




August 18, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO: R. David Paulison
Administrator

FROM: G. Kemble Bennett 
Chairman, National Advisory Council

SUBJECT: National Advisory Council Recommendation Regarding Creation
of a Regional Disability Coordinator Position

In fulfillment of their charge, the National Advisory Council's Special Needs Subcommittee has undertaken a review of existing programs and offices with missions related to the role of the FEMA Disability Coordinator.

The Subcommittee concluded that the creation of a Regional Disability Coordinator position within each of the ten FEMA Regions would appropriately expand and enhance the work of the FEMA Disability Coordinator, both in maintaining relationships with volunteer groups and in coordinating response activities.

During its August 13-14, 2008 meeting in Washington, DC, the full National Advisory Council unanimously approved the provision of this recommendation to FEMA.

Background

Through initial investigative efforts, the Subcommittee became aware of numerous volunteer organizations operating at the local level to provide care and support to those with special needs in an emergency response and recovery context. They noted that these groups are organized in a variety of ways and link to government operations in many different manners.

Several states have a senior level official or office which coordinates with such volunteer groups and the FEMA Disability Coordinator serves as a point of contact for these entities at the federal level. The Subcommittee posited that Regional Disability Coordinators would provide a link between these state and federal networks.

Additionally, given the number of open disasters at any particular time, response coordination responsibilities present a significant drain on the time and resources of the FEMA Disability Coordinator.

Regional Disability Coordinators would multiply FEMA personnel available to be present in Joint Field Offices to coordinate and support outreach to victims with special needs when disaster strikes.