



Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

NPSC Preparedness for Large-Scale Disasters





**Homeland
Security**

APR 15 2010

Preface

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law 107-296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*. This is one of a series of audit, inspection, and special reports prepared as part of our oversight responsibilities to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness within the department.

This report identifies measures that can be taken by FEMA to address the overall effectiveness and performance of its National Processing Service Centers. It is based on interviews with employees and officials of relevant agencies and institutions, direct observations, and a review of applicable documents. We contracted with the independent public accounting firm Williams, Adley & Company, LLP to perform the audit. The contract required Williams, Adley & Company, LLP to perform its audit according to generally accepted government auditing standards. Williams, Adley & Company, LLP is responsible for the attached report and the conclusions expressed in the report.

The recommendations herein have been developed to the best knowledge available to our office, and have been discussed in draft with those responsible for implementation. We trust this report will result in more effective, efficient, and economical operations. We express our appreciation to all those who contributed to the preparation of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Jadacki".

Matt Jadacki
Deputy Inspector General
Office of Emergency Management Oversight

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Abbreviations

DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
NPSC	National Processing Service Center

OIG

Department of Homeland Security
Office of Inspector General

Executive Summary

Williams, Adley & Company, LLP reviewed the National Processing Service Centers' (NPSCs) preparedness to meet staffing requirements and handle an increased volume of inquiries and applications during large-scale disasters.

The NPSCs are improving their capacity to provide services during large-scale disasters, but several systemic barriers continue to require management attention. The NPSCs have enhanced their ability to meet staffing and training requirements through detailed staffing forecasts, surge planning, greater internal coordination, standardized training, and upgraded information systems. Enhanced human capital management practices have produced capable staff and measurable performance improvements, which were demonstrated in the organizational response to Gustav and Ike.

Concerns remain regarding the length of time needed to obtain security clearances for temporary staff, and the operational challenges of managing workspaces, equipment, and personnel during surges in workload. In particular, the use of inexperienced staff requires a flexible and innovative approach to training, knowledge acquisition and sharing, and performance management.

A longer-term strategic challenge is to facilitate a reduction in call volume and potentially result in more accurate information through greater on-line registration, mobile disaster recovery centers, and advanced technology.

We recommended that FEMA assess options for building NPSC surge capacity, improve training and staff development, and modