

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**“PKEMRA IMPLEMENTATION:
An Examination of FEMA’s Preparedness and Response Mission”**

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Introduction

Good Morning Chairman Cuellar, Ranking Member Rogers, and other distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a privilege to appear before you today on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). As always, we appreciate your interest in, and continued support of emergency management, specifically FEMA's progress in implementing the many reforms mandated by the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, hereinafter referred to as PKEMRA.

As you well know, PKEMRA provided the necessary provisions and guidance to help expand the scope of the agency's mission, transform it into the nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness agency, and provide the means and authority to build a more nimble and flexible national emergency response system. The Act also clarified FEMA's responsibilities and its unique role within DHS. PKEMRA also greatly expanded our ability to meet our preparedness mission. We appreciate the Subcommittee's involvement in building this blueprint, which effectively positions FEMA to perform its vital role in helping our stakeholders to safeguard the Nation from disruptions by man or nature.

The shortcomings that prompted the PKEMRA clearly didn't happen overnight. The implementation of over 250 PKEMRA provisions along with the reforms from DHS and FEMA's internal organizational assessments have led to the adoption of new ways to prepare our society for a host of 21st century challenges. They have transformed the agency into a "New FEMA." By strengthening its coordination internally and with other DHS components, as well as with Federal partners outside of the Department, FEMA has improved the Nation's ability to prepare for and respond to major disasters and, in particular, those catastrophic events that exceed the considerable response capacity of our State, local and Tribal partners. Thanks to PKEMRA, FEMA has more tools and capacity to lead a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system and address preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation missions. These improvements can be seen day-in and day-out in FEMA's operations, planning, and assistance.

While some system-wide reforms will take time, we are proud of the progress we have made to date in becoming a more engaged, agile, responsive, and trusted leader and partner.

I'd like to highlight some of our primary achievements and progress:

Improving Response Operations, Readiness and Emergency Communications

The operational tempo we and our partners have faced since Hurricane Katrina have given us ample opportunity to test and implement many new or enhanced operational capabilities. Upgrades to our national and regional operations centers have dramatically improved our connectivity and ability to conduct effective coordination and integration with other Federal departments and agencies and State governments. This has facilitated our ability to develop situational awareness and a common operating picture, enabling effective decision-making. The upgrades to the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) at FEMA headquarters have given us new and improved abilities to coordinate and exchange information.

FEMA has developed and deployed Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs), our next generation rapidly deployable interagency national and regional emergency response “strike” teams that are often the earliest Federal presence on scene, serving as liaisons to State and local officials, providing situational awareness and needs assessments. Currently, two National and four Regional IMATs are operational. The National and Regional IMATs were instrumental in providing on-scene situational awareness during the 2008 hurricane responses. All IMATs were deployed to support the responses in Texas and Louisiana. Critical on-scene command, control, and communications support was provided by IMATs and the Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) for Houma, Louisiana government officials and the Mayor of Galveston, Texas during last year’s hurricanes. The National IMAT-East and Region IV IMAT recently supported the 2009 Inauguration activities.

FEMA also manages other disaster response teams and assets that can be rapidly deployed to support State and local response operations including Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Forces, our Mobile Emergency Response Systems (MERS), and Emergency Response Teams (ERT). The IMAT hurricane deployments were complemented, for example, by Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Forces that supported Search and Rescue missions -- including more than 3,000 rescues in both Louisiana and Texas. FEMA can now rapidly deploy telecommunications assets during a disaster response to support communications operability and interoperability. We are upgrading outdated equipment and procuring tactical response vehicles and have also provided direct assistance to Gulf and East Coast States in developing State and regional communications plans for hurricane season. Our MERS assets continued to provide communications support to States/locals, as well as our response teams and other interagency response teams.

Improving Assistance to Disaster Affected Areas and Populations

FEMA, in collaboration with a number of Federal partners, simplified and unified the application process for disaster survivors. We expanded our capability to register those in need of aid, to include providing mobile registration centers that can be on hand to help those without access to phones or computers, while also strengthening our ability to detect and limit fraud and abuse of assistance programs.

