5.4.11   Terrorism

This section provides a profile and vulnerability assessment for the terrorism hazard.

5.4.11.1   Hazard Profile

This section provides profile information, including description, extent, location, previous occurrences and losses, and probability of future occurrences.

Description

Terrorism is defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (Title 28 CFR §0.85 2015). Terrorism is less about causing physical damage and injuries (and fatalities) as it is about creating and spreading fear. This fear may result in a change in key policy or business operations (such as logging) to cease. Terrorism may include the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive weapons; armed attacks; industrial sabotage; cyber terrorism; and other means. These categories can be further subcategorized or attacks can involve multiple categories, especially when considering the means and purpose behind the event.

FEMA lists common categories of terrorism, including threats of terrorism, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings, bomb scares and bombings, cyber-attacks (computer-based attacks), and use of chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological weapons (FEMA 2014). These various types of terrorism are discussed in the sections below.

Threats of Terrorism

Terrorists can use the mere threat of an attack to inflict damage on the target and help achieve their aims. Sometimes the threat does not require follow-up action for it to successfully weaken or intimidate its victims. Terrorists use threats for three principal reasons:

- Create fear among the public
- Try to convince citizens that the government is powerless to prevent terrorism
- Get immediate publicity for their causes (FEMA 2014)

Armed Attacks and Assassinations

Armed attacks include raids and ambushes. An assassination is the killing of a selected victim, usually by bombings or small arms. A drive-by shooting is a common technique employed by unsophisticated or loosely organized terrorist groups. Historically, terrorists have assassinated specific individuals for psychological effect.

Arson and Firebombings

Incendiary devices are inexpensive and easy to hide. Arson and firebombings are easily conducted by terrorist groups that may not be as well organized, equipped, or trained as a major terrorist organization. An act of arson or firebombing against a utility, hotel, government building, or industrial center portrays an image to the public that the ruling government is not capable of maintaining order.

Bioterrorism

Bioterrorism refers to intentional release of toxic biological agents to harm and terrorize civilians, in the name of a political or other cause. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has classified specific types of viruses, bacteria, and toxins that could be used in an attack. Category A Biological Diseases are likely to do the most damage. They include:

- Anthrax (*Bacillus anthracis*)
- Botulism (*Clostridium botulinum toxin*)
- The Plague (*Yersinia pestis*)
- Smallpox (*Variola major*)
- Tularemia (*Francisella tularensis*)
- Hemorrahagic fever, caused by Ebola Virus or Marburg Virus

Bombings

Bombings are the most common type of terrorist act. Typically, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are inexpensive and easy to make. Modern devices are smaller and harder to detect, and have destructive capabilities. Terrorists can use materials readily available to the average consumer to construct a bomb.

Cyberterrorism

Cyberterrorists use information technology to attack civilians and draw attention to the terrorists' cause. They may use information technology, such as computer systems or telecommunications, as a tool to orchestrate a traditional attack. More often, cyberterrorism refers to an attack on information technology itself in a way that would radically disrupt networked services. For example, cyber terrorists could disable networked emergency systems or hack into networks that house critical financial information. The extent of an existing threat by cyber terrorists is currently not known.

Ecoterrorism

Ecoterrorism is a term describing violence in the interests of environmentalism. In general, environmental extremists sabotage property to inflict economic damage on industries, businesses, or persons perceived as harming animals or the natural environment. Targets of ecoterrorism attacks have included fur companies, logging companies, and animal research laboratories.

Hijackings and Skyjackings

Hijacking is seizure by force of a surface vehicle, its passengers, or its cargo. Skyjacking is taking of an aircraft, which creates a mobile, hostage barricade situation; provides terrorists with hostages from many nations; and draws heavy media attention. Skyjacking also provides mobility for the terrorists to relocate the aircraft to a country that supports their cause, and provides them with a human shield, making retaliation difficult.

