

Statement of

R. David Paulison

Administrator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Department of Homeland Security

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Good morning, Chairman Thompson, and Members of the Committee.

I welcome the opportunity to appear before this Committee to discuss how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season.

The guiding principle of the new FEMA is that we are leaning further forward to deliver more effective disaster assistance to individuals and communities impacted by a disaster. We call it “engaged partnership”. That is the FEMA you saw in the Florida, Georgia, and Alabama tornadoes – the Nor’easter that affected the New England States and most recently in Kansas where the community of Greensburg was devastated by a tornado.

In those disasters you saw a FEMA that became an engaged partner with the State within minutes of the disaster, immediately deployed operational and technical experts to the disaster site, started moving logistics and communications capabilities even before a disaster declaration and coordinated with the Governor to facilitate a Presidential disaster declaration. And, FEMA has supported and helped to facilitate an effective Unified Command with other Federal agencies, and State and local officials.

All of these actions were taken by a well led, motivated, and professional FEMA workforce that has embraced and enhanced the vision and reality of a new FEMA.

Colorado State University has predicted 17 named storms, including 9 hurricanes, of which 5 are expected to be major hurricanes. Predictions from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) are scheduled to be released on May 22, 2007, during National Hurricane Preparedness Week.

FEMA is preparing for an active 2007 hurricane season by taking the following actions:

1. Establishing a heightened posture of hurricane preparedness;
2. Engaging our State and Federal partners in more thorough and informed hurricane planning; and
3. Building FEMA’s operational capabilities to provide effective response and recovery.

Establishing a Heightened Posture of Hurricane Preparedness

FEMA is placing primary emphasis on strengthening the Federal-State partnership to better ensure we are able to achieve shared objectives for a safe, coordinated and effective response and recovery effort. First, we are emphasizing the States’ primary responsibility to provide for the safety and security of their citizens. The States must take the lead to ensure they and their local jurisdictions are prepared for hurricane season.

The Stafford Act acknowledges the Constitutional authority of a State to respond to incidents within that State through the State’s Emergency Management Agency or similar agency, which incorporates the States’ mutual aid system and principles of the Incident Command System, and provides the structure through which State and local government agencies respond. The State Emergency Management Agency coordinates the overall management of an emergency to include requests for support and resources from other State agencies, from other States under the

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), and for supplemental assistance from the Federal government. The EMAC process offers state-to-state assistance during Governor-declared states of emergency: EMAC offers a responsive and straightforward system for states to send personnel and equipment to help disaster relief efforts in other states. When one State's resources are overwhelmed, other states can help to fill the shortfalls through EMAC.

The strength of EMAC and the quality that distinguishes it from other plans and compacts lies in its governance structure, its relationship with federal organizations, states, counties, territories, and regions, and the ability to move just about any resource one state has to assist another state.

Second, FEMA, by advancing the concept of engaged partnership, then stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the State—there to support, fill gaps, and help to achieve a successful response and recovery. In the past, our system was cued to sequential failure: where the State held back until the local jurisdiction was overwhelmed, and the Federal system held back until the State was overwhelmed. This approach, evident in the response to Katrina, ensured caused delays in delivering support. Under “engaged partnership,” FEMA has strengthened the relationship between FEMA Regional Administrators and State Emergency Managers to focus on more deliberate disaster planning. In preparation for this hurricane season, we have engaged each of the 18 hurricane impact States (Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas), the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Territories in a focused effort to identify strengths and weaknesses. We are engaging now in discussions to fill gaps and develop mitigation strategies to ensure successful response and recovery. FEMA is prepared to allocate commodities and enlist the assistance of other departments and agencies as needed to ensure a strong response to a State's call for assistance. And, as a result of our joint planning, we can anticipate a State's needs and be more able to quickly provide support.

