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## A Declaration of Inter-Dependence

### **Introduction**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

In the Declaration of Independence, the founders set forth the role of government in this statement.

These are the very rights that we in this room are pledged to protect. And at their basic level, they are what FEMA is working to secure.

We are dedicated to saving Life – by planning for disasters, protecting the nation through mitigating efforts, and responding when needed.

We are dedicated to preserving Liberty – by helping secure essential services before, during and after disasters strike and by fulfilling our respective governmental roles to preserve our ability to protect our fellow citizens.

And we are dedicated to the Pursuit of Happiness – by emphasizing the importance of preparedness and by assisting individuals and communities as they rebuild and recover following disasters that exceed their capacities.

The founders did not do it alone. They banded the colonies together to secure the blessings of liberty for themselves and their posterity. So, too, must we work together to provide emergency management to a modern nation. None of us can nor should do it alone. It took more than 100 years, two efforts at forming a national government, and a civil war to gain that vision.

And so, let me present to you my Declaration of Inter-Dependence.

### New Team, New Relationships

When I was confirmed last year in my position at FEMA, I committed FEMA's leadership both to building a stronger organization and to building strong ties with our partners inside and outside of government.

You have heard from Secretary Chertoff in the past few months about his vision and support for the role FEMA plays as an integral part of the Department of Homeland Security. In the past year I have enjoyed the greatest support from him that I could have asked for. The simple fact of the matter is that we needed to build faith and trust with him just as much as we do with the American public. I can say with certainty that he has expressed that trust in countless meetings and events. That confidence is important because, both through law and executive order, he is the lead official for domestic incident management and FEMA is the critical operational lead that assists him in carrying out that charge. As we have addressed FEMA's needs, weaknesses and strengths, the Secretary's support for our increased budget requests, for our desire to build stronger partnerships across DHS, and for our outreach to Congress has been unwavering. Many of you may be surprised to hear that given the rhetoric of the past few months. It's the untold story...not because its not there to be seen...but because some don't wish to see it.

At FEMA, we have built a stronger team. I filled all 10 of the Regional Administrator positions with experienced leaders: men and women with decades of experience from a broad spectrum of the emergency management community. From a 26 year veteran of the state police in Ed Buikema, to a former state Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in Susan Reinertson, to – yes – a former Fire Chief in Dick Hainje, we have professionals that you all know and respect leading the regions and the Secretary has been fully supportive of my selections.

We have also built an experienced team in Washington. Admiral Johnson, with decades of Emergency Management experience in the Coast Guard, our new head of Logistics Management in Eric Smith, who comes to us from the DLA – the recognized leader in the field. Our new Deputy Administrator for Preparedness comes from the States, where Dennis Schrader served as the Homeland Security advisor to Maryland's governor.

We are listening to new voices: with a disability coordinator, a small state and rural advocate and, coming soon, a full-time law enforcement advisor. We have even borrowed executives from top companies to provide us with their view on how to introduce private sector best practices inside FEMA. We believe UPS, for example, knows a thing or two about moving commodities efficiently and effectively. Our Logistics Directorate is leveraging that expertise through our loaned executive program,

and today a leader from UPS is working within FEMA to help us learn from their best practices.

Listing all the leaders who've joined our team could take more time than we have. But I don't have to do this; because these men and women are making themselves known to you on a daily basis. I have said frequently that the worst time to build relationships is during a disaster. When you call for assistance from FEMA, you will know the person you are calling.

And we will be ready to answer that call. In the two years since Katrina, we have truly made great strides in building "New FEMA."

When I say that, I want to make a couple of things crystal clear. Dedicated men and women have been part of FEMA's history and have done heroic work through good times and bad. But they have often done so with scarce resources and support. That has been true for every administration since FEMA was formed. It was a small agency with a very small base budget, but with an enormous mission. No honest reflection on FEMA's past can fail to recognize that problem.

New FEMA is about changing that. We are already well on the way to doubling FEMA's permanent staffing level. We are well on the way to almost doubling FEMA's base budget. We are well on the way to transforming the quality of the assistance we are capable of providing to support you. FEMA will no longer wait for you to call before we consider our options. Today, FEMA is leaning further forward to plan for your needs and be ready to respond quickly. This approach is what we call "Engaged Partnership" and it is guiding our plans and our actions.

