

**Written Statement of
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Evolution of Emergency Management and Communication



FEMA

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I. Introduction

Good afternoon Chairwoman Landrieu, Ranking Member Coats and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It is an honor to appear before you today on behalf of FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security to discuss the evolution of emergency management and communication at FEMA.

As you know, FEMA has completely changed the way we do business over the past several years. FEMA was included in the organizational realignment that led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks. FEMA also underwent major organizational changes after Hurricane Katrina and Congress has provided increased funding for building emergency management capabilities. As a result, FEMA is a much more effective agency today than we were just a few years ago. Our enhanced ability to meet our mission is a direct result of the tools that we have been able to put in place with your help and support.

In my testimony today, I will share with you some of the major ways in which emergency management – from a federal perspective – has shifted during my time as the FEMA Administrator. First, we acknowledge the importance of planning for disasters in a realistic manner, and we conduct our preparedness, response and recovery operations accordingly. Second, we have adopted a “Whole Community” approach to emergency management, leveraging the expertise and resources of our stakeholders at all levels, both governmental and non-governmental. And third, we have overhauled and improved the way we communicate in a disaster environment, using cutting-edge technology and availing ourselves of tools like cell phones and social media in order to more effectively engage with the public.

The devastating effects of the recent severe storms, including tornadoes and flooding in Alabama, Mississippi, Missouri and other states in the South and Midwest continue to serve as a solemn reminder of the importance of maintaining a robust and efficient national emergency management capability. FEMA is expected to and will support the affected states and the region throughout the recovery process.

II. Realistic Planning and Preparedness

I often say that we can’t plan for “easy;” rather, we must plan for “real.” This means that we must use a realistic set of assumptions when we plan for disasters. Rather than assuming that a disaster will respect jurisdictions, we conduct exercises based on disaster scenarios that cross state lines and regional boundaries.

Further, rather than assuming that the individuals we serve all share the same ages and abilities, we plan for “real” by incorporating children and people with disabilities into our disaster planning at the outset, thus ensuring that we consider the “Whole Community.” And rather than assuming that all disasters will be small enough in scope for the state, local and federal

governments to handle, we prepare for a “meta-scenario” that might overwhelm the capabilities of every level of government to respond.

Conducting Realistic Exercises

Exercises play a crucial role in preparedness, providing opportunities for emergency responders and officials to practice, assess and refine their collective capabilities.

Prior to the passage of PKEMRA in 2006, Congress authorized several “Top Officials” exercises, which exercised how key government officials would respond to simulated terrorist attacks. With the 2006 enactment of PKEMRA, Congress created the National Exercise Program (NEP) in order to “carry out a national exercise program to test and evaluate the national preparedness goal.”¹ PKEMRA required that exercises be “as realistic as practicable, based on current risk assessments, including credible threats, vulnerability, and consequences, and designed to stress the national preparedness system.”² These exercises, referred to as national level exercises in the statute, must be conducted at least every other year.³

We take very seriously the need to conduct exercises that reflect real needs and response capabilities in the event of a disaster. For that reason, in planning exercises, we create a realistic catastrophic disaster scenario that takes us past the point of failure, rather than create a manageable scenario that we know will allow us to succeed. Creating a realistic scenario is required by law and it is also essential to our ability to identify gaps and make improvements to our response and recovery plans.

This year’s National Level Exercise (NLE 11) examined the federal government’s ability to implement catastrophic incident response and recovery plans by simulating a major earthquake in the New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) in the central United States. The exercise was the first NLE to simulate a natural hazard and provided the framework for the eight impacted states and four FEMA Regions to test and evaluate regional earthquake response and recovery plans.

This year’s NLE is different from similar exercises held in prior years because it was the first national level exercise to benefit from changes made to the NEP. As a result, it reflected more direct involvement and direction from senior levels of government, more frequent smaller-scale exercise elements, and a shorter timeframe for evaluation, after-action reporting and improvement planning. As the NEP continues to evolve, future exercises will continue to incorporate these same principles.

NLE 11 also incorporated a comprehensive and efficient system of exercise evaluation that focused on the rapid identification, development, and dissemination of lessons learned, as well as the development of corrective actions. NEP’s rigorous evaluation methodology will help to ensure that issues identified during the exercise are remediated. Specific provisions for the NEP evaluation methodology are detailed in the NEP Implementation Plan.

¹ Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 STAT. 1355, 1427 (Oct. 4, 2006).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 1428.