Third, FEMA has extended our reach across the span of Federal agencies to ensure the smooth and responsive coordination of Federal support when it is needed. The most visible demonstration of that coordination is the array of Federal capabilities contained in our “playbook” of pre-scripted mission assignments. This playbook represents an examination of the range of Federal support that may be requested in response to a disaster. It also includes advance inter-agency coordination to ensure delivery of that capability when it might be called upon in time of need. At present, we have gained approval for 103 separate forms of assistance and are reviewing 85 potential pre-scripted mission assignments over a span of 21 Federal agencies. This support ranges from heavy-lift helicopters from DOD, to generators from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams from HHS and Emergency Road Clearing Teams from the U.S. Forest Service. These pre-scripted mission assignments will result in more rapid and responsive delivery of Federal support to States.

Disaster response support is coordinated through one or more of the National Response Plan's (NRP) 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). The ESFs serve as the primary operational-level mechanism supporting FEMA in providing State and local disaster assistance in functional areas such as transportation, communications, public works and engineering, firefighting, mass care, housing, human services, public health and medical services, search and rescue, agriculture,

and energy. The signatories to the NRP provide substantial disaster response assistance in their areas of expertise and provide operational support for FEMA when assigned missions to support the disaster response. In addition, FEMA can surge its own teams and assets into an area in anticipation of an approaching storm or event that is expected to cause a significant impact and result in a declared emergency or major disaster and can turn to other DHS components such as the U.S. Coast Guard for assistance. The surge capability allows FEMA to position assets prior to the event to enable a quick response, but actual assistance cannot be provided until the Governor requests and the President approves a disaster declaration.

Within the first 72 hours after the tornado devastated Greensburg, Kansas, FEMA coordinated the efforts of numerous Federal agencies in their ESF roles under the NRP. For example, the DHS/National Communication System (ESF 2) worked with the State and local officials to reestablish communications infrastructure, advising local government as necessary, and providing needed technical assistance. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ESF 3) management team for critical facility restoration planning was on-site providing technical assistance to state and local government. Additionally, Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) in the form of 13 small Mobile Emergency Operations Vehicles (MEOVs) and one large MEOV were deployed to Greensburg for communications and command and control support. The larger MEOV was provided to serve as the Unified Command Post.

To further strengthen our partnerships, FEMA is actively engaging with State governments and other Federal partners in joint exercises as we prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season. During the first week in May, FEMA tested the national incident management system and its response operations during an exercise called Ardent Sentry - Northern Edge, which depicted a Category 3 hurricane that struck Newport, Rhode Island.

Engaging with State and Federal Partners in More Thorough and Informed Preparedness Planning

As we approach the 2007 Hurricane Season, FEMA is taking a three-tier approach to planning. First, we are engaging each of the 18 hurricane impact States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Territories in focused hurricane planning. This includes employing a Gap Analysis Tool that will inform the planning process. Second, we are providing specific attention to the Gulf Coast States pursuing for the first time regional development of a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan. Third, we are pursuing specific planning efforts with our partners in the State of Louisiana, in recognition of their fragile condition following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Last, we are also focusing Catastrophic Disaster Response Planning on Southeast Louisiana and the State of Florida.

Hurricane Gap Analysis Tool

FEMA is employing a Gap Analysis Tool that is serving as the basis for better understanding vulnerabilities in a more consistent manner. The Gap Analysis Tool was developed in coordination with the State of New York Emergency Management Office/New York City Office of Emergency Management and has been implemented to provide FEMA and its partners at both

the State and local levels in the hurricane prone regions of the country with a snapshot of asset gaps at the National, State and local levels

The initiative is a joint effort between State Emergency Management representatives and FEMA Regional representatives to conduct a series of structured discussions with local jurisdictions to better understand potential disaster response asset gaps in the critical areas of debris removal, evacuation, sheltering, interim housing, healthcare facilities, commodity distribution, communications, and fuel. The discussions are providing an opportunity for local jurisdictions to ask specific questions of Federal and State officials and identify issues of critical concern to help long-term preparedness programs. We are confident that through these structured discussions, we will all be better prepared.

