,606,000	\$11,476,060	\$57,380,300	\$1,147,606,000
Chestnut Ridge, Village of	\$1,208,912,000	\$12,089,120	\$60,445,600	\$1,208,912,000
Clarkstown, Town of	\$10,790,548,000	\$107,905,480	\$539,527,400	\$10,790,548,000
Grand View on Hudson, Village of	\$57,017,000	\$570,170	\$2,850,850	\$57,017,000
Haverstraw, Town of	\$1,306,045,000	\$13,060,450	\$65,302,250	\$1,306,045,000

Table 5.4.7-5. General Building Stock Exposure and Estimated Losses from Severe Winter Storm Events

Municipality	Total (All Occupancies)	1% Damage Loss Estimate	5% Damage Loss Estimate	10% Damage Loss Estimate
Haverstraw, Village of	\$864,560,000	\$8,645,600	\$43,228,000	\$864,560,000
Hillburn, Village of	\$154,749,000	\$1,547,490	\$7,737,450	\$154,749,000
Kaser, Village of	\$540,123,000	\$5,401,230	\$27,006,150	\$540,123,000
Montebello, Village of	\$637,968,000	\$6,379,680	\$31,898,400	\$637,968,000
New Hempstead, Village of	\$481,082,000	\$4,810,820	\$24,054,100	\$481,082,000
New Square, Village of	\$283,711,000	\$2,837,110	\$14,185,550	\$283,711,000
Nyack, Village of	\$1,195,804,000	\$11,958,040	\$59,790,200	\$1,195,804,000
Orangetown, Town of	\$5,765,568,000	\$57,655,680	\$288,278,400	\$5,765,568,000
Piermont, Village of	\$375,058,000	\$3,750,580	\$18,752,900	\$375,058,000
Pomona, Village of	\$476,410,000	\$4,764,100	\$23,820,500	\$476,410,000
Ramapo, Town of	\$2,994,808,000	\$29,948,080	\$149,740,400	\$2,994,808,000
Sloatsburg, Village of	\$355,185,000	\$3,551,850	\$17,759,250	\$355,185,000
South Nyack, Village of	\$520,705,000	\$5,207,050	\$26,035,250	\$520,705,000
Spring Valley, Village of	\$2,021,793,000	\$20,217,930	\$101,089,650	\$2,021,793,000
Stony Point, Town of	\$1,970,843,000	\$19,708,430	\$98,542,150	\$1,970,843,000
Suffern, Village of	\$1,219,838,000	\$12,198,380	\$60,991,900	\$1,219,838,000
Upper Nyack, Village of	\$267,094,000	\$2,670,940	\$13,354,700	\$267,094,000
Wesley Hills, Village of	\$651,564,000	\$6,515,640	\$32,578,200	\$651,564,000
West Haverstraw, Village of	\$985,445,000	\$9,854,450	\$49,272,250	\$985,445,000
Rockland County	\$36,272,436,000	\$362,724,360	\$1,813,621,800	\$36,272,436,000

Source: HAZUS-MH 3.2

A specific area that is vulnerable to the severe winter storm hazard is the floodplain. Severe winter storms can cause flooding through blockage of streams or through snow melt. At-risk residential infrastructures are presented in the flood hazard profile (Section 5.4.4). Generally, losses resulting from flooding associated with severe winter storms should be less than that associated with a 100-year flood. In addition, coastal areas are at high risk during winter storm events that involve high winds. Please refer to the severe storm profile (Section 5.4.6) profile for losses resulting from wind.

Impact on Critical Facilities

Full functionality of critical facilities such as police, fire and medical facilities is essential for response during and after a severe winter storm event. These critical facility structures are largely constructed of concrete and masonry; therefore, they should only suffer minimal structural damage from severe winter storm events. Because power interruption can occur, backup power is recommended. Infrastructure at risk for this hazard includes roadways that could be damaged due to the application of salt and intermittent freezing and warming conditions that can damage roads over time. Severe snowfall requires the clearing roadways and alerting citizens to dangerous conditions; following the winter season, resources for road maintenance and repair are required.

