

**Prepared Statement of Donald L. Carcieri
Governor
State of Rhode Island
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Senator Chafee, Senator Collins, I am pleased to have the opportunity to testify before you today.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we all know how important it is for our state to be fully prepared if a hurricane should strike our state.

Since 1851, Rhode Island has experienced 9 direct hits. We've learned firsthand what can happen to our capital city when a Hurricane strikes.

During the hurricane of 1938, the storm hit Rhode Island at high tide, flooding Providence's business district. Residents drowned. Cars were submerged beneath 7 feet of water. Buildings were damaged by the fury of the storm. Sixteen years later our capital city was flooded once again by tidal waves from Hurricane Carol. Just like the Hurricane of '38, Carol arrived near the time of high tide.

Southern Rhode Island had wind gusts of 115 to 135 mph and T. F. Green Airport sustained 90 mph winds. Carol took a great toll on Southern Rhode Island. From Westerly to Newport, 5000 buildings were destroyed.

In Westerly, it's estimated that there were tides up to 13 feet above mean water. 600,000 Rhode Islanders lost power. The storm also affected our capital city with water rising within 1 foot of the record water line on the commemorative Plaque for the 38 Hurricane at Old Market House in Downtown Providence.

After the hurricanes in Florida nearly 2 years ago, I directed the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency to begin updating Rhode Island's hurricane plans. The lessons that we learned through Hurricane Katrina have reinvigorated that process. Under the leadership of our new EMA director, Bob Warren and our new Adjutant General, General Bray we have been working to make our plan the strongest and most effective in the nation. In fact, a team from the United States Department of Homeland Security recently visited our state and praised our efforts.

We are currently working with a consultant to assist us in developing a comprehensive hurricane evacuation plan for our state. I have allocated \$20,000 for this purpose and the plan will be complete in June. This plan will give us a blueprint to follow and will highlight the steps we need to take before, during and after a hurricane. Our plan will address issues such as evacuation and resource management while the storm is still along the southeastern coastline.

As part of our efforts to better prepare our state for a hurricane, I have asked all municipalities for a report documenting that local emergency plans are as comprehensive as possible for people with disabilities.

Last fall I attended a Hurricane Preparedness Meeting with Bob Warren and our state's Emergency Management Agency officials and local municipalities to ensure that all cities and town have effective evacuation routes as well as hurricane preparedness plans. We have already identified escape routes for 21 coastal communities that might be inundated by flooding during a major storm and we have posted that information on the EMA website. We have also worked with the Red Cross to solve the shortage in evacuation shelters. In fact, a total of 12 of a targeted 30 shelters have already been approved.

To make certain that our hurricane plan will ensure public safety to the utmost degree, the EMA has been developing a Donations Management Plan and we are working on partnering with the Salvation Army, the Red Cross and the Rhode Island Community Food Bank to receive these items.

The Rhode Island EMA has also been working with the Department of Environmental Management to address the state's debris management plan. If a category 3 hurricane were to hit our state, it could generate as much waste as the state would normally produce in 3 years. We must have the capability to clear critical infrastructure and dispose of debris.

Additionally, EMA has worked with FEMA to create a plan to distribute food, water and ice to our citizens.

Since I took office, I have made it a priority to enhance Rhode Island's preparedness for hurricanes and emergencies of any kind. I have allocated \$50,000 each year since I have been in office for ongoing support of the Hurricane Barrier. Our Hurricane Barrier was tested in July before the Army Corps of Engineers and it passed inspection.

Since fiscal year 03, Rhode Island has received \$41.5 M in homeland security grants. That is enabling us to move forward with a host of projects including urban search and rescue, hazard teams, and mass casualty trailers to name just a few.

Currently our state has requested nearly \$60 M in homeland security grants. As you know, we are only guaranteed \$7 M. We are very concerned about the new process. In order to continue the progress we are making in better preparing our state for a hurricane or a disaster, we must receive the funding we need to protect the people of Rhode Island.

I urge you to address this pressing issue so that we can build upon the momentum we've gained.

For example, we are making progress in facilitating communication among first responders. In fact we have enhanced interoperability in Washington County and work is underway to bring this standardized communication system for first responders in Newport, North Providence, Providence and South County.

However, in order to complete this statewide system, our Emergency Management Agency is seeking \$32 M in homeland security grants.

We also have Nextel radio systems in our hospitals and in every community in our state to enable first responders to communicate with emergency rooms.

And last year we dedicated a high-tech \$1.4 M mobile Command Center which will enable us to set up a post anywhere in our state and will allow federal, state and local agencies to communicate effectively during an emergency.

Two years ago Burrillville and several surrounding communities pooled their resources from homeland security grants to purchase a mobile command post. And due to the generosity of a local resident the City of Newport also has a mobile command post.

Additionally, Rhode Island E911 has implemented a pilot program that utilizes state-of-the-art technology which enables dispatchers to view a location from

many different angles. This gives first responders all of the pertinent information before they get to a scene.

To have more cohesive emergency operations, I have recommended a \$20M bond to locate the Emergency Operations Center, E911, IT and EMA to the Pastore Complex. The General Assembly has heard testimony on this issue and is considering this request.

We also will be seeking \$6 M from the federal government to make this a state-of-the-art facility a reality.

Last week, my staff and I met with Senator Chafee to discuss emergency response planning for the Port of Providence in the event that a series of catastrophic events occur. We saw what happened with Katrina, with the Hurricane followed by the flood. We are seeking up to \$1M to enable us to be better prepared for any type of chain reaction we may experience at the Port of Providence. We all know that with LNG located there, that presents high risks which could easily be compounded. We have to be ready for it.

In closing, let me make one final point. Over the last two years, Rhode Island has made a tremendous amount of progress in updating our ability to deal with a major hurricane.

Since September 11th, there is no doubt that much of our energy has been devoted to concerns raised by the war on terror. In fact, terrorism has been a major focus for emergency management officials in every state and community throughout the country.

But we have also been working to ensure that Rhode Island is ready to meet the challenges presented by a hurricane similar to Katrina. While much work remains to be done, I believe that we are on schedule for completing our preparations, and that we will have a complete plan in place, before the beginning of this year's hurricane season.

Once again, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today.