Finally, this year's exercise fully incorporated all aspects of the emergency management team, including not only federal, state, local, tribal and territorial governments, but also non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, individuals, families and communities, engaging FEMA's "Whole Community" approach to emergency management.

Conducting realistic exercises allows us to practice our protocols, assess areas of both success and failure, and make necessary adjustments to ensure that we are as prepared as possible for a catastrophic disaster.

Incorporating Children and People with Disabilities into Disaster Planning

A realistic approach to emergency management means not only conducting exercises that reflect real disaster scenarios, but incorporating the needs and abilities of real disaster survivors into planning and preparedness efforts. Our planning must be inclusive of people of different ages and abilities and it must meet the access and functional needs of children and people with disabilities.

In February 2010, FEMA established the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, and in July 2010, established the first-ever Disability Working Group within FEMA. The Disability Working Group is responsible for ensuring that the access and functional needs of children and adults with disabilities are fully integrated into all aspects of FEMA's disaster planning, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation efforts initiated and coordinated at the federal level.

FEMA is also committed to placing Regional Disability Integration Specialists in each of FEMA's ten regions. Eight are already on board on a permanent full-time basis, and an additional one is in place on an acting basis. During the height of our response to the Southeast storms, five of these Specialists were deployed to the region.

Emergency management officials at all levels need to plan and prepare for every member of a community, including children, who comprise approximately 25 percent of the U.S. population. For that reason, FEMA established a Children's Working Group (CWG) responsible for coordinating the agency's efforts - in partnership with other federal agencies and non-governmental stakeholders - to ensure that the unique needs of children are considered and integrated into all disaster planning, preparedness, response and recovery efforts initiated and coordinated at the federal level.

As an example, when we pre-stage commodities in preparation for disasters, we include basic items such as water, meals and generators. However, military-style Meals Ready to Eat (MREs) and other provisions are not necessarily suitable for the entire population, especially young children. So we transitioned from MREs to commercial shelf-stable meals and we pre-stage commodities including infant formula, baby food, electrolytes and diapers to anticipate, understand and specifically plan for the needs of children.

Planning for the "Meta-Scenario"

Historically in emergency management, we only planned for scenarios that we were capable of responding to and recovering from at the governmental level. That was simply not enough. We must also plan for the “meta-scenario” (or maximum of maximums event) that by its nature will overwhelm the ability of state, local and federal governments to respond. Because of the possible breadth and scope of a “meta-scenario,” we cannot be satisfied with a “government-centric” approach to emergency preparedness. Rather, we must incorporate the “Whole Community” into our preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Therefore, in coordinating and facilitating the development of detailed state and regional response plans for earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, improvised nuclear device attacks and other threats, our catastrophic planning, evacuation and transportation planning and emergency communications planning are all based on worst-case scenarios that are designed to challenge preparedness at all levels, forcing innovative, non-traditional solutions as part of the response strategy to such events.

We have identified the highest priority tasks necessary to save and sustain lives and stabilize following a catastrophic incident during the crucial, first 72 hours; and we have begun to work across all segments of society to identify how we can collectively achieve these outcomes. While the initial 72 hours following an incident are the most crucial for saving and sustaining life, our approach spans not only response operations following a disaster, but also prevention, recovery, protection, and mitigation activities that occur before, during and after a catastrophic event. Changing outcomes will require public engagement and public action, which means fully embracing dialogue between our public safety and emergency services institutions and the communities they serve. This planning process results in the development and identification of existing capabilities that can be employed using pre-established logistics protocols and deployment solutions.

Because a “meta-scenario” would be of such a catastrophic nature so as to overwhelm the capability of the federal government to respond, we have incorporated the entire emergency management team, or “Whole Community,” into our planning and preparedness efforts.

III. A “Whole Community” Approach to Emergency Management

Our planning and preparedness efforts translate into action through FEMA’s “Whole Community” framework. This approach recognizes that FEMA is not the nation’s emergency management team – FEMA is only *a part* of the team. In order to successfully prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, we must work with the entire emergency management community. This “Whole Community” includes FEMA and our partners at the federal level; our state, local, tribal and territorial governmental partners; non-governmental organizations like faith-based and non-profit groups, the private sector and industry; and most importantly, individuals, families, and communities, who continue to be our greatest assets and the key to our success.

A “Whole Community” approach to emergency management does not mean that FEMA abdicates its role as the federal government’s coordinator for disasters and emergencies. Rather, it means that we recognize our mission as supporting our citizens and first responders to ensure resilience to all hazards. In order to fulfill this mission, we must leverage the resources and capabilities of all aspects of the emergency management team, both governmental and non-governmental. As a result, a “Whole Community” framework means thinking about FEMA programs and policies in conjunction with how we work to support other aspects of the emergency management team. I would like to discuss FEMA’s “Whole Community” framework in the context of the recent severe storms, tornadoes and floods in the South and Southeast.