In 2007, the President directed FEMA to establish a single application process for all Federal disaster assistance programs. FEMA led an interagency task force in developing and delivering the Disaster Assistance Improvement Plan (DAIP) on December 31, 2008. DAIP is an online coordinated disaster application process. Disaster survivors can access the DAIP at [Disaster Assistance.gov](http://DisasterAssistance.gov).

Also in 2007, FEMA partnered with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to create and pilot the new Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). This new program for eligible individuals and households displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is a temporary housing rental assistance and case management program administered by HUD on behalf of FEMA. The program’s interaction with disaster victims is administered by HUD through its existing national network of Public Housing Agencies (PHAs). Since the partnership began, HUD and FEMA have been working together to ensure that the transition of responsibility from one agency to the other is completed as smoothly as possible. FEMA has also

partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to create a disaster case management program that can be in place within 72 hours after a declaration and can ensure that persons affected by a disaster are connected to disaster assistance, health care, mental health, and other social services necessary to make them self-sufficient again."

In addition, FEMA has undertaken many initiatives to improve implementation of the Public Assistance Program. We have established a Public Assistance Steering Committee composed of senior Public Assistance staff in each of our 10 Regions and 10 State representatives. The purpose of the Committee is to serve as the Board of Directors for the Public Assistance Program and develop the vision, strategies and policies to ensure efficient, effective and consistent implementation of the program. We recently completed the Public Assistance Pilot Program authorized by PKEMRA and expect the report on the effectiveness of the pilot program to be delivered to Congress soon.

FEMA will continue to refine its evacuee hosting guidance, and plans to complete five State hosting plans for large numbers of evacuees. These State Hosting Plans will help adjacent States that may host Gulf Coast evacuees. This effort is designed to synchronize separate State evacuation plans to create a more cohesive and unified effort. Teams engage with each State to identify requirements and capabilities, working to develop a plan that integrates shelter planning with transportation planning. The result of these efforts will be more organized, timely and better coordinated evacuation by those with their own transportation, as well as for those in need of assistance in evacuating by bus or air. FEMA is also completing enhancements to systems that support mass care and housing activities following a disaster, by implementing standard protocols and staff training for long-term recovery planning. FEMA will continue to refine plans and procedures for managing disaster assistance operations under the varying conditions of different catastrophic and extraordinary disaster scenarios.

In FY 2009, FEMA will continue to improve its plans and capabilities for managing mass evacuations and the resulting displaced populations, including additional State and local plans and development and expansion of evacuee tracking systems. The agency will also continue to improve, test and exercise its capabilities for all of its Individual Assistance functions (mass care, emergency assistance, housing, and human services).

FEMA worked with its partners, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the American Red Cross, to establish and implement a National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and a National Emergency Child Locator Center to help those displaced find their loved ones. Through the Agency's 2008 Competitive Training Grant Program, we have awarded two grants in the amount of \$1.7 million and \$3.5 million to the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Partnership for Environmental Technology Education, respectively, to provide basic life supporting first aid and education, as well as all hazards preparedness training to children (grades 1-7), caregivers, parents and responders. The Agency also supports Teen Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training, which targets high school students.

Engaging Federal, State, Tribal, Local, and Private Sector and Volunteer Partners

PKEMRA enabled FEMA to strengthen partnerships that encompass the emergency management community and its key communities of interest through establishment of a Small State and Rural

Advocate and a National Disability Coordinator. In keeping with the Act's intent to foster engaged partnerships, FEMA also established a Private Sector Office and appointed a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor.

FEMA has greatly benefited from establishment of the National Advisory Council (NAC). The NAC is providing invaluable counsel on a number of important initiatives, and doing so earlier in the concept development phase of initiatives to solicit feedback and gain stakeholder buy-in before the initiatives are implemented. Recently, FEMA and the NAC coordinated a final review and revision of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), during which the NAC provided five areas of comments and recommendations to FEMA, all of which were welcome and endorsed by FEMA leadership. One example includes NAC members' recommendations to strengthen the system by advocating for a closer linkage between Incident Command System principles that represent best practices in emergency management and the Emergency Support Functions that operate during Federal responses to disasters. FEMA's coordination with the NAC on NIMS dramatically improved the publication and is a ringing endorsement of PKEMRA's goal of fostering partnerships that enhance the Nation's emergency management and national preparedness systems.

