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Good afternoon.

I am pleased to be here with NEMA President Albert Ashwood. Oklahoma Dept. of Emergency is lucky to have you.

I am proud to be joined today by two of FEMA's visionary leaders. FEMA Deputy Director Harvey Johnson is our Chief Operating Officer. Policy Director Marko Bourne is one of our leaders in developing the vision of New FEMA.

I am always honored to speak with the men and women who are on the front lines of emergency management in the U.S. The NEMA conferences have a well deserved reputation for bringing together the best and the brightest so that we can develop the skills and relationships that are key when regional and national disasters strike.

I know Secretary Chertoff touched on the improvements that we've made to FEMA over the past year. I want to **thank the Secretary and President Bush for their support**. We would not have come so far without their commitment to strengthening FEMA.

I also want to **recognize the men and women of FEMA**, because it's through their dedication and hard work that we've been able to make the improvements we've made in logistics, claims management, customer service, communications, and debris removal. I'm very proud of the work this agency has done and honored to lead it.

I'd like to discuss with you our **vision for FEMA**, and share with you how we are making a New FEMA that is a better, stronger, and more responsive organization. First, I will briefly discuss the progress we've already made in building this New FEMA. Next I will explain how our **FY 2008 Budget request** provides the tools to build towards this New FEMA. Finally, I want to **challenge the old way of doing things** and ask all of you to join in the effort.

I want FEMA to be the preeminent emergency management agency for the Nation – an organization that our partners in federal, tribal, state and local governments trust and can rely on during times of crisis.

What are we doing to accomplish this? It's often said that "those who do not learn from the past are doomed to repeat it." We started by learning from our past.

Based on numerous reviews and reports – including one presented by NEMA – we have been working to build a model agency that is developing emergency management competencies at all levels of government.

To truly transform FEMA into the Nation's Preeminent Emergency Management Agency, we must focus our efforts in four key areas.

First, we must strengthen the core capabilities, competencies and capacities of FEMA.

Second, we will strengthen FEMA's Regions. They are our on the front line, engaging directly with state and local partners and disaster victims. It is the Region that will lead the Federal response to incidents across the spectrum of all-hazards events. In Florida, some in the public don't seem to understand that our response team to the tornadoes was coordinated through the region and the region brought in any supplementary staff. And it is the Region that can best help our partners to understand the procedures that go with our grant programs. We plan to place grant advocates in each region that will work with you to provide direct, day-to-day interaction and support on grant issues.

Third, recognizing that response to disasters and emergencies is primarily a state and local effort, we must have effective partnerships with state, tribal and local governments. You will play an instrumental role in building and supporting an effective **national** emergency management system.

Some may forget, but there is also a strong individual component to preparedness and response. I don't have to tell you this. But FEMA will continue to emphasize personal responsibility. Government can help those physically or financially unable to respond. This is why my family and I get ready for Hurricane season each year by preparing our home with water, food, batteries and other emergency supplies; and we know our evacuation plan. Friends I know in California have their "earthquake kits" while others in the north have their snow supplies. Sadly, polls show that only 16% of Americans considered themselves "well prepared" for a disaster. We must do more to encourage personal and family preparedness.

Fourth and finally, FEMA is bringing in the right people with the right skills. We've built a strong team of leaders in DC with decades of emergency management experience.

For the first time in memory, FEMA will also have full time, experienced Regional Directors in all ten regions—we've just filled the last vacancy. But to succeed we must build a nationwide system of trained and certified experts skilled in all hazards emergency management. You all must play a central role in this effort to professionalize the national emergency management system.

Implementing the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act presents both opportunity and tremendous responsibility. It is an opportunity to improve our core capabilities and strengthen our Regions. There are new responsibilities as we include preparedness and protection to our traditional missions of mitigation, response and recovery. There is a new responsibility to include in our role, elements related to terrorist and other man-made events. And it provides both opportunity and responsibility as we engage new constituencies, such as the law enforcement community.

While this reorganization itself is event-driven, we've begun to look 5, 10, 15 years down the road toward what we want this organization to become. You know, the dinosaurs didn't die because the weather changed. They died because they couldn't adapt when it did. We are going to build New FEMA so that will adapt to ever-changing, new situations. DHS and FEMA announced our plan for reorganization this January and Marko will discuss its implementation shortly.

