

Remarks of R. David Paulison
Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency

National Sheriffs' Association

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Thank you for inviting me to join you today to discuss how FEMA and law enforcement can continue to work together in our response to disasters and emergencies.

Some of you may know that I got my start in local government. I served as a firefighter and a paramedic and rose to serve as the Chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Department. I worked closely with local law enforcement and know what it means to be part of a community's emergency leadership team. My on-the-ground experience shaped my views as I moved to serve the entire country – first at the US Fire Administration, then within the Department of Homeland Security, and today at FEMA.

Once, the idea that the former President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs would speak to law enforcement groups on a regular, almost monthly, basis as the head of FEMA would have been surprising. But not today. Today we know that all first responders must work together to respond to both natural and man-made disasters.

In fact, FEMA has made major internal reforms in the past year since I was confirmed that will make sure we are including the voices and ideas of the law enforcement community and addressing your concerns.

To begin with, this year we instituted a reorganization of FEMA that is more inclusive and incorporates many of the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina.

One important addition is the creation of the Law Enforcement Advisor to the Administrator. The law enforcement community needs to have a permanent seat at the table, and I need someone whose advice I can call on and who can help me to include that advice throughout the agency. To develop the job description, I met with many of you here today, with your fellow organizations such as the FOP and National Association of Chiefs of Police, and with people around the country. The official posting closes tomorrow and then we will begin to interview the best candidates and plan to have the right person on-board later this summer.

The first mission set forth for the Law Enforcement Advisor is to nationally enhance communication and coordination between the FEMA and State, local and tribal law

enforcement. Clearly we are serious about working hand-in-hand with you in the days and years to come.

To further improve our relationships with our partners on the ground, I have filled all 10 Regional Administrator positions – for the first time in recent memory. They come from diverse backgrounds, but all are experienced. Of interest to you, two served in law enforcement.

Region Five Administrator Ed Buikema was an officer with the Michigan State Police for more than 26 years, serving in the Emergency Management Division for 19 of those years.

Region Eight Administrator Bob Flowers served with the California Highway Patrol and as Chief of Police for St. George, Utah and then served as Commissioner of Utah's Department of Public Safety. As Commissioner, Bob led the Utah Highway Patrol, State Bureau of Investigations, Fire Marshall Division, Aero Bureau, Homeland Security Bureau, Intermountain Training and Education Center, State Crime Labs, Training Academies and Division of Emergency Services and Homeland Security. He is a graduate of the FBI National Academy and a member of the FBI National Academy Associates. He also graduated from the National Executive Institute and Law Enforcement Development Institute and is currently a member of the Utah Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Association.

I know experienced and qualified people when I see them. We brought them in to work with you on a daily basis. We know that the worst time to exchange business cards is during a disaster. We need to build these relationships today. That's why I'm here and why I encourage each of you to be in touch with our Regional offices. I hope they have already been in contact with you.

FEMA is also developing other avenues for our partners to let us know your thoughts. Last week I announced the membership of the National Advisory Council. This body has members from diverse backgrounds representing the broad spectrum of emergency management specialties. It includes Sacramento Police Chief Albert Najera and Pacific County Sheriff John Didion from Washington. I look forward to hearing their advice and suggestions.

As you can see, law enforcement's presence is felt across the FEMA organization.

The recent realignment at FEMA also moved the preparedness and grant offices back under our umbrella. The National Preparedness Directorate is working to insure the proper distribution of grants to help you prepare your communities before a disaster strikes. I was in South Carolina last week at the memorial service for the fallen firefighters. I am dedicated to providing all first responders with the training and support you need to avoid such tragedies in the future. Rest assured, my team knows of my

commitment to making sure these grants get out to the people who need them in a fair, efficient and timely manner. We owe those of you who protect us no less.

FEMA is also working with the Department of Commerce to administer the \$1 Billion interoperability grant program to improve your ability to communicate across jurisdictions. We are committed to making your communications with every level of responder and to getting you the resources you need to be prepared.