Federal Agency Partners

Our partners within the federal government bring to the table a great amount of expertise and resources that we utilize in a disaster environment through mission assignments, interagency agreements and advanced contracts for commodities. These partnerships are essential to FEMA’s ability to carry out its mission by leveraging the full capacity of the federal government.

We continue to work closely with our federal agency partners to help the states affected by the recent severe storms, tornadoes and floods in the South and Southeast get back on their feet. One of the ways we do this is through the use of mission assignments, which are work orders issued by FEMA to other federal agencies that direct the completion of a specific task and are intended to meet urgent, immediate and short term needs. They allow FEMA to quickly request federal partners to provide critical resources, services or expertise. To date, FEMA has developed 263 pre-scripted mission assignments with 29 federal agencies.

Since the severe storms and tornadoes devastated the Southeast beginning in late April 2011, FEMA has directed the completion of over 80 mission assignments in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. A few examples of the support these mission assignments provided include:

- Coordinating with U.S. Northern Command to establish an incident support base in Maxwell, Alabama. The support base allows FEMA to move supplies (such as water, infant/toddler kits and tarps) closer to the affected areas;
- Activating the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to conduct debris clearance and removal, infrastructure protection, restoration and emergency repair;
- Working with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help support housing operations under Emergency Support Function #6 - Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services; and
- Activating U.S. Environmental Protection Agency personnel to perform the functions of Emergency Support Function #10 – Oil and Hazardous Materials Response, by conducting response efforts relating to oil and other hazardous materials and conducting short- and long-term cleanup.

These are just a few examples of our coordination efforts with other federal agencies. We continue to work closely with our federal government partners to leverage the resources they bring to various aspects of our preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Governmental Partners

Coordination with state, local, tribal and territorial governments is perhaps the most essential part of our effort to integrate the entire emergency management community. FEMA's leadership comes from diverse backgrounds, but we share something vital: direct, on-the-ground experience in state and local emergency management. Our experiences have helped us realize and appreciate the important role that state, local, tribal and territorial governments play in disaster preparedness, response and recovery. FEMA's success is heavily dependent upon our ability to work closely with these governmental entities.

FEMA has been in constant contact with all of the impacted states as they responded to and began recovery efforts from the devastating storms, tornadoes and floods of Spring 2011. At the request of the respective governors, FEMA currently has teams on the ground in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as strategically pre-positioned commodities in the region to support the states. Federal Coordinating Officers have been working closely with these affected states to assist them in meeting the unique needs of their residents. Deputy Administrator Serino and I have visited with state and local officials throughout the Southeast, surveying damage and assisting in response and recovery efforts. Secretary Napolitano also has traveled to the region to view the damage first hand and provide her support. President Obama, in addition to visiting the impacted areas, has issued major disaster declarations related to severe storms and tornadoes in the Southeast for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee. The states of Tennessee, Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Minnesota have also been granted disaster declarations related to the Mississippi Valley flooding, with the President issuing an Emergency declaration for 22 Louisiana Parishes. Finally, more than 1,530 FEMA employees have been deployed to the affected areas.

Our on-going preparedness efforts in support of state and local governments are paying tangible dividends. As an example, in 2009, Tuscaloosa Mayor Walter Maddox sent 66 city and county emergency management and response personnel to a four-day exercise-based training program at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute. The Integrated Emergency Management Course they attended occurs every year, and stresses the integration of functions, resources, organizations and individuals in all phases of emergency management.

Mayor Maddox recently said in a *New York Times* article that the decision to have his city participate in the training "has done more to help Tuscaloosa handle the disaster than anything else."⁴ The training allows localities to more fully understand roles and responsibilities during a disaster, identify gaps in emergency management plans, and address those gaps through developing and implementing emergency policies to ensure an effective response.

Engaging Non-Governmental Organizations

Government can and will continue to serve disaster survivors. However, we fully recognize that a government-centric approach to disaster management will not be enough to meet the

⁴ Severson, Kim & Brown, Robbie. Mayor's World Remade in an Instant, N.Y. Times, May 10, 2011, at A13.

challenges posed by a catastrophic incident. That is why we must fully engage our entire societal capacity, leveraging trade associations, voluntary and faith-based organizations, private industry, and social and fraternal organizations. These are the organizations that provide the bulk of services to communities every day, and to the extent that they are able, they should continue to be the primary provider of such services in a disaster. The quicker these entities are able to get back on their feet, the faster communities as a whole will be able to recover.