#### New FEMA: The Results Are Evident

FEMA is improving our operational capabilities and our business processes, and we are already stronger and more nimble than we were two years ago.

We have made significant strides in all of FEMA's major programs. Nearly every week, I speak somewhere in the country or on Capitol Hill about reforms and improvements we have initiated. But in the interest of time, let's consider the results to date.

Since Katrina, FEMA has responded with you to more than 300 federally declared disasters. Ranging from wild fires in the West to the Nor'Easter this winter and including tornadoes, floods, earthquakes and hurricanes. And in each case the improvements at FEMA have been self evident and I am proud of these results.

Two years ago few local officials were praising FEMA. But after the Greensburg, Kansas tornado Mayor McCollum said, "As I broke down my back door to go out, there's a fireman from Dodge City, Kansas. He meets me as I'm digging out of the rubble to see if I'm OK. And almost the next person behind him is somebody from FEMA." Now, I know that is not exactly accurate or I would have to give Dick Hainje a raise...and that is not going to happen...and we need to be careful about managing expectations... but I think this IS reflective of the philosophy and practice of New FEMA.

More recently, I believe our response to Hurricane Dean indicates where a New FEMA is heading. I personally reached out to the governors' offices in the states along storm's projected path. We pre-positioned assets – with one of our teams on the ground in Puerto Rico well before first landfall – and had plans in place ready to move supplies anywhere along the coast as needed. We were in touch with our State and local officials and – most importantly – we their requirements. In short, we were agile, flexible and moving commodities and staff before Dean arrived. This didn't just happen – it was the result of a great deal of effort by many individuals over many months.

The effectiveness of New FEMA will be seen in when, where and how we perform. We should be and will be judged not only on our performance before, during and after an event, but also on how well we work with our partners across government and in the private and non-profit sectors.

This is what we mean by “engaged partnerships.”

The old paradigm of making our own plans and then executing them only after local and State governments are completely overwhelmed is no longer practical or prudent. This requires a robust, cooperative relationship among all participants so that we understand your vulnerabilities, risks and requirements.

In the past, much of the discussion in Washington and in state legislatures was based on a simple – but faulty – assumption: that FEMA was limited in its options to support state and local governments. People asked us whether resources should only focus on preparedness or response. There was a false assumption that FEMA could only be “WalMart with a check book:” the purveyor of blue tarps and ice. There was an assumption that FEMA could only play one role and provide only one answer – and that this answer would always be the same. This thinking represents a “tyranny of false choices.”

FEMA is organizing to work with our partners to determine what your needs are and how we can best support you. Sometimes the answer is not money, it is knowledge.

Our new Gap Analysis program is a prime example. This year working, with many of you, we initiated vulnerability assessments in the coastal States most prone to hurricanes. We have learned much from this effort. The result: FEMA and the states knew which Federal resources would be most necessary to support any given State during a hurricane. With this initial analysis in place, we put plans in place on a state-by-state basis. Was it perfect? Far from it – but it was a good start, and we intend to refine and extend the process next year. There is a truism, however, in emergency management planning: one size does not fit all. When faced with the false choice of ‘is FEMA allocating resources to provide for debris removal or evacuation assistance’ the new answer is – as it should be – it depends what that State needs most.

This also reflects how the focus of the new National Preparedness Directorate is permeating throughout FEMA. The GAP analysis reveals how we are planning for our future. When we know what is needed, we can develop and implement improved mitigation activities, plan our disaster operations and logistical needs, and be ready with the right type and amount of resources to assist in the recovery following an event. We are becoming a New, integrated, FEMA.

But FEMA’s improved plans and operations, no matter how closely aligned with State and local plans, will not be sufficient if the men and women on the ground aren’t prepared as well.