Specific gaps are determined by identifying a series of requirements in each critical area within each location and then subtracting the corresponding capabilities for meeting those requirements for each location. By June 1, 2007, the data will be compiled for the jurisdictions within the hurricane prone States, reviewed, and then incorporated into FEMA's planning efforts. Although our initial use of this method is being applied for the upcoming hurricane season, this process is applicable to all hazards and the goal is to build upon lessons learned and apply the tool to all locations for all hazards on an ongoing basis.

The new FEMA has made a conscious effort to focus broadly on all 18 hurricane-prone States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and Territories to prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season. Today, FEMA is working closely with each of the 18 state emergency management communities in hurricane prone states using a consistent set of measures and tools to evaluate strengths and vulnerabilities.

We are actively conducting these analyses with state emergency managers. So, not only have we improved our ability to respond, we also will have a better understanding of what type of response and supplies may be needed for a particular area following a disaster.

Modeling is also an essential element of FEMA's planning efforts for different circumstances. FEMA is coordinating with the DHS Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate to adapt modeling tools to large metropolitan areas. For example, many tools utilize a standard figure for population per square mile, often resulting in skewed data for areas with high-rise apartment buildings. The work with S&T is focusing on adapting these modeling tools to urban environments.

As the use of the Hurricane Gap Analysis Tool becomes more mature, FEMA plans to incorporate additional modeling capabilities to validate the data received and to forecast needs based on different variables. FEMA's current hurricane planning efforts rely heavily on existing modeling tools such as:

- HurrEvac (Hurricane Evacuation) to enable tracking hurricanes and assist in evacuation decision making;

- SLOSH (Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes) to enable estimates of storm surge heights and winds resulting from historical, hypothetical, or predicted hurricanes by taking into account pressure, size, forward speed, track, and winds;
- HAZUS (Hazards U.S.) established by FEMA to assess risk and forecast losses based on population characteristics and buildings;
- The US Army Corps of Engineers modeling tools which rely on geospatial capabilities to provide estimates of debris volumes; water, ice, and commodity needs; and the number of people within the households likely within hurricane force winds; and
- NISAC (National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center) advanced modeling and simulation capabilities to analyze critical infrastructure interdependencies and vulnerabilities.

Gulf Coast State Evacuation Plan

FEMA is helping Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama develop a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan that extends to adjacent States who may host Gulf Coast evacuees. The purpose of this effort is to synchronize separate State evacuation plans to create a more jointly organized effort. Teams are engaging with each State, identifying requirements and capabilities, and then will work to develop a plan that integrates shelter planning with transportation planning. The result will be a timelier, better organized and coordinated evacuation by those with their own transportation and those who need assistance to evacuate by bus or air.

Coordinating with Louisiana

Recognizing Louisiana's continuing fragile situation, we are collaboratively assessing requirements, State capabilities and the potential need for Federal assistance. Louisiana is better prepared than last year—by applying lessons learned and investing some of their resources, but still needs assistance in finding shelter space in adjacent States, ensuring sufficient transportation resources to conduct a timely and effective evacuation, pre-positioning commodities, and caring for those with critical medical needs.

Catastrophic Disaster Planning Initiatives

We are also working with 13 southeastern Louisiana parishes (including the City of New Orleans), which were selected as the initial geographic focus area for FEMA's "Catastrophic Planning" initiative, because of their vulnerability to hurricane disasters. Substantial planning activity continues with the State of Louisiana and its parishes in planning and preparing for the 2007 Hurricane Season.