Kidnappings and Hostage-Takings

Terrorists use kidnapping and hostage-taking to establish a bargaining position and to elicit publicity. Kidnapping is one of the most difficult acts for a terrorist group to accomplish; however, a successful kidnapping can gain terrorists money, release of jailed comrades, and publicity for an extended period. Hostage-taking involves seizure of a facility or location and taking hostages present in that facility. Unlike a kidnapping, hostage-taking provokes a confrontation with authorities. It forces authorities to either make dramatic decisions or to comply with the terrorist's demands. It is overt and designed to attract and hold media attention. The intended target is the audience affected by the hostage's confinement, not the hostage.

Nuclear Terrorism

Nuclear terrorism refers to a number of different ways nuclear materials might be exploited as a terrorist tactic. These methods include attacking nuclear facilities, purchasing nuclear weapons, building nuclear weapons, or finding ways to disperse radioactive materials.

Location

Terrorism could occur anywhere in Allegany County, depending on the agenda of the terrorist or group. Any facility is vulnerable, as terrorists have historically sent chemical or biological agents through the mail. High-risk targets include local, county, state, or federal government facilities; major venues and gathering places; sites with historic, cultural, or other significance; and key infrastructure. Damage to or disruption of operations at government facilities could profoundly impact Allegany County's population, even if the terrorism event is relatively small scale.

Extent

Acts of terrorism can occur anywhere at any time of day. The National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) communicates information about terrorist threats by providing detailed information to the public, government agencies, first responders, airports and other transportation hubs, and the private sector. When a threat is posed, an NTAS Alert will be announced by the Secretary of Homeland Security and will be shared with the public. It may include specific information about the nature of the threat, including the geographic region, mode of transportation, or critical infrastructure potentially affected, as well as steps that individuals and communities can take to protect themselves and help prevent, mitigate, or respond to the threat. The alert indicates whether the threat is elevated or imminent. An elevated threat alert is issued when no specific information is available about timing or location. An imminent threat alert is issued when the threat is believed to be impending or to quickly result in an incident. Alerts will be posted online and released to the news media for distribution. The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will also distribute alerts through its social media channels (DHS 2015).

The effect of a terrorism event can vary depending on the type of attack and magnitude of the event or events. A terrorism event, such as a biological or nuclear attack, can create fear among members of the public about using mass transportation or leaving their homes. Communication systems, both public and private, may fail because of an overwhelming amount of use or damage to the communications infrastructure. Healthcare facilities can become quickly inundated and must be prepared to triage injured patients, handle mass casualties, and conduct decontamination operations.

Most terrorist attacks occur with very little, if any, advanced warning. However, thwarting terrorist attacks is possible through aggressive intelligence monitoring and monitoring of individuals who exhibit radical tendencies. Warnings may appear before an attack, such as a suspicious package left unattended. Local, state, and federal officials, as well as the public, are responsible for recognizing warning signs of terrorism, and for taking appropriate actions to mitigate against possible attacks.

In Allegany County, terrorist attacks could vary from a mere threat to an individual facility, to the use of a high-yield explosive or other device in a more densely populated area.

Previous Occurrences and Losses

Between 1952 and 2016, FEMA issued two major disaster declarations as a result of terrorism in New York State, specifically in New York City. According to the 2014-2016 New York State Homeland Security Strategy, New York has been identified as the most likely target of terrorism within the United States. According to the

New York State Intelligence Center (NYSIC) product, The Vigilance Project, since the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, 17 identified jihadi terrorist plots have targeted New York State, and seven (7) other cases had some connection to New York State. While the report did not specify the counties targeted by those plots, it is unlikely that Allegany County was one of them.

Allegany County has not currently experienced any international or domestic terrorist attacks or threats of attacks. The only somewhat related historical event of note was a nonviolent resistance to a nuclear dumping site being constructed in the county in 1989-1990; however, this event would be classified as civil disturbance and not terrorism (Stole 2011).

Probability of Future Events

The probability of terrorism occurring cannot be quantified with as great a level of accuracy as a natural hazard. Furthermore, these incidents generally occur at a specific location (such as a government building) rather than encompassing a geographical area such as a floodplain. Thus, planning for the terrorism hazard should be asset-specific, identifying potentially at-risk critical facilities and systems in the community. Allegany County is marginally more likely to be the target of a domestic terrorism attack, such as agri-terrorism or ecoterrorism, due to its rural nature; however, the county should equally prepare for any type of terrorism (as well as prepare to provide assistance should neighboring counties experience a terrorist incident).