We are working closely with non-governmental organizations in order to respond to and recover from the flooding and severe weather events of recent weeks. A few examples of our work with non-governmental organizations include the following:

- American Red Cross and FEMA are jointly leading Emergency Support Function #6, the planning and coordination of mass care services;
- We coordinated with Verizon, AT&T and other mobile carriers to make available their “Stores on Wheels” to provide docking and charging stations for customers near Disaster Recovery Centers. By helping disaster survivors charge their cell phones, they can let friends and loved ones know their location and that they are safe;
- We connected American Red Cross with Tide to provide free laundry service for disaster survivors in parts of Alabama and Georgia;
- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (National VOAD) member organizations such as American Red Cross, Salvation Army, Convoy of Hope, and many others continue to be heavily involved in the disaster response by providing assistance to disaster survivors. The Red Cross Safe and Well secure website provides a way for people to find information on those affected by the storms.

We will continue to leverage the resourcing strengths of the private sector and NGO’s, ensuring that they are fully engaged in all of our efforts.

The Importance of Individuals, Families and Communities

We work not just with governmental entities and private sector organizations, but with the individuals, families and communities who are our nation’s ‘first’ first responders. Our state and local emergency management experience has taught us that, in the event of a disaster, individuals and communities are not liabilities; rather, they are our greatest resources and the key to our success.

FEMA’s Individual Assistance Division in the Office of Response and Recovery helps disaster survivors with housing, crisis counseling, legal services, disaster case management, and unemployment assistance, among other services. However, in addition to supporting the individuals, families and communities we serve through Individual Assistance, we also work to engage the public as a valuable resource through personal preparedness, citizen and community training, and two-way communication that helps provide us with situational awareness in a disaster environment.

Ready is FEMA’s national public service campaign in which we partner with the Advertising Council to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to all emergencies,

including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. The goal of the campaign is to get the public involved and to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation.

In addition to focusing on personal preparedness, FEMA also taps into the great capacity of the public to look out for friends and neighbors in a disaster. In the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, President Bush launched Citizen Corps, a community-based entity coordinated by FEMA. Citizen Corps recognizes that effective emergency management and response requires community leaders to participate in developing emergency plans for their own communities. These leaders conduct localized outreach to and education for the public, promote training, participate in exercises, encourage volunteerism, and form an integral part of the response effort when disaster strikes. The mission of Citizen Corps is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds.

In 95 percent of all emergencies, a survivor or bystander provides the first immediate assistance on the scene. Because family members, neighbors or fellow employees are often the first to provide assistance, it is important that all members of the community have access to the training they need to make a difference during an emergency situation.

Finally, we engage the public as a critical resource by facilitating two-way communication that allows us to communicate *with* the public in a disaster environment rather than talking *at* the public. Social media is a key part of this effort, and is discussed in the next section.

IV. Communication in a Disaster Environment

The ability to effectively communicate during and immediately after a disaster is essential to fulfilling our mission. When working on a tight timeframe with many of our emergency management partners, making sure that everyone is on the same page is absolutely essential. For that reason, we have completely overhauled the way we communicate with each other and with the public in a disaster environment, leveraging cutting-edge technology as well as important social media tools that the public uses in their everyday lives.

Social Media and Disasters

Social media provides the tools needed to minimize the communication gap and participate effectively in an active, ongoing dialogue. Social media is an important part of the “Whole Community” approach because it helps to facilitate the vital two-way communication between emergency management agencies and the public, and it allows us to quickly and specifically share information with state and local governments as well as the public.

FEMA uses multiple social media technologies like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to reach the public. Rather than asking the public to change the way they communicate to fit our system, we are adapting the way we do business to fit the way the public already communicates.

In December 2010, FEMA also created a blog (<http://blog.fema.gov>), which provides information before, during and after a disaster strikes, and highlights the best practices, innovative ideas and insights that are being used across the emergency management community.

To date, FEMA has posted more than 200 messages to its blog, Facebook and Twitter accounts relating to the severe weather in the Southeast, sharing information with disaster survivors, including how to register for assistance, the role of disaster recovery centers and other information related to the federal government's support to the affected states and their residents.