In addition, FEMA is using scenario-driven workshops to enhance the State of Florida's capability to respond to a Category 5 Hurricane making landfall in Southern Florida. This is a two-phased project. Phase 1 focuses on developing regional response and recovery annexes, including evacuation planning, for the counties and communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee (in the event of failure of the Herbert Hoover Dike) and will be completed by the beginning of

the 2007 Hurricane Season. Phase two will address the effects of a Category 5 hurricane striking south Florida. The end product for phase two will be standardized and comprehensive catastrophic Category 5 hurricane disaster functional response and recovery plans for the State of Florida and responding Federal agencies. Phase two will be completed by September 30, 2008. These plans will be used as planning templates for other large urban areas also.

Next, it is important to understand what FEMA is doing to build its operational capabilities to improve its response and recovery capabilities in support of State and local efforts.

Building FEMA's Operational Capabilities to Provide Effective Response and Recovery

In addition to the many action items already described to better prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season, FEMA's comprehensive strategy for improving its disaster response efforts includes a 2007 Hurricane Contingency Plan, a new operational planning unit, an Interagency Agreement with Defense Logistics Agency, Total Asset Visibility, a new generation of response assistance teams, principal federal officials role, and mass evacuation planning.

2007 Hurricane Contingency Plan (CONPLAN)

The 2007 Hurricane CONPLAN provides the operational incident management framework to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of hurricanes impacting the United States. The CONPLAN provides guidance on actions that will be executed by Federal Departments and Agencies.

This document was developed in collaboration with all of FEMA's National Response Plan partners for the Emergency Support Functions-- or "ESFs"-- and addresses the coordinated national-level Federal preparedness, response and initial recovery operations that will be used to support State, local, Territorial and Tribal government entities impacted by a hurricane or tropical storm.

New Operational Planning Unit Capabilities

FEMA is hiring staff for its new Operational Planning Unit (Planning Unit). Located in FEMA's Headquarters, the Planning Unit will provide sophisticated operational analyses. With the new staff, FEMA is building its core planning competency that will possess greater depth of experience and more capability to perform critical disaster response operational analyses, prepare operational plans, and conduct crisis action planning to ensure that the Agency can lead, coordinate and support a national all-hazard emergency management response.

Specifically, the Operational Planning Unit—

- Provides National and Regional operational planning guidance and coordination;
- Coordinates at the operational level the execution of all hazard contingency plans;
- Provides forecasting and analysis of potential events;
- Assists FEMA Regions in operational planning at the regional level; and

- Leads the development of DHS and FEMA hazard-specific contingency plans.

Eventually, planners will also be hired for the Regions to provide this capability to those specific areas.

FEMA/DLA Interagency Agreement

FEMA and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) have entered into a collaborative partnership, via an Interagency Agreement, to optimize the planning, ordering, storing and replenishing of certain commodities such as emergency meals and fuel, and develop a road map for larger scaled supply chain initiatives.

The FEMA/DLA partnership has improved FEMA's immediate response and logistics capabilities by reducing the acquisition and distribution time, as well as the replenishment lead-time. The partnership has also improved FEMA's day-to-day supply chain operations by creating repeatable, sustainable processes for planning and execution at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Through this agreement DLA will procure, maintain, transport, and stage commodities. DLA currently provides visibility of all commodities shipped to disaster locations, logistic centers or other locations as directed, from the initial receipt of the order until ownership passes to FEMA.

TAV Program

FEMA Logistics has identified areas for improving its end-to-end supply chain to deliver critical supplies at the right time, in the right quantity and to the right location. FEMA is implementing industry best practices for supply chain management and an automated system that is improving information flow by providing real-time visibility into orders and shipment of critical supplies during emergency response efforts. The Total Asset Visibility (TAV) Program oversees, directs and manages the design and implementation of an initial capability pilot system to monitor and view the orders and movement of select commodities which was launched during the 2006 hurricane season.

Currently, the TAV Program provides FEMA with the ability to (1) manage and view orders and inventory of select commodities and (2) track the location of trailers carrying the commodities distributed from the FEMA Logistics Centers (LCs) and select vendors to field sites. The long-term vision for the TAV Program is to engage external emergency management stakeholders – from state, local and tribal governments and other federal agencies to non-government agencies and vendors – in the entire FEMA supply chain. These activities cover requests for critical supplies to tracking shipments and delivery to people in need during times of emergency. Stakeholders would have real-time visibility into the status of requests and locations of shipments in transit.