Impact on Economy

The cost of snow and ice removal and repair of roads from the freeze/thaw process can drain local financial resources. Another impact on the economy includes impacts on commuting into, or out of, the area for work or school. The loss of power and closure of roads prevents the commuter population traveling to work within and outside of the County.

Future Growth and Development

As discussed in Sections 4 and 9, areas targeted for future growth and development have been identified across the County. Any areas of growth could be potentially impacted by the severe winter storm hazard because the entire planning area is exposed and vulnerable. Areas targeted for potential future growth and development in the next five (5) years have been identified across the County at the municipal level. Refer to the jurisdictional annexes in Volume II of this HMP.

Current New York State land use and building codes incorporate standards that address and mitigate snow accumulation. Some local municipalities in the State have implemented the following activities to eliminate loss of life and property and infrastructure damages during winter storm events:

- Removal of snow from roadways
- Removal of dead trees and trim trees/brush from roadways to lessen falling limbs and trees
- Ensure proper road signs are visible and installed properly
- Bury electrical and telephone utility lines to minimize downed lines
- Removal of debris/obstructions in waterways and develop routine inspections/maintenance plans to reduce potential flooding
- Replace substandard roofs of critical facilities to reduce exposure to airborne germs resulting from leakage
- Purchase and install backup generators in evacuation facilities and critical facilities to essential services to residents
- Install cell towers in areas where limited telecommunication is available to increase emergency response and cell phone coverage (NYS DHSES, 2014)

Change of Vulnerability

Overall, the entire County remains vulnerable to severe winter storms. A damage estimate was not conducted as part of the 2010 Rockland County Hazard Mitigation Plan risk assessment. The updated vulnerability assessment provides a more current risk assessment and analysis for the County.

Effect of Climate Change on Vulnerability

Climate is defined not simply as average temperature and precipitation but also by the type, frequency and intensity of weather events. Both globally and at the local scale, climate change has the potential to alter the prevalence and severity of extremes such as winter storms. While predicting changes of winter storm events under a changing climate is difficult, understanding vulnerabilities to potential changes is a critical part of estimating future climate change impacts on human health, society and the environment (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2013).

The 2011 ‘Responding to Climate Change in New York State’ report was prepared for New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to study the potential impacts of global climate change on New York State. According to the synthesis report, it is uncertain how climate change will influence extreme winter storm events. Winter temperatures are projected to continue to increase. In general, warmer winters may lead to a decrease in snow cover and an earlier arrival in spring; all of which have numerous cascading effects on the environment and economy. Annual average precipitation is also projected to increase. The increase in precipitation is likely to occur during the winter months as rain, with the possibility of slightly reduced precipitation projected for the late summer and early fall. Increased rain on snowpack may lead to increased flooding and related impacts on water quality, infrastructure, and agriculture in the State. Overall, it is anticipated that winter storms will continue to pass through New York State (NYSERDA, 2011). Future enhancements in

climate modeling will provide an improved understanding of how the climate will change and impact the Northeast.

Additional Data and Next Steps

The assessment above identifies vulnerable populations and economic losses associated with this hazard of concern. Historic data on structural losses to general building stock are not adequate to predict specific losses to this inventory; therefore, the percent of damage assumption methodology was applied. This methodology is based on FEMA’s How to Series (FEMA 386-2), Understanding Your Risks, Identifying and Estimating Losses (FEMA, 2001) and FEMA’s Using HAZUS-MH for Risk Assessment (FEMA 433) (FEMA, 2004). The collection of additional/actual valuation data for general building stock and critical infrastructure losses would further support future estimates of potential exposure and damage for the general building stock inventory. Mitigation strategies addressing early warning, dissemination of hazard information, provisions for snow removal and back-up power are included in Volume II, Section 9 of this plan.