In the past year we have made steady progress to improve our preparedness posture at FEMA, too, so that we will be ready to work with you and your teams when disaster strikes. Whether it is a hurricane, tornado, flood, earthquake, or even a man-made event, FEMA is better prepared to respond this year than ever before.

The New FEMA is leaning further forward to deliver more effective disaster assistance to individuals and communities impacted by a disaster. You can see the results in our response this year to Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Kansas tornadoes as well as the Nor'easter that affected States across the Mid-Atlantic and New England.

In each of these cases, FEMA was an engaged partner with the tribal, state and local governments immediately. We deployed operational and technical experts, rolled logistics and communications capabilities – even before a disaster declaration – and coordinated with the Governor to facilitate a Presidential disaster declaration. It was also FEMA that supported and helped to facilitate an effective Unified Command amongst the many Federal, tribal, state and local partners involved in the responses. We call this: “engaged partnership.”

It is this philosophy that will guide our actions as we face disasters this year and into the future.

Let me reassure you, we know that local governments will always be the first to respond. But FEMA has an important role to play. The old paradigm of waiting for state and local governments to be overwhelmed before providing federal assistance does not work. Under “engaged partnership,” FEMA has strengthened our relationships with key state, county and local partners. A “one size fits all” approach to emergency management will not work. FEMA is helping each State analyze their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, our planning is more informed and we can better anticipate specific needs and move quickly to support you in times of need.

FEMA’s own operations have improved as we put in place pre-scripted mission assignments, pre-arranged contracts, and stronger, more nimble plans. Don’t be fooled by press stories that FEMA has no plans in place. We do. And they are getting stronger. We still have a lot of work to do, but we are moving in the right direction.

There are areas, though, where we could use your assistance – where you can make a difference.

One way you can be of assistance is to help us bring in talented people to FEMA. Encourage qualified people in your community to join FEMA's team. There are a variety of potential opportunities. Temporary employees are needed to be on-call to supplement our operations. Full-time employees who can develop the depth and breadth of skills to build the nation's preeminent emergency management agency are always in demand. And I can tell you a career at FEMA can be extraordinarily rewarding – professionally and personally.

The second area where we could benefit from your help is in building a culture of preparedness in America. Everyone has a role to play in preparing for disasters. First responders are just one percent of the population and can be overwhelmed or unable to reach the scene immediately.

The recent example of the Fort Dix plot being uncovered based on a tip from a clerk illustrates one of the roles citizens can play in supporting law enforcement and making our communities safer, stronger and better prepared. For elected officials and law enforcement alike, engaging in your local and state Citizen Corps Councils helps join governmental and non-governmental partners with trained, organized, volunteers to strengthen communities' protection, preparedness, planning and resiliency. Over 2,200 state, local, tribal and territorial Citizen Corps Councils serve 75 percent of the U.S. population.

Americans must "be prepared" to care for themselves and their loved ones during and immediately following a disaster until other resources are available. In urban areas, getting through debris or providing the vast quantity of supplies can pose a challenge. A little bit of preparedness can go a long way to reducing the burden on all of us.

I believe we have made real progress at FEMA. By leaning further forward to coordinate the federal response, which is more informed through assessments and communications with our partners, we can better serve all Americans.

Of course, we are not done yet. There is still much work to do.

But if our progress over the past year is any indication, I believe we are on the right track to fulfilling our vision to become the nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness agency.

I am especially proud of the men and women who work at FEMA. They have put their hearts and souls into rebuilding this agency. I hope you are as proud to work with them on the ground as I am to work with them every day.

Thank you again for the work that all of you do in your communities. Thank you for inviting me to join you this morning. I am pleased to be joined today by my partners in the federal government, US Marshalls Service Director John Clark and Federal Bureau of Prisons Director Harley Lappin and look forward to learning from their remarks. I look forward to continuing to strengthen all of our relationships and partnerships in the future. God bless you, and God bless America.