



From The Morning Call -- March 30, 2004

MARKETPLACE
classifieds & more

- Jobs
- Homes
- Autos
- Newspaper Ads

Never miss an ad... never miss an opportunity.

Opinion

- ▶ [Lehigh Valley News](#)
- ▶ [US/World News](#)
- ▶ [Births](#)
- ▶ [Obituaries](#)
- ▶ [Sports](#)
- ▶ [Opinion](#)
 - Another View
 - Your View
 - Getting a letter printed
 - Submit a letter
 - Op-Ed Columnists
 - Writing an op-ed column

- ▶ [Business](#)
- ▶ [Features](#)
- ▶ [Entertainment](#)
- ▶ [PhotoJournal](#)
- ▶ [Weather](#)
- ▶ [Archives](#)
- ▶ [Noticias en Español](#)
- ▶ [Feedback](#)
- ▶ [Sitemap](#)
- ▶ [Shopping](#)
- ▶ [Coupons](#)
- ▶ [Special Sections](#)
- ▶ [Media Partners](#)
- ▶ [Subscribe](#)
- ▶ [Customer Service](#)

THE MORNING CALL

101 North 6th St.
Allentown, PA 18101
(610) 820-6500
Home Delivery Info
Local: (610) 820-6601
Toll-free: (800) 666-5492

- [Subscription Form](#)
- [No paper this morning?](#)
- [Vacation Options](#)

State must take important first step to better handle inevitable sinkholes

The sinkhole that tried to swallow the seven-story Corporate Plaza in downtown Allentown a decade ago captured the most national attention. But a sinkhole two months ago affects 17,000 motorists a day who no longer can travel on a Route 33 bridge over Bushkill Creek in Palmer Township. The need for a single state agency to serve as a clearinghouse for sinkholes is clear.

Pennsylvania sinkholes usually get a disjointed probe by various government agencies, according to a story Sunday by Morning Call reporter Steve Esack. In contrast, Florida's Department of Emergency Management catalogues sinkhole reports and forwards the information to the appropriate agencies for investigation.

The magnitude of Pennsylvania's sinkhole problem speaks to the need for a more focused approach. Ninety sinkholes have opened in the cement quarry region in and around the Bushkill and Schoeneck creeks since 1999. In fact, sinkholes occur naturally by the thousands in Northampton County. The reasons are many and the geology complex. It's impossible to determine which is more to blame for each event: nature or the actions of people.

Sinkholes form in porous limestone — most of the Lehigh Valley. Yet, mining and development can contribute to the earth's instability. For example, when a quarry or a mine deepens, it reaches groundwater. As water is pumped out, it creates a funnel. The cone can drain groundwater for miles around, undermining the earth until the surface collapses.

During a Feb. 5 public meeting, the state Department of Environmental Protection, state Department of Transportation and the Army Corps of Engineers pledged a joint effort. Yet, each is hamstrung by their respective regulations. PennDOT can only use tax dollars to repair roads, bridges and adjacent land within its rights of way. The Army Corps doesn't have the authority to fix sinkholes, but is studying ways to line a particular trouble spot, the Bushkill Creek bottom, with

- Email this story
- Printer friendly format
- News via RSS

Feedback

[Submit Letters](#)

The Morning Call

[Editorial board](#)

Susan Hunt,
Publisher

Deb Stevens
Special Projects Manager

Ardith Hilliard
Editor

Glenn Kranzley,
Editor of the Comment Pages

Eric Chiles,
Comment Pages Writer

Mary Youtz,
Comment Pages Writer

Meet the Editorial Board

News by e-mail

This Just In...
LATEST NEWS BY E-MAIL!
[Sign up today!](#)

MCall.com Feedback

Questions or comments about MCall.com? [Contact Us](#)

Related Stories

Rules for hard-coal mines miss the target
Mar 30, 2004

'Racino' license auction proposal isn't about making slot machine plan work
Mar 29, 2004

Ms. Rice's refusal to testify publicly hampers 9-11 board, hurts Mr. Bush

advertis

Open online in under 5 minutes!

Great Rates. No Fees. No Minimums.

2.00%
Annual Percentage

ING DIRECT
Save Time
[CLICK HERE](#)

complete class

1,564

6,451

1,156

careerbuild
cars.com
REAL ESTATE

special feat

Spring Home Show
at **ASSO**

Come Play
FREE TRAVEL BROCH

Your Health

koolkid cam guide

• Media Partners

plastic.

Mar 29, 2004

Three major quarries have operated since the early 1900s in Upper and Lower Nazareth townships. Company representatives met with DEP mining inspectors in early March — a show of cooperation. But it's pointless to just blame quarries, considering the region's geology.

Medicine and Money
Mar 28, 2004

Confluence of technology, safety costs, insurance and economy has produced a health care 'perfect storm.'
Mar 28, 2004



Neither Northampton County nor area municipalities can afford to handle sinkholes of such magnitude. Fortunately, U.S. Sen. Arlen Specter secured federal funding for 90 percent of the \$6 million replacement bridge cost. However, the unexpected depth for one of the new span's abutments temporarily halted construction last week and could result in a revised design and costs.



It's a headache of enormous proportions. Even worse, the region's geography guarantees more sinkholes. The problem will never disappear — just the buildings or bridges above them. Pennsylvania is long overdue for a statewide clearinghouse for sinkhole information. It would be an important first step to better understanding of this costly and destructive phenomenon. It also would enable better leadership for bringing together national, state and local resources to deal with sinkholes — leadership that now is lacking.



Copyright © 2004, [The Morning Call](#)

>> Right to your doorstep! - [Click here to subscribe to The Morning Call](#)

[US/World News](#) | [Health](#) | [Weather](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [PA Lottery](#) | [NJ Lottery](#)
[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Business](#) | [Go Guide](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Free E-mail Newsletters](#)
Make Us Your Homepage

© 2004 THE MORNING CALL Inc.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)