



**EPA'S RESPONSE TO 9-11 AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR
FUTURE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**TESTIMONY OF JAMES L. CONNAUGHTON
CHAIRMAN
COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
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Chairwoman Clinton, Ranking Member Craig and Members of the Committee, I welcome the opportunity to testify today. The tragedy of September 11th was unprecedented in its scope. The complexity of the situation facing the local, state, and Federal governments in responding to this terrorist attack was immense – the work by all was heroic.

Chairwoman Clinton, I appreciate your leadership, as well as that of Senator Inhofe and Senator Lieberman, in providing constructive oversight and advice as we continue to cope with the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York City on September 11, 2001. You have been thoughtful with your questions, diligent in your pursuit of answers, and practical in working to find sensible solutions.

With respect to a wide variety of risk communication issues, including those involving air quality, the Environmental Protection Agency did its utmost to communicate the best available information accurately, and in a timely fashion to meet the needs of lower-Manhattan residents, workers, and businesses. To that end, EPA worked with the State of New York, the City of New York, OSHA, and the Council on Environmental Quality to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of the residents of lower-Manhattan.

The Federal government's communications in September of 2001 were conveyed real-time in fast-moving circumstances, using a variety of approaches, at a variety of levels. In all instances, federal agencies acted with the best available data at the time, and updated their communications and actions as new information was obtained.

We all learned a great deal following September 11th, including how to improve federal response and communications efforts. EPA completed a lessons learned document for the World Trade Center response in February 2002. EPA has used these lessons learned as well as lessons learned from subsequent responses to strengthen its organizational structure, to improve its preparedness and response program, and to develop its National Approach to Response. EPA will be discussing those changes during today's testimony. These improvements were

successfully put to the test in the swift and well-coordinated response to the space shuttle Columbia tragedy in February 2003.

With respect to the test and cleanup program, I appreciated the opportunity to sit down with you in October 2003 to work out a plan moving forward, building on the substantial effort previously undertaken. In a relatively short period of time, our staffs were able to quickly develop a workable strategy, identify appropriate resources, and initiate an expert-led process, with significant public involvement, under the supervision and management of seasoned EPA officials.

Although I have not been directly involved since that time, EPA has briefed me on its progress. I am pleased that Assistant Administrator Susan Bodine, accompanied by Assistant Administrator George Gray, are here today to discuss their efforts to date.

Along with EPA's leadership and expertise, I look forward to continuing to work with you, Members of the New York Congressional Delegation, and Members of this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.