

**NEWS ALERT**



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Homeland Security Committee**

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“Assessing the Capabilities and Coordination of Federal Emergency Response Teams”**

May 9, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Communication, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee hearing entitled “Assessing the Capabilities and Coordination of Federal Emergency Response Teams”:

“Over a year and half ago, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana and in my home state of Mississippi. The poor response to that hurricane continues to provide us with many valuable lessons on improving our nation’s preparedness.

As the Committee responsible for homeland security, it is our responsibility to make sure the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA strengthen coordination, clarify responsibilities, and correct unresolved issues that may hamper our response to large emergencies.

As a volunteer firefighter for 26 years, I know that that starts with supporting our fire, rescue and medical personnel. These folks form the backbone of our Urban Search and Rescue and National Disaster Assistance Teams, which we have before us today. We need to ensure that these teams have the resources they need and receive the guidance they need from FEMA to do their jobs.

That hasn’t always been the case.

I look forward to hearing about the needs of these response teams, which we rely upon to rescue and treat the victims the worst disasters our nation faces. I also look forward to hearing how the ‘New FEMA’ will not only improve its disaster operations, but also increase readiness of these response teams. Finally, we should examine whether any of the needs we identify during this hearing require a legislative fix.”

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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