

Highlights of [GAO-07-139](#), a report to congressional committees

### Why GAO Did This Study

Much of FEMA’s funding is provided in supplemental appropriations when a disaster is declared, but funds to staff, manage, and operate other FEMA programs and underlying support functions—what GAO refers to as its day-to-day operations—compete with other Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and federal priorities for limited resources. In this environment, FEMA must strategically plan for and manage its day-to-day operations to ensure they efficiently and effectively support the agency’s disaster relief mission. To analyze this issue, GAO examined resource trends and management related to FEMA’s day-to-day operations from fiscal year 2001 through fiscal year 2005.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that FEMA take steps to better manage resources for its day-to-day operations, including collecting data that enables managers to monitor progress and support resource priorities, using leading practices to develop a strategic workforce plan, and developing business continuity plans. In carrying out these recommendations, FEMA should work with Congress to ensure that the information it provides is sufficient for use in oversight activities.

DHS and OMB staff provided technical comments on a draft of this report, which we incorporated where appropriate.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-139](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-139).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Susan J. Irving, (202) 512-9142, [irvings@gao.gov](mailto:irvings@gao.gov).

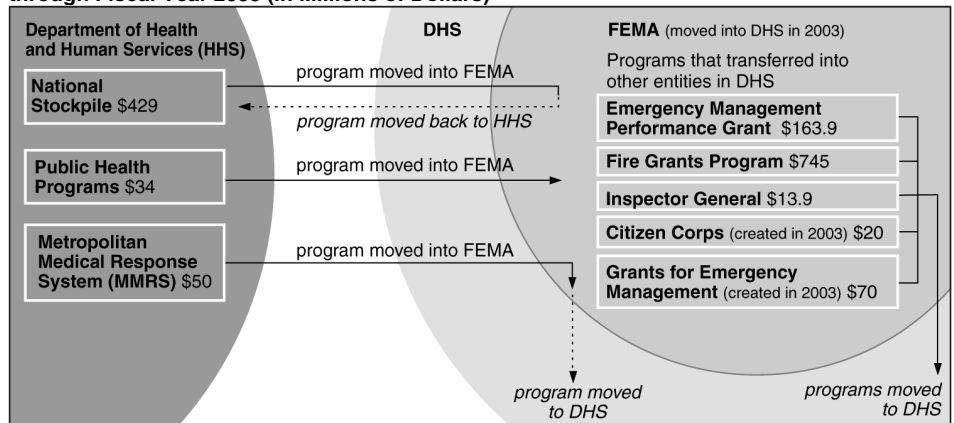
## BUDGET ISSUES

# FEMA Needs Adequate Data, Plans, and Systems to Effectively Manage Resources for Day-to-Day Operations

### What GAO Found

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) experienced near-constant organizational change from fiscal years 2001 through 2005 that caused considerable flux in FEMA’s resources. During this period, the most significant change occurred in March 2003 when FEMA transitioned from an independent agency to a component of the newly created DHS. From the beginning of fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2005, a significant number of programs and their associated funding moved into and out of FEMA. Although the amounts nearly balanced, the movement was disruptive to operations and created uncertainty about the availability of resources.

**Programs and Associated Funding That Moved into and out of FEMA from March 1, 2003 through Fiscal Year 2005 (in Millions of Dollars)**



Source: GAO analysis of FEMA data.

FEMA also contributed to DHS start-up costs and ongoing expenses, which reduced funds available for FEMA’s operating expenses. Though FEMA would have incurred some of these costs as an independent agency, evidence suggests that FEMA may have been assessed a disproportionate amount relative to several larger DHS entities. While all of this affected resources for FEMA’s day-to-day operations, the extent cannot be fully understood because FEMA does not have adequate information on how resources are aligned with those operations. Such information could be used to improve planning and management and provide greater accountability to Congress and the public.

Although these shifting resources created challenges, the way FEMA managed its existing resources compounded problems. Notably, FEMA lacks a strategic workforce plan and related human capital strategies—such as succession planning or a coordinated training effort—which are integral to managing resources. They enable an agency to define staffing levels, identify the critical skills needed to achieve its mission, and eliminate or mitigate gaps between current and future skills and competencies. FEMA also lacks business continuity plans for its day-to-day operations, which puts support for the disaster-relief mission at increased risk. Even FEMA staff’s strong sense of mission is no substitute for a plan and strategies for action.