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I am honored to be here today. FEMA is committed to developing stronger relationships with our partners at every level of government as well as in the private sector. I have met with law enforcement officials and organizations on numerous occasions over the past three years and truly value your input.

In fact, as I hope you know, FEMA now has a full time Law Enforcement Advisor to give this key community an important voice in FEMA's leadership. Chief Rick Dinse joined us last November and is in regular contact with leaders across the community. We both value your thoughts and I hope you will take this opportunity or reach out to us directly to express your ideas and opinions.

Today I'd like to give you a brief snapshot of FEMA, our recent reforms and how they are working. This is not the FEMA of just two years ago. We are stronger and more responsive than we were in the past.

While we are all concerned with the recent flooding here in Indiana and across the Midwest, the silver-lining has been the ability to see first-hand how these recent reforms are making a positive impact.

We did not wait to be called on but began moving people and resources into the region. As the flooding moved downstream, we prepositioned resources and commodities and had operational planners develop contingency plans. In the past we often waited for a request and we had no full-time operational planners.

Disaster response and recovery is about more than just FEMA and we are dedicated to working with our partners. Look at the results of our collaborative attitude in the Midwest. Over the past month, FEMA, the Corps of Engineers, GSA and the Defense Logistics Agency provided over 3.6 million bottles of water, more than 200,000 meals, and more than 13 million sandbags – enough to stretch from here to San Francisco. In addition to our federal partners, we called on private and charitable organizations. Just two examples: the American Red Cross distributed the meals and operated dozens of shelters while Wal-Mart used its distribution network to provide more than 500,000 bottles of water.

Law enforcement was part of this collaborative response. The state of Iowa reached out through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact for law enforcement support to help supplement their efforts in flooded towns. They knew that some might try to take advantage of abandoned areas so they reached out for help. Law enforcement in neighboring states responded and provided additional manpower they needed to protect life and property during the response to this disaster. Thank you for supporting your colleagues through this process.

As the floods continue to recede we also will see the impact of FEMA's reforms on the recovery. Thirty-five of our mobile disaster recovery units are on the ground helping people apply for assistance. As of last Friday, In Iowa, Indiana and Wisconsin, we have already received over 59,000 registrations for assistance and approved more than 124 million dollars for housing assistance and other disaster-related needs.

Again, it's not just FEMA. SBA has approved more than 14.3 million dollars in loans and the Departments of Labor, Agriculture and Transportation are all involved in providing grants to those hit by the floods.

One final example of our collaborative efforts is our National Housing Task Force, established to support state needs and field operations as they work to provide temporary and long-term housing. Participants include more than 10 federal agencies, the Red Cross, AmeriCorps and Save the Children. The task force is operating under a model developed during the California wildfires, bringing federal agencies and non-governmental organizations together to mobilize resources and to quickly ramp-up the recovery phase. Each state is also setting up its own task force and federal agencies are involved, offering direct advice and support on the ground. We are committed to this process and to the collaborative effort it will take to support those with housing needs.

All this done using the plans and procedures we have developed in recent years: and in particular the National Response Framework. Let me just take a moment to thank you for your assistance in developing the law enforcement elements of this plan. In fact, your own John Thompson was there at the roll-out on stage with Secretary Chertoff and me and demonstrating that we had included key communities such as yours in the process.

There is still much to be done. I spoke about law enforcement deployments to Iowa last month. This is not a new issue, and we continue to work with the law enforcement community to review this capability for future events.

During Katrina and Rita, law enforcement resources were severely impacted. Many well meaning law enforcement personnel self dispatched without adequate equipment, or sustainability and became, unfortunately part of the problem. I saw this in a similar

setting, personally, when I was Miami-Dade Fire Chief and a number of firefighters and other responders arrived in Florida following the ValuJet crash. I did not know who they were or what capabilities they possessed.

Following Katrina, FEMA and DHS were tasked to produce a report to congress on the feasibility and efficacy of developing a coordinated national surge capability of law enforcement resources during catastrophic disasters. In addition, the Major County Sheriffs' Association and Major Cities Chief Association produced their own report recommending the development of Law Enforcement Deployment Teams that would be similar to the Urban Search and Rescue Teams with one major exception: it was proposed that they be activated through the EMAC process. This report together with significant input from other emergency response organizations, including NSA, has become the foundation of a report that will be presented to Congress later this year. It is clear to all who participated in this process that an additional means for coordinated national law enforcement surge capability utilizing state and local resources will be necessary in the future.

Of course, direct help and support helps you, too. We recognize that no matter how prepared we are: FEMA can not do it alone. FEMA is committed to supporting you so that we are all better prepared.

President Bush and Secretary Chertoff have been committed to strengthening FEMA. This year, they proposed a \$9.7 billion FEMA budget that is the strongest in FEMA's history. This is to your benefit, as well. Nearly a quarter of FEMA's budget – roughly \$2.2 billion – will go to state and local grants. Another \$1.9 billion will go to mitigation projects. And the Disaster Relief Fund will receive another \$1.9 billion. When all is said and done, just about 10% of our budget will go to FEMA for our operations – the rest is focused on our efforts on the ground and on supporting you.

Over the past five years FEMA and DHS have provided over \$23.8 billion for state and local projects through our disaster grant programs. With more than \$26 billion provided to our partners across state and local government and involving non-profit and private sector elements, we have provided grants that are directly helping to improve our nation's preparedness for any disaster.

FEMA also is providing training to first responders through our Center for Domestic Preparedness, our Emergency Management Institute, and on-line as we know many of you can not afford the time to travel to one of our classes.

Finally, let me just take a moment to reassure you that these reforms will continue throughout the coming transition of Administrations – no matter who our next President may be.

We have a robust transition plan in place. The initial focus has been on filling career deputy slots with experienced and qualified people who will be ready to “hold down the fort.” I have named one of our career Regional Administrators, Nancy Ward, to serve as our Senior Career Transition Officer in the event that a new Administrator is not in place. Chief Dinse is serving a three year term in his position and thus will also be present through this transition and into the new administration so that he can continue to be a voice for you.

We are working across FEMA’s components and Regions to develop simple, useful, and uniform means to transfer knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned to the new leadership. We will not leave you standing alone during this transition.

As you can see, FEMA is learning from our past and looking to the future. But we can not do it alone.

Government – even with the Federal, tribal, State and local governments working perfectly in sync – is not the entire answer. All Americans need to be part of the emergency management process. We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America, in which every American takes personal responsibility for his or her own emergency preparedness. FEMA will be a partner with all of you as we move forward. We ask you to join us as we all prepare for the future and are ready to help those in need.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.