FEMA is now managing many of the Homeland Security grant programs that provide you with the resources needed to make improvements at home. From firefighter grants to competitive training grant programs to Urban Area Security Initiative, we know that getting you additional support, and in a timely manner, means that you will be able to support exercise, planning and training programs to better prepared to respond to disasters in your communities.

The New FEMA recognizes we are not in this alone – and I hope you know that, too. So let us look at how we can move forward together, and how this renewed interdependence can better serve America.

### A Framework For Working Together

Sound relationships are based on trust, confidence and openness, and they are focused on mutual objectives. Good relationships allow for constructive feedback, so let me offer a frank observation here: the FEMA-NEMA relationship has considerable room for improvement. We share similar missions, values and goals. And, I believe together we can accomplish much.

But like those 13 Colonies of years' past, we need to keep our disagreements civil and work together towards those common goals. South Carolina did not complain to King George about Pennsylvania. They brought their disagreements to the table in Constitution Hall and worked them out together. I am quite concerned that our recent interactions have resulted in negative outcomes. This is not my vision for our relationship.

I am reaching out today and ask you to work constructively, openly and honestly with me and my team to address your concerns. To be sure, we have had some very positive results. We renewed the EMAC-MOU between FEMA and NEMA. NEMA's participation in the Individual Assistance Policy Working Group was very valuable. Your coordination with EMI in developing the State directors training course is helping us to prepare for the future. And, it is these types of successes upon which we must build.

Fortunately we have developed a number of avenues for improved communications and for future joint-activities.

The first – as I have made very clear today – is direct communications. When you have a question, pick up the phone and call. The Regional Administrators want to work with you. My leadership team wants to work with you. I want to work with you. I ask that we work to develop a list of common key issues we can work on together and I would like to hold regular quarterly meetings between our respective leadership.

The second avenue for increased input is through the new National Advisory Council – or NAC – and our Regional Councils. Some NAC members are here in this room.

The third avenue I'd like to mention is the current round of comments – and the implementation – of the draft National Response Framework. NEMA's testimony before Congress on the draft NRF reminded me of a book review by a reader who had only read the first chapter. It focused on the new summary document and not on the entire system created. When taken as a whole, the draft NRF provides the guidance for our future relationship and interactions.

I urge you to look at the draft NRF as a whole when submitting your suggestions for improvements. The documents available at the National Resources Center incorporate the more than 1,000 comments received from more than 700 individuals – including the suggestions of many of you.

Of course all 1,000 comments are not fully spelled out in the 77 page base document. Please note that the 17 primary areas of concern that most of the comments fell into are

clearly included in the annexes and guides, which make up the family of plans included in the draft NRF.

We look forward to your feedback, and when we put this into effect, we will have a much easier document for executives and first responders to understand that will guide our response during incidents. The starkest lesson of Katrina is that government leaders at all levels did not understand or read the old NRP. The practitioners understood but the events cascaded beyond expectations. A straightforward framework, when combined with these detailed annexes, will truly be a framework on which we can build a great emergency management system that does not fight the last war but foresees the next.

### How You Can Be A Part of the Future

That is what I am asking you to do today. Be a partner in developing an enhanced emergency management system that will guide this nation's response into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

I am not asking you to pledge your lives, fortunes and sacred honor as those signers of the Declaration did in 1776. But I am asking you to join us in working together to protect America in times of need.

Working together we can truly make a difference.

We can make sure that during the next catastrophic event, the national framework is not on the shelf while people execute their own plans. Rather, we can develop and implement an integrated response system where all participants at all levels of government, private sector and nongovernmental organizations understand their role.

Together we can educate the public on their role during a disaster. 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. Americans must understand and take responsibility for their role in disasters. We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America.

It's been a dozen years since emergency responders here in Oklahoma City rushed to the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on that fateful April day. It's been half a dozen years since 9-11. It's been two years since Katrina. Each of these events changed us. We must take the many lessons from each of these tragedies and build a more prepared tomorrow.

I want a better future – for my children and my grandchildren. I am dedicated to working hand-in-hand, day-by-day, with my partners at every level of government, in the private

sector, in the non-profit sector and wherever I can find just one individual who wants to help those in need. I ask you to join me in this journey. Together we will make a difference.

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