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Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities  
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I am here today not only to talk about our work at FEMA but also to listen and learn from you.

In the year since I was confirmed as Director of FEMA, we have made many significant changes and reforms. One important element of this New FEMA is our commitment to listening to new voices – and to being an agency that serves all the people. FEMA is changing, and this New FEMA places emphasis on partnerships – both inside the government and out.

We are already making progress in reforming FEMA. In the past year we have improved our operations in the areas of: Communications, Logistics, and Customer Service while also instituting a renewed focus on reducing waste, fraud and abuse.

Last fall, Congress passed the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act to authorize and encourage further reforms. DHS and FEMA took this as an opportunity to review our operations and organization. We have not done the bare minimum the law requires. Instead, we have developed a robust organizational structure that will be better equipped to serve the American people.

The New FEMA will consult with and hear from New Voices. Under our new structure, we will have a Disability Coordinator, a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor, a Small State and Rural Advocate and a National Advisory Council.

But changing FEMA in Washington is not enough. This Reorganization has a substantive Regional component. The Regions are truly where “the rubber meets the road.” For the first time in recent memory, we now have full-time Regional Directors in all 10 of our Regions. The new structure will include Regional Advisory Councils and Regional Grant Advocates to help improve our communication with tribal, state and local governments as well as the private sector.

The worst time to develop relationships and lines of communication is during a crisis. We are working to build these ties – both with our partners in government and with our partners in the private & non-profit sectors – now so that they are established and strong when we need them.

That is why I am here today – to reach out to a new audience and ask for your input and involvement.

FEMA has gone to great lengths to make sure we continue to reach out to the Hispanic community. As the former Chief of the Miami-Dade Fire Department, I am proud of my experience working with the community in Florida. Since 1992, FEMA has had a multilingual element working with our offices around the country. During the 2005 Hurricane Season, when Katrina and Rita hit, FEMA broadcast warnings on the largest Spanish-language media outlets: Telemundo, Univision, CNN en Espanol, Televisa and Galavision.

When disasters strike, FEMA usually sets up a Multilingual Operations Public Affairs staff to translate materials into other languages to ensure that FEMA's message, as well as those of the State and local government, is heard by all affected populations. Another important part of FEMA's Multilingual Operations is multilingual tele-registration. Through our Puerto Rico and Texas National Processing Service Centers, FEMA can provide over the phone assistance to disaster victims in Spanish – or in other languages if necessary.

Additional components of our outreach efforts include the *FEMA en Español* web site, the Spanish version of the FEMA children's web site, other versions of our web page in 9 additional languages, and the ability to provide disaster victims the opportunity to register for assistance over the Internet in Spanish through The Centro de Asistencia Individual.

At FEMA's headquarters, we provide translation services into Spanish and other languages to our field offices across the nation. Press releases, tri-folds, fliers and other information get translated, distributed and posted at our websites. After Katrina and Rita hit, more than 145,000 copies of our *Recovery Times* publication were distributed in Spanish alone. After translating materials, FEMA-Multilingual disseminates the Spanish language press releases to the *FEMA en Español* web site team and Spanish Language news media. Other materials are sent back to the regions and field offices to be disseminated by Community Relations teams.

In addition to translation, Multilingual Operations is also responsible for multilingual interviews, media monitoring, and international media requests. Since 2004, FEMA has translated more than 1,200 documents into Spanish and made them available through our web page and distribution to our network of more than 3,000 media outlets.

In keeping with our commitment to working with our partners outside of government, FEMA continues to work with the American Red Cross to publish and distribute materials about preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation in Spanish and other languages.

As you can see – we are committed not only to communicating with the Hispanic community, but to having the professional staff at FEMA who are available to reach out before, during and after a disaster.

So, what does this New FEMA mean for the American Public in general? The New FEMA will prove to the public that we are an agency that works for all of our 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 reach out to your community and to all the diverse communities around the country that rely upon us. The New FEMA will help the Nation continue to build a culture of preparedness.

I welcome the opportunity to open up the lines of communication that will be essential when we come together to serve our country in times of need.

Thank you again for inviting me to join you today.