This strengthened partnership practice has benefited FEMA in its engagement with other key stakeholders, such as collaboration with the American Red Cross in implementing the National Shelter System. Additionally, we are working more closely with States to identify potential gaps in functions or commodities where they anticipate needing Federal support, and doing so in a manner that is tailored to an individual State's needs.

We are making strenuous efforts to incorporate the feedback, best practices and lessons learned from all of our stakeholders into our processes, procedures and planning. We have worked with State partners over the last two years to do a formal Analysis of Federal Requirements, where we cataloged Federal preparedness program requirements that were levied on State and local governments, visited a large sample of States, and solicited specific recommendations to streamline needed, or shed duplicative requirements. Our partners provided seventy-five specific recommendations that continue to help FEMA find ways to lessen the programmatic and bureaucratic burden on its partners where appropriate.

Enhancing Disaster Planning and Other Preparedness Activities

In 2007, FEMA released the National Response Framework (NRF), which provides a clear picture of the resources and assets available through the Federal government and clarifies the agencies and programs that are brought to bear in disaster response and their role in support of State and local officials.

Moving into FY 2009, FEMA's National Preparedness Directorate (NPD) will improve coordination of national exercises with State exercises, and will implement - for the first time - a national planning system focused on high-risk scenarios that will bring consistency to contingency planning at the Federal, Regional, State and local levels. By focusing on planning, exercising and evaluations, and more focused applications of grant funding, NPD will measurably lead the Nation to a higher level of preparedness.

Another major area of improvement is in Mission Assignments. During response operations, FEMA uses the interagency “Mission Assignment” (MA) process to task and reimburse other Federal Departments and Agencies that provide essential disaster response assistance. Greater emphasis has been placed on the MA process, to include development of Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs), a mechanism used to facilitate rapid response. In 2006, FEMA had a total of 44 PSMAs with 2 Federal agencies in place for support for Hurricane Season. Since then, FEMA increased the number of PSMAs in place to 236 with 29 agencies. This support ranges from heavy-lift helicopters from the Department of Defense (DoD), to generators from the United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams from Health and Human Services (HHS), and Emergency Road Clearing Teams from the U.S. Forest Service.

In addition, FEMA has instituted operational planning as a core Agency competency. Since 2007, FEMA Headquarters and Regions/Area Offices have been hiring operational planners - the first time FEMA has hired a group of individuals with this skill set - to provide the capability to perform sophisticated operational analyses, analyze trends, and improve planning for the response to ongoing and future events. Planners are currently being hired in each of the FEMA Regions and Area Offices to provide this capability in the field. At the Regional level, these planners will coordinate the development of Federal, State, and local operational plans to guide response activities and help build a national culture of preparedness. The operational planners will also facilitate and conduct regional evacuation planning.

This year, FEMA will focus on the development of operational planning capabilities at all levels of emergency management, and operational planning for the National Planning Scenarios. We will continue to increase national readiness for site-specific catastrophic events, using scenario-driven plan development processes and supporting the development of vertically and horizontally integrated Catastrophic Response Plans.

FEMA has also greatly improved its evacuation planning capabilities. We have completed a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the NRF and a supporting supplement is under development. For Hurricane Gustav, FEMA implemented the Gulf Coast evacuation plan which had been developed over the past two years in coordination with the State of Louisiana. Using the plan, FEMA coordinated the evacuation of more than 2 million people in 48 hours to multiple receiving States using multi-modal evacuation sources including air, train, and bus. Working with DoD, HHS, and the States, FEMA successfully coordinated large scale medical evacuations from Louisiana and Texas. More than 600 pre-arranged ambulances were available to Louisiana for Hurricane Gustav and more than 300 ambulances were made available to support Texas for the Hurricane Ike response.