FEMA recognizes that certain types of resources may be required immediately after a disaster by State and local governments in order for them to adequately respond.

If State or local governments, and State partners, are unable to supply these resources, then FEMA will coordinate the provision of Federal commodities to ensure that resources are in place

in order to supplement State and local response efforts during the immediate phase of response activities. FEMA has initiated the Pre-Positioned Disaster Supply (PPDS) program to position life-saving and life sustaining disaster equipment and supplies in modular containers as close to a potential disaster sites as prudent, in order to substantially reduce the initial response time to incidents.

Enhanced Response Teams

FEMA is developing the next generation of rapidly deployable interagency emergency response teams, tentatively identified as Incident Management Assistance Teams (“IMATs”). These teams will support the emergent needs of State and local jurisdictions; possess the capability to provide initial situational awareness for Federal decision-makers; and support the initial establishment of a unified command. These teams will ultimately provide the three national-level response teams and regional-level emergency response “strike” teams required by the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006.

The teams are still being designed and decisions on team assets, equipment, and expected capabilities have not yet been finalized. FEMA’s goal is to establish interim Regional and National teams using existing personnel within FEMA. The teams will subsume the existing mission and capabilities of the Federal Incident Response Support Teams (or “FIRSTs”) and Emergency Response Teams (or “ERTs”). The mission and capabilities will incorporate similar leadership, emergency management doctrine, and operational communications concepts. The national-level and regional-level teams will eventually be staffed with a core of full-time employees, unlike the ERTs, which are staffed on a collateral duty basis; will be fully compliant with NIMS and ICS; and will train and exercise as a unit.

Principal Federal Officials

Also, the Secretary of Homeland Security is represented by the Principal Federal Official (PFO). The PFO ensures that incident management efforts are well coordinated and effective. The PFO does not direct or replace the incident command structure, nor does the PFO have directive authority over other Federal and State officials. For example, during a terrorist incident, the local FBI Special Agent-in-Charge coordinates with other members of the law enforcement community and works in conjunction with the PFO.

The PFO is one member of the JFO Coordination Group. This group also includes either an FCO, who manages and coordinates Federal resource support activities related to Stafford Act disasters and emergencies, or a Federal Resource Coordinator, who performs similar functions for incidents that do not involve Stafford Act declarations. Depending on the incident, other agency officials are added to the Coordination Group, such as the Senior Federal Law Enforcement Official.

Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the National Response Plan

As part of incorporating lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the NRP is under development. The Mass Evacuation Incident Annex will provide an

overview of evacuation functions and agency roles and responsibilities. It also will provide overall guidelines to enable evacuation of large numbers of people in incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response through the NRP ESFs. This annex will describe how Federal support resources are integrated into State, local, and tribal efforts. Communication linkage to sheltering facilities, special needs of evacuees, and addressing the need for evacuation of both companion and service animals are just a few of the issues reflected in this annex.

Improved Delivery of Disaster Assistance

FEMA is making significant progress in improving its disaster assistance as well. FEMA's Disaster Assistance Directorate's planning and capability building initiatives include enhancing mass care capability by improving the National Shelter System and developing better tools for coordinating and tracking donations and volunteers; greatly increasing disaster victim registration capabilities while enhancing protections against waste, fraud and abuse; developing a national disaster housing strategy and improving operational planning for providing temporary housing in a catastrophic disaster; establishing a case management program; updating ESF 6 Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services standard operating procedures; developing debris estimation technology and monitoring methodology and enhancing state and local debris operations capabilities; and, improving our capability to conduct operations planning for long term disaster operations.

