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League of Cities  
Public Safety and Crime Prevention Steering Committee  
Washington, DC  
Tuesday, March 13, 2007

It is a pleasure to be with you today. I am always pleased to speak about the past, present and future of FEMA.

With the lessons of 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina in mind, FEMA has been changing and evolving. While local and state governments will continue to lead the way as the first-responders during a disaster, we want to work with you as partners.

Let me just say, before I talk about how FEMA will work with you during a disaster, that we also have a role together in educating the American public about their responsibility to prepare themselves and their families. Few Americans have stored water, food, batteries and other emergency supplies in their homes to help them during lesser events. They rely on local, state and federal resources for even short-term needs during a disaster. All of us need to get back to emphasizing the need to – as the Boy Scouts put it – “Be Prepared.” All of us know how hard it can be in widespread disasters to rush supplies where they are needed. Please join me in reeducating the public on their need to be ready to support themselves and their families until help can arrive.

With that said, we are making major strides to get help where it is needed as soon as is possible. Over the past year we have been taking the important first steps that will lead to a better, stronger, more nimble FEMA. This is truly a New FEMA.

I have brought in new staff with decades of experience in the emergency management fields to provide strong leadership and direction.

These leaders are not only serving in Washington, but in our regional offices around the country. In fact, for the first time in recent memory we now have full-time professional Directors in all 10 of our Regions. These are men and women with decades of experience as firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency managers. The Regions are where “the rubber hits the road” and strengthening their abilities is a key element of our reform efforts. They are committed to reaching out to those of you in local government. They know, as I do, that the worse time to build relationships is during a crisis. We are all committed to building open lines of communications today so

that we can work with you when a disaster strikes. Please. If you have not already met with your regional Director or their staff, do so. It is in both our interests to know each other so that we can better work together in good times and in bad.

Our New FEMA has already implemented major reforms. These include: Stronger communications with a focus on establishing these clear lines of communication with our state and local partners; A greater focus on Continuity of Government, especially in insuring that basic government services like law enforcement and health care are available in times of crisis; A more robust logistical programs with new supply lines that gets equipment where we need it when we need it; And numerous reforms to our financial management that will greatly reduce the potential for waste, fraud and abuse.

We have taken advantage of the reorganization to ensure that our new stakeholders have a seat at the table and a voice in the organization. The New FEMA will have a Disability Coordinator, a Rural and Small State Coordinator and a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor to the Administrator.

With all of these details in mind, let me conclude by re-emphasizing our commitment to local government and to the law enforcement community. The old way of doing things – waiting for you to get in trouble – is truly the way of the past. In the future, we will respond together, as true partners, when responding to disaster. We hope to continue to build upon our relationships from the past, and expand our opportunities for tomorrow. I hope you will help us keep open the lines of communication and move forward with us in building the type of emergency management system that this nation will be proud.

Let us move forward together.