We value social media tools not only because they allow us to send important disaster-related information to the people who need it, but also because they allow us to incorporate critical updates from the individuals who experience the on-the-ground reality of a disaster. The exigent nature of emergency management makes time a critical resource. The sooner we are able to comprehend the full scope of the disaster, the better able we are to support our citizens and first responders. That is why we must seek out and incorporate information provided by the public, our most critical emergency management resource.

FEMA's Mobile Website

One of the major lessons we learned from the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti was that even if the physical infrastructure of an area is completely destroyed, the cellular infrastructure may be able to bounce back quickly, allowing emergency managers to relay important disaster-related information and enabling the public to request help from local first responders.

In early 2010, FEMA launched its first-ever mobile website, which allows the public to view web pages easily loaded on their smartphones. The mobile site features information on what to do before, during and after a disaster, along with the ability to apply for federal disaster assistance directly from your phone and locate nearby Disaster Recovery Centers. As we witnessed during the response to the Georgia and Tennessee floods in 2009 and 2010, disaster survivors often have little with them but their phones. As a result, providing the ability to register for assistance from smartphones enables us to immediately mobilize the appropriate assistance to support our citizens' needs during disasters.

While social media and mobile technology will continue to be important tools, they are by no means exhaustive of our efforts to communicate with the public in a disaster environment. In addition to tapping into communications tools that already exist, we also work to ensure that we are at the forefront of communications technology that will allow us to share life-saving and life-sustaining information with first responders and the public in a disaster environment.

Personal Localized Alerting Network

Last month, I joined New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski, and top executives from AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon, in publicly announcing the creation of the Personal Localized Alerting Network (PLAN). PLAN is a free service that will allow customers with enabled mobile devices to

receive geographically-targeted messages from state and local emergency management agencies alerting them to imminent threats to safety in the area.

FEMA developed the PLAN technology to allow any customers of participating wireless carriers to turn their mobile phones into personal alert systems. These alerts will be able to get through to phones whether nearby cell towers are jammed or not. The alerts are also completely free of charge, and individuals are not required to sign up in order to receive them.

Disaster Emergency Communications

Of course, in addition to communicating with the public, we must also help provide communications support to emergency responders in a disaster environment.

Emergency communications issues presented an impediment to operations in the immediate aftermath of both the September 11, 2001 attacks and Hurricane Katrina. As a result, FEMA's Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) Division was established in 2008 as the lead integrator of tactical federal disaster emergency communications. DEC provides tactical emergency communications support to emergency managers and first responders when the federal, state, local, tribal or territorial infrastructure cannot support communications needs for emergency operations.

DEC represents a significant shift in the federal government's organization and integration of emergency communications in disaster response. Some of DEC's activities include:

- Deploying equipment and personnel for on scene communications support;
- Offering operational support to emergency responders in the field;
- Providing Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) units that support disaster response by enabling seamless connectivity throughout the disaster area, state and local emergency operations centers, and national-level command and control facilities;
- Conducting Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups, which provide a forum to assess and address the sustainability and interoperability of emergency communications systems at all government levels;
- Supporting the establishment of state-specific plans to improve the nation's interoperability capabilities. To date, DEC has provided support in the establishment of 36 state and 3 territory communications plans, and we will deliver 3 additional state plans by the end of this fiscal year; and
- Developing a Technology Roadmap to evaluate current and emerging technologies and provide recommendations on which new technologies FEMA should invest in and which existing technologies to replace.

FEMA's DEC works closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Emergency Communications (OEC), which serves as the primary federal office for national interoperable emergency communications policy, planning, and analysis. For example, FEMA DEC coordinates closely with OEC, its National Communications System, and the Federal Communications Commission on all 10 of FEMA's Regional Emergency Communications

Working Groups (RECWGS). The RECCWGS, which are comprised of state, local and federal organizations, serve as planning and coordinating bodies responsible for providing a forum to assess and address the survivability, sustainability, operability, and interoperability of emergency communications systems at all government levels. We will continue to improve our ability to communicate in a disaster environment, including communication with emergency managers, first responders and the public.

V. Conclusion

With your help and support, we have completely changed the way we at FEMA approach emergency management: adopting a pragmatic and realistic approach to preparedness, response and recovery; incorporating the “Whole Community” into our efforts; and improving our ability to communicate with the public and among emergency responders in a disaster environment. Of course, these are just some of the ways in which Congress’ significant investment in FEMA over the past several years has allowed us to improve our ability to support our citizens and first responders. While I am proud of the progress that we have made together, I know that there is still more work to be done. So I look forward to working with you, Madam Chair, and the other Members of this Subcommittee, as we continue to build our nation’s capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions the Subcommittee may have.