Emergency Evacuation, Shelter, and Housing

FEMA's most pressing priority for planning for Recovery from a catastrophic disaster event has been *emergency evacuation, shelter and housing*. In 2004, FEMA completed an initial Catastrophic Disaster Housing Strategy, which proposed several initiatives to increase FEMA's capability to provide assistance to individuals and households following an extraordinary or catastrophic disaster. The strategy provided the principles and recommended strategies that establish the framework for the catastrophic disaster housing recovery planning being done today. Key needs identified at that time included: an expandable disaster registration intake and applicant assistance process; the ability to provide immediate benefits payments; a plan for assisting applicants to temporarily relocate to outside the disaster area; and a strategy and prepared public messages to provide victims with information about assistance.

- **Mass Evacuee Support Planning:** The 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes caused several hundred thousand residents to evacuate to over forty States, many for prolonged time periods. Cities such as Houston, Oklahoma City, Atlanta, and Baton Rouge received hundreds of thousands of evacuees requiring immediate shelter, food, other basic assistance, as well as longer term services. In June 2006, FEMA published Recovery Strategy RS-001, Mass Sheltering and Housing Assistance. This strategy addresses many contingencies for providing sheltering and housing assistance for declared emergencies and major disasters. In addition, FEMA is undertaking more detailed mass evacuee support planning. This will assist State and local governments to plan and prepare for hosting large displaced populations. The project includes FEMA developing an evacuee registration and tracking capability, implementation plans for federal evacuation support

to states, emergency sheltering guidance and providing direct planning assistance to potential host States and communities.

- **The National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and National Emergency Child Locator Center:** As defined in the Post Katrina Act, these capabilities will address the reunification of displaced persons and activity to locate missing children during disasters. For disasters declared by the President, this tracking capability will assist FEMA, Department of Justice and the American Red Cross in further developing and implementing methods for quickly identifying and reunifying missing and separated children and family members during a disaster.
- **Improving Shelter Management and Accountability:** FEMA and the American Red Cross, the nation's largest operator of major congregate shelters during disasters. The first phase of the National Shelter System (NSS) was developed through a FEMA/American Red Cross partnership to provide a web-based data system to support shelter management, reporting, and facility identification activities. The system is intended for use by all agencies that provide shelter services during disasters to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the shelter populations and available shelter capacity. In addition, this system will provide visibility on large shelter populations and position FEMA to provide targeted registration assistance to disaster victims. Outreach and training for Federal, State, and local authorities in use of the system is being conducted.
- **Housing Options:** The FEMA Housing Portal was developed to consolidate available rental resources for evacuees from Federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals. The Joint Housing Solutions Group is a dedicated unit to research and document alternatives to traditional temporary housing. They are currently conducting initial baseline field tests of a housing option assessment tool.
- **Expanding Home Inspections Capacity:** FEMA has increased the daily home inspection capacity of FEMA contracted firms from 7,000 per day to 40,000 per day through a new contractual agreement. This added capacity – combined with a newly established third party evaluation of inspections performed on victims' damaged homes – will increase the speed and accuracy of home inspections that determine the FEMA repair and replacement grants for which a victim may be eligible.

Applicant Registration and Management

In 2006 and 2007 FEMA has focused its Recovery planning and capability building efforts on improving applicant management systems, expanding registration intake and processing capacity, increasing fraud controls, supporting displaced populations, identifying alternative forms of temporary housing, and debris management planning. FEMA has made significant progress in increasing its capability to provide assistance to individuals particularly in the areas of registration, applicant processing, and providing assistance.

- **Doubling Registration Capacity to 200,000 Per Day:** During the days and weeks following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA surpassed 100,000 registrations a day,

shattering all previous records of intake. While call center capacity was increased to its highest levels ever, FEMA is pursuing even more robust contract and contingency surge capabilities that will quickly allow for rapid expansion to a registration intake capacity of up to 200,000 per day. FEMA's Internet-based registration capability has been increased by improving accessibility, allowing FEMA to handle more registrations than ever before. This will help reduce registration wait times and FEMA Helpline information delays following a major disaster.