In Florida in 2008, while preparing for and responding to Tropical Storm Fay and Hurricane Hanna, the State implemented and used the Lake Okeechobee Plan developed in preparation for and response to a Category 5 Hurricane in Miami. This plan was developed as part of FEMA’s Catastrophic Planning Initiative.

We have also reinforced the critical and enduring need for personal preparedness, to encourage individuals to adequately prepare themselves for disaster events, recognizing that better

individual preparedness translates into better community preparedness and situational resilience. At the same time, we continue to work with our partners to develop a more sophisticated culture of preparedness across America.

Moreover, FEMA has continued working with the States to identify the gap between State resources and needs. The Gap Analysis Program was developed using a consistent, national approach to determine asset gaps at the local, State, and National levels. The initial focus in 2007 was on eight areas: debris, interim housing, sheltering, evacuation, commodity distribution, medical, and communication, and fuel in 18 hurricane-prone States. The All-Hazards Gap Analysis Template is now being applied in all 10 FEMA Regions. This Gap Analysis will feed the Comprehensive Assessment System as called for in PKEMRA, which will function as a central repository for national preparedness data by integrating preparedness assessments in order to develop a more complete picture of national preparedness. It will also ensure we are not overburdening States with overlapping reporting requirements.

These assessment and preparedness-related efforts will be guided by the revision and updating of “risk-based target capabilities for Federal, State, local, and tribal governments” that are “specific, flexible, and measurable,” as called for in PKEMRA. Since the release of the Target Capabilities List (TCL) in September 2007, we continue to refine the capabilities to make them more user-friendly; to provide guidance that distinguishes the appropriate level of capabilities different jurisdictions may wish to build and sustain based on their unique risks and needs; establish measurable readiness targets on which to base preparedness investments and assessments; and improve the usability of the capabilities to drive investments, equipment acquisition, plans, training, exercises, evaluation and improvement.

Increasing Regional Preparedness Capability, Capacity, and Coordination

One of FEMA’s primary reforms during 2007 was empowering and increasing the capacity of its regions. As the primary point of interface with States, FEMA Regions are essential to deliver on the promise of New FEMA.

One of the most significant initiatives is the new package of blended capability in the form of: Regional Advisory Councils (RACs), Federal Preparedness Coordinators (FPCs), Regional IMATs, Regional Operational Planners and enhanced Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCCs). Moreover, FEMA established Grants Management Branches in all 10 Regional offices and embedded 20 new Grant Management Specialists in the Regions to manage Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG), Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), and Drivers’ License Security Grant Program funds. The Regions are also strengthening their ties to partners by the establishment of a Regional Advisory Committee and Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups (RECCWGs). Eight out of ten regions currently now have RECCWGs. Both of these new entities greatly expand the opportunity to communicate and exchange ideas with key constituency groups.

Improving Timely Delivery of Goods and Services and Tracking

The Logistics Management Directorate (LMD) is FEMA’s major program office responsible for policy, guidance, standards, execution and governance of logistics support, services and operations. Its mission is to effectively plan, manage and sustain national logistics response and

recovery operations in support of domestic emergencies and special events – to act as the National Logistics Coordinator (NLC) or Single Logistics Integrator for National incident support. LMD is organized around four core competencies: Logistics Operations, Logistics Plans and Exercises, Distribution Management, and Property Management.

LMD has worked diligently to strengthen its business processes and leverage the best practices by enhancing relationships with both the public and private sector through various initiatives for a more coordinated logistics response operation. Overall, LMD has contributed significantly to FEMA’s forward leaning posture by putting in place contracts and interagency agreements (IAAs) that provide an enhanced logistics capability such as:

- Logistics Management Transformation Initiative
- Total Asset Visibility (TAV) to track supplies in transit
- National bus evacuation readiness
- Demonstration Program Logistics Capability Assessment Tool
- Ready meals and water (IAA with the Defense Logistics Agency)
- Base camp support contracts
- Single point ordering and tracking for Regions
- Supplies and services (IAA with the General Services Administration)
- Vehicle drivers and fleet management
- Vehicle maintenance

We are confident that through these initiatives, an enhanced operational capability and improved alliances with logistics partners across the Federal family and with the private sector will strengthen our ability to better manage the logistics pipeline to insure needed supplies and resources arrive at a disaster site more quickly and efficiently.

