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Thank you. I am pleased to be here to discuss with you how together we can improve the national, state and local response during an emergency.

I'm excited to be here as FEMA – sadly - does not have a strong history of interaction with the law enforcement community. This is changing. In the past few months I have had the pleasure of meeting with key leaders from the National Association of Chiefs of Police and The Fraternal Order of Police. And just last week I addressed the FBI Mission Conference in Texas. This is a beginning. But these lines of communications must remain open if we are to succeed in the future.

Today, I would like to discuss with you what FEMA is doing and, as importantly, hear from you how we can move forward together. I want you to be comfortable working with FEMA and proud of the work we do together.

FEMA is very special to me—not just because I am privileged to lead such a fine organization—but because I get to work with people who, like you, are devoted to serving others.

I believe many Americans have little awareness of FEMA's mission—which is to help America mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters; FEMA's reliance upon partners—including federal, state and local law enforcement—to accomplish nearly all that we do, and Citizens' personal roles and responsibilities, along with state and local jurisdictions, in the emergency management process.

The lack of awareness is our fault.

We in FEMA simply haven't done as good a job as we should explaining our roles and responsibilities, managing expectations and communicating the urgent need for preparedness. But recognizing one's strengths and weaknesses is the first step in making the adjustments an organization needs to make if it is to succeed.

In our discussion today I'd like to emphasize three key points. First: lessons learned in recent years and our immediate responses. Second: our vision for FEMA and how the reorganization announced last week fits into this vision. And Third: FEMA's commitment to breaking out of our traditional boxes and including new and diverse voices into the process – and especially the expanded voice of the law enforcement community.

First, What We've Learned From the Past.

As has been often said, "Those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." We have learned from the past. The 2005 Hurricane Season challenged this nation and FEMA as never before. It was a wake-up call for all of us.

We learned first-hand some significant lessons.

We need to improve Communications. Information sharing was probably the single largest point of failure at the local, state and federal level.

We need to have our Logistics set to go. Know where supplies are and be able to deliver them to the right place, at the right time, and in the right quantity.

We need to Ensure Continuity. Federal, state, local, and tribal governments must be ready to provide essential functions and services to the citizens during times of crisis. As the rumors of dangerous criminal activity that circulated during Katrina prove, law enforcement is one of these essential services. While the rumors were later proven to be false, the fact is we were not prepared to prove to the public and communicate clearly that they were safe and secure at the shelters.

Looking ahead to 2007 and beyond, I want FEMA to be the preeminent emergency management agency for the Nation. Why? Because FEMA must regain the confidence of the American people and set the standard for best practices in emergency management.

How are we setting about accomplishing this? In 2006 we concentrated on three primary areas: Disaster operations, including operational planning, hazard mitigation, and logistics; Disaster assistance, including case management and customer service to disaster victims; and, Business processes, including how we execute basic operations such as financial management, procurement, acquisition, IT, and human resources. In 2007 and beyond, we will take reform a step further.

Which leads me to my second major point today: FEMA's Vision for the Future and How We Are Building the New FEMA.

FEMA is responding to the challenge confronting us with new leadership. We've built a strong team of leaders at FEMA Headquarters with decades of emergency management experience. We are making concerted efforts to strengthen the Regions, because that is where the rubber meets the road. Through our Office of National Security Coordination, we are coordinating with all of our Federal, State and local partners in continuity planning to ensure the continuation of essential government functions. Through FEMA's Office of National Security Coordination we are developing an Integrated Public Alert and Warning System-IPAWS- to provide communications to a large number of citizens in a specific area or to the entire nation. And of particular importance to you, our partners in law enforcement, we've created the position of Law Enforcement Advisor to the Administrator, which I will discuss in greater detail in just a moment.

The call for transformation is broad and expectations are high. The Nation needs a stronger and more capable FEMA. We truly are putting together a "New FEMA." Just last week, I joined Department of Homeland Security Undersecretary Foresman in announcing a reorganization that will leave us better prepared to respond to emergency and which meets the requirements under last October's Emergency Management Reform Act.

The New FEMA, as we call it, we will include the US Fire Administration, the Office of Grants, the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Division, and the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program, among others. We are currently laying the groundwork for the transition, and the new organization goes into effect on March 31 of this year. And we are using the opportunity of this reorganization to make other changes that were not required by congress, but which will help us better adapt to future needs.

Which brings me to my final point today; FEMA needs to listen to new voices.

We Are Not Alone. We Share Responsibility for Emergency Management with Our Partners in state and local government. We need to work better together when we're facing disasters. Katrina made it very clear that we need to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters as partners, standing side by side, so if there's a need in the system or a gap to fill, we fill it before there's a failure in the emergency management system. The traditional model of waiting for state and local capabilities to be overwhelmed before federal organizations try to come together to bring assistance to the scene of a disaster is no longer sufficient. Responding to all disasters, catastrophic or otherwise, must now be viewed from the perspective of "all for one" and "one for all." As an agency we are dedicated to being a partner with other Federal offices as well as state and local governments. Which is why the New FEMA will not go back to the old ways of doing things. We have learned and are evolving.

I will admit that FEMA had a tendency to listen to those with whom we were most familiar. This needs to - and will - change. We need to be more inclusive and involve more of those on the ground in our process.

One area where FEMA had not enjoyed a close relationship was in the law enforcement community. But as I mentioned earlier, law enforcement is a key component of any continuity of government plan and is very important to the public. The New FEMA will not make this mistake.

To insure that law enforcement always has a seat at our table, and that we have your perspective when making and executing our plans, I am creating the permanent position of Law Enforcement Advisor to the Administrator. This position is part of the organizational structure we announced on Monday and will reside directly within the Office of the Administrator. I am also asking for input from law enforcement – and would love to hear from you – to help me develop the job description for this position. I've already spoken with many in the community about how best to structure the job and the role they will play. Once in place, we will search for the right person to fill this critical role. They will be someone with experience in the field, and someone who understands the strengths and needs of the law enforcement community. They will be a part of FEMA's senior leadership team—participating in our planning meetings and on-hand during times of crisis. We want to hear your voice and make the best use of your talents. We want to provide you with the support and resources you need to prepare for your jobs and to respond when needed.

Whether it is the new Office of Grants, or our existing teams in the field, or our new Advisor, we are dedicated to making sure we are responsive to you, and that law enforcement is integral to all parts of the process.

FEMA will proudly lead the transformation of preparedness, emergency management and continuity in the nation. We want you as part of the team.

As we strengthen FEMA and align with this vision, what can America expect of us? You can expect that we will:

- Instill public confidence that FEMA is an agency that works for all of our citizens;
- We will capitalize on partnerships among the local, state and federal authorities—because we will bring value;
- We will manage our assets more efficiently and effectively;
- We will help the Nation continue to build a culture of preparedness;
- Ensure national communications through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System;

And support our federal, state and local partners in ensuring the continuation of this nation's essential functions.

We will listen to those who know what they are talking about;

Thank you for your time and I look forward to continuing to work with you in the days and years to come.