Our FY08 Budget proposal takes the New FEMA structure and our new vision into account. So let us take a moment to look at the budget and what it means. A New FEMA requires a new investment in growing the size and capability of our agency. We received tremendous support from the President, Secretary Chertoff, OMB and Congress in the fiscal year 2007 appropriation. The FY08 request provides our first opportunity seek the resources necessary to achieve our vision.

No longer will we need a "McGuyver" attitude at FEMA. Too often we didn't have the resources to get the job done, so employees did what they could – up to using baling wire and duct tape to hold together the operations. This budget demonstrates President Bush's commitment to building a strong national emergency management system at every level – federal, tribal, state and local.

To start, **the Operations, Planning and Support budget for FEMA will increase by nearly \$141.6 million to \$667.6 million. This is nearly a 27% increase in FEMA's base operating budget over FY07 levels.** This is the funding that makes New FEMA possible.

When you include programs and offices that are part of the reorganization, the overall budget for operations and programs will increase \$600.7 million to over \$5.8 billion – an increase of more than 11%.

When all FEMA-related activities are included, include our joint programs, FEMA will have budget authority over more than \$9 billion – an increase of \$329 million or nearly 4%. This is the first year of a three-year plan to build a New FEMA that is the Nation's Preeminent Emergency Management Agency.

I know you all are particularly interested in the grant program funding that is part of FEMA's FY 2008 request. Let me echo Secretary Chertoff. The President's FY2008 budget will make available an additional \$3.2 billion to our state and local partners. \$2.2 billion is included in FEMA's FY 2008 budget to support state and local grant program. In addition, FEMA will be working with the Department of Commerce in administering \$1 billion in interoperability grants. This program will bring resources for interoperable communications, which have accounted for almost 28 percent of grant program expenditures in recent program years, to support state and local preparedness efforts. It's worth noting that from 2001 through 2007, the federal government has allocated more than \$16 billion in state and local preparedness funding. The FY 2008 request demonstrates how far we've come in with respect to federal support for emergency management, especially considering that FY 2001 preparedness grant programs were approximately \$350 million. This is a strong request that demonstrates the Administration's continued support to funding preparedness and response activities across our country.

Before I wrap up, there's one more topic that I want to talk to you about. It's how we at FEMA and all of our counterparts around the country need to work better together when we're facing disasters. As an agency we are dedicated to being a partner with state, tribal and local agencies as well as with the private sector. Let me emphasize that word: **partner**. We are a support agency. We are not coming in and taking over. FEMA will proudly lead the transformation of preparedness and emergency management in the nation. But we need the help of everyone in the emergency management community to do this. The traditional model of waiting for state and local capabilities to be overwhelmed before federal assistance is on 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."

During this year's tornadoes, I did not wait to reposition our supplies until someone called to ask for them. I rolled my trucks with water, food, tarps, generators and other needed supplies Friday morning. If the state didn't need them, no harm done. But when the state requested the tarps, they were there. When they decided that some of our other supplies would be useful, we did not wait for them to drive hundreds of miles from a depot. They were there. FEMA will be a proactive agency that will anticipate needs and be ready to fill them.

What It All Means

At the end of the day, what does a New FEMA with a larger budget and a reorganized structure mean for the American Public?

The FY 2008 Budget will result in a FEMA that is in touch with America, ready to respond and user friendly. As we strengthen FEMA and align with this vision, what can America expect of us? The New FEMA will prove to the public that we are an agency that works for all citizens. The New FEMA will capitalize on partnerships among the federal, tribal, state and local authorities—because we will bring value. The New FEMA will manage our assets more efficiently and effectively. The New FEMA will help the Nation continue to build a culture of preparedness. The New FEMA will ensure national communications through the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. And the New FEMA will support our federal, tribal, state and local partners in ensuring the continuation of this nation's essential functions. In short, the New FEMA will be better, stronger, faster than before. The New FEMA will be ready to take a leadership role where needed, provide support where appropriate and be on-hand across the country before and after any major event.

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