Identified hazards of concern for Allegany County were ranked in Section 5.3. Probability of occurrence, or likelihood of an event, is one parameter used for hazard rankings. Based on historical records and input from the Planning Partnership, probability of occurrence of terrorism events in the county is considered "rare" (not likely to occur within 100 years, as presented in Table 5.3-3).

Climate Change Impacts

No climate change impacts are associated with the hazard because terrorism is a human-caused hazard.

5.4.11.2   Vulnerability Assessment

To understand risk, a community must evaluate what assets are exposed or vulnerable in the hazard area identified. All of Allegany County has been identified as a hazard area for terrorism events. Therefore, all assets in the county (population, structures, critical facilities, and lifelines), as described in the county profile, are vulnerable. The following text evaluates and estimates potential impact of terrorist attacks on the county, including:

- Overview of vulnerability
- Data and methodology used for the evaluation
- Impacts 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 compared to vulnerabilities presented in the 2011 Allegany County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Further data collection that will assist in understanding this hazard over time

Overview of Vulnerability

The entire county is vulnerable to terrorism events. Assessing vulnerability to the hazard is also difficult because predicting particular targets of these events is difficult. The entire county and building stock are vulnerable to a terrorist attack.

Data and Methodology

Insufficient data is currently available to model long-term potential impacts of terrorism events on Allegany County. Over time, additional data will be collected to allow better analysis of this hazard. Available information and a preliminary assessment are provided below.

Impact on Life, Health, and Safety

For this HMP, the entire population in Allegany County is considered vulnerable to terrorism events. However, it can be inferred that individuals living in more densely populated areas will have a greater exposure to terrorist incidents than those living in rural areas because terrorists typically prefer to affect the greatest number of individuals at a given location. Refer to Section 4 for a summary of population statistics for the county. A large-scale incident could kill or injure many residents in the immediate vicinity of the attack, and could also affect people at a distance from the initial event.

Impact on General Building Stock

All building stock in the county is exposed and vulnerable to the terrorism hazard because of accessibility, design, availability to roof access, driveways underneath buildings, unmonitored areas, proximities of structures to transportation routes, underground pipelines, and potential for a terrorist to strike any structure randomly. Refer to Section 4, which summarizes the building inventory in Allegany County.

Impact on Critical Facilities

If critical facilities are targeted in terrorist attacks, the effects could be catastrophic. Dams, power stations, and tunnels are all examples of critical infrastructure and facilities that are vulnerable. Additionally, communications systems, first-responder stations, and emergency operations centers are all vulnerable to terrorist attacks. Disrupting one of these facilities or destroying critical infrastructure could result in devastating, cascading impacts on Allegany County. All critical facilities in the county are exposed to the terrorism hazard.

Impact on Economy

Measuring the economic impact of a terrorist attack on Allegany County is difficult. The initial impact can be measured in immediate costs, such as costs related to response to the event and those associated with immediate loss of productivity that results from closed businesses. The full economic impact includes long-term costs such as terrorism mitigation activities. Additionally, a terrorist attack in a neighboring county or elsewhere in the state could lead to indirect economic impacts in Allegany County.

Future Growth and Development

As discussed in Sections 4 and 9, areas targeted for future growth and development have been identified across Allegany County. Any areas of growth could be impacted by the terrorism hazard because the entire county is exposed and vulnerable. Please refer to the specific areas of development indicated in tabular form and on the hazard maps included in the jurisdictional annexes in Volume II, Section 9 of this plan.

Change of Vulnerability

Overall, the county's vulnerability to terrorism has not changed since the 2011 HMP, and the entire county will continue to be vulnerable to terrorism events.

Additional Data and Next Steps

Any additional information regarding localized concerns and past impacts will be collected and analyzed for the Plan Update. These data will be developed to support future revisions to the plan. Mitigation efforts could include building on existing New York State, Allegany County, and local efforts.