Strengthening Contracting Practices to Enhance Preparedness and Accountability

FEMA has implemented pre-positioned contracts in response to the need for enhanced planning and preparation in advance of disasters. FEMA currently has approximately 75 pre-positioned contracts in its inventory. For Gustav, FEMA activated its ground and air ambulance evacuation services contract with American Medical Response, Inc.; its rail evacuation services contract with AMTRAK; and its pre-positioned housing inspection services contract with PaRR Inspection Services.

In terms of oversight, FEMA has made considerable strides in improving the contract management and oversight aspects of its acquisition duties. It has institutionalized the use of Contract Administration Plans (CAPs) to facilitate efficient and effective contract administration and improve the agency’s post-award contract execution. CAPs also promoted task order competition while ensuring that services are available expeditiously to meet critical disaster response needs, while establishing consistent enterprise-wide contract administration processes for the Contracting Officer’s Technical Representatives (COTRs) in various regions. CAPs also document the agreements between program offices and the Acquisitions Management Division and serve as a guide for continual actions related to a contract administration.

The Agency has published the Emergency Acquisition Field Guide, which will ensure that non-1102 (contract specialist) personnel can effectively and appropriately contract for goods and services in an emergency situation. The guide defines the critical elements of an emergency acquisition in plain language so that any member of the disaster support team can understand and apply proper procedures. It includes information on purchase cards, program management, and contracting.

Employing Better Controls to Prevent Waste, Fraud and Abuse

While we are committed to streamlining the process of getting disaster aid to victims, we are also steadfast in our responsibility to be good stewards of the Disaster Relief Fund. To this end, in FY 2007, we implemented new software that communicates real-time data to caseworkers and the auto-determination system to prevent duplicate housing payments for applicants already receiving assistance through direct housing.

FEMA implemented checks in the National Emergency Management Information System (NEMIS) that flag “high risk” addresses such as check cashing stores, mail drops, cemeteries, and jails. Applications with high risk addresses require an intensive review prior to the delivery of assistance to prevent potential fraud.

Ensuring a Professional and Well-Trained Workforce with Effective Surge Capability

Recognizing that our disaster reservists are the backbone of our agency – routinely accounting for 70 to 90 percent of any disaster response and recovery effort – FEMA created the Disaster Reserve Workforce Division in 2008. This Division has primary responsibility for the development, deployment and support of a disaster workforce ready for the national, all-hazard response needs of FEMA program managers and regional leadership. This office is led by a long-time FEMA senior executive and staffed with senior managers with leadership experience in managing other successful reserve programs.

Summary

An improved level of preparedness and the enhanced performance of response and recovery actions in recent disasters have demonstrated noteworthy progress in implementing the PKEMRA reforms. More effective collaboration and cooperation between all partners – Federal, State, local, tribal, and voluntary organizations—has been the cornerstone of this progress. As a prime result of the PKEMRA legislation, our Nation’s emergency response system is more anticipatory than ever; our Regions and the National Response Coordination Center have newfound capabilities, such as the ability to host daily video teleconference calls with Federal and State interagency partners; our national response teams are more numerous and more robust; we are more effectively pre-staging resources and commodities; and we are deploying new capacity such as our housing task force. New FEMA performs a unique national role in helping our States prepare for all hazards for all missions, and in ensuring we deliver on the key principles of effective response identified in the National Response Framework: engaged partnership; tiered response; scalable, flexible, and adaptable operational capabilities; unity of effort through unified command; and the readiness to act.

Those principles reflect the inherent characteristics of our distributed and adaptive national emergency response system. The success of PKEMRA rests in the fact that the legislation

capitalized on the strengths of this system. PKEMRA provided key enablers that when fully realized will serve us well as we face the dense complex of 21st century risks.

Thank you again for the privilege of providing this report on our progress in implementing PKEMRA. I am prepared to respond to your questions.