

New FEMA stronger, more nimble than it was

(Printed in The New Orleans Times-Picayune)

June 12, 2007

Re: "Ready or not," Our Opinions, June 7.

The Times-Picayune's editorial fails to acknowledge **FEMA's** considerable progress over the past two years. **FEMA** has made major improvements in our communications, logistics, customer service and financial controls. The new **FEMA** is stronger and more nimble than it was a year ago.

The author of the Government Accountability Office report you cited said of **FEMA**, "They really have made a yeoman's effort to step back and look at what they've needed to do and how they're going to do it." GAO's William Jenkins also noted that **FEMA** is "certainly better off, they have teams ready to go; they have teams that can get there within 12 hours. They've got mobile communications trucks that they can send video back."

Updating the National Response Plan is an ongoing process. The expanded role of **FEMA** under the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act that Congress passed last fall widened the scope of and interest in the revision process for the National Response Plan. While the overwhelming desire of new constituencies to be part of the discussion resulted in the updated plan being delayed, the existing plan remains sound and we are better prepared than we were last year.

Our effective plans and improvements are evident in **FEMA's** recent responses to tornadoes and storms across the country. Senior **FEMA** leaders were in regular contact with our partners in state and local government.

Supplies were pre-positioned and available even before states asked for assistance. **FEMA** staff were on the ground within hours assessing damage.

In short, our plans worked. We continue to work aggressive-ly to update the NRP with additional input and are confident that the revised plan will be well received by all of those who use it.

R. David Paulison
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Washington, D.C.