- **Deployable Mobile Registration Intake Centers (MRICs) Pilot:** Recognizing many disaster victims may be stranded or in congregate shelters with no communications, and unable to register for assistance, FEMA has established a new registration pilot program that pushes registration capabilities directly into the field. In the 2007 hurricane season FEMA will have the ability to deploy Mobile Registrations Intake Centers immediately to congregate shelters and provide an on-site capability to quickly register for FEMA assistance.

Debris Management Planning

Management of contaminated debris is of particular concern for terrorist events, but is also an issue in most large natural disasters. An Interagency Work Group to coordinate Federal agency management of contaminated debris began work in 2005 just prior to Hurricane Katrina. The Work Group is further developing Federal contaminated debris operational procedure guidance. This project is analyzing the implications of a catastrophic incident on contaminated debris management programs and policies and will assist FEMA, USACE, EPA, USCG, and other federal stakeholders to better define their operational role and inter-relationships. FEMA's Public Assistance Program is also undertaking two catastrophic planning initiatives focusing on increasing State and local debris management capabilities through planning and enhancing Federal capabilities to estimate debris volumes following a disaster to assist in operational planning and cost estimation.

Increasing Fraud Controls

FEMA has also taken steps to implement new and stronger controls pertaining to identity and occupancy verification of applicants for disaster assistance. Examples of controls implemented include: deployment of a new Internet registration application that disallows any duplicate registrations; added identity proofing to the call center registration application so that all Individual and Households Program (IHP) registrations are subjected to the same stringent criteria, including verification of social security numbers and occupancy requirements; data-marking any applications in FEMA's database that fail identity proofing so they are flagged for manual review and denied automated payment; real-time interaction between the FEMA Service Representative and the applicant during registration to ensure the data entered that resulted in a failed identity check is correct before accepting the application; working with FEMA's data contractor to flag any addresses that are not residential addresses in order to prevent automated payments without an on-site inspection verification of address and residency; and flagging at-risk social security numbers to identify potential fraud.

Conclusion

I believe we have made real progress at FEMA and are prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season. Our efforts will bear fruit across our disaster operations and assistance programs. Today, I have focused on

1. Establishing a heightened posture of hurricane preparedness;
2. Engaging our State and Federal partners in more thorough and informed hurricane planning; and,
3. Building FEMA's operational capabilities to provide effective response and recovery.

But, there is a lot more going on inside FEMA that will contribute to enhanced performance and organizational success. For example, I hope to announce soon the selection of our Disabilities Coordinator.

Although all disasters are local, FEMA must play a more proactive role in understanding vulnerabilities so we can assist the localities in being better prepared to respond. And, as I hope you can see by today's testimony—we are. By leaning further forward to coordinate the federal response, we can better serve all Americans.

Today, FEMA:

- Has created engaged partnerships in support of State and local governments,
- Has supported and helped to facilitate an effective unified command with other Federal agencies, and State and local officials,
- Has engaged with hurricane-prone states to gain a better understanding of their vulnerabilities,
- Has improved logistics and communications capabilities to improve response, and
- Enhanced Disaster Assistance capabilities for recovery efforts.

Of course, we are not done yet. There is still much work to do.

But if our progress over the past year is any indication, I believe we are on the right track to fulfilling our vision to become the nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness agency.

I am especially proud of the men and women who work at FEMA. They have put their hearts and souls into rebuilding this agency. The men and women of FEMA are dedicated to the mission of disaster and victim recovery, and staunchly committed to improving the speed, efficiency, and accountability with which we perform that mission. That commitment is not only to the victims and communities of those disasters that we expect to face in the future, but to those victims and communities still struggling with the personal, professional, and social consequences and challenges of past disasters.

Thank you for your continued support and the opportunity to discuss how FEMA is preparing for the 2007 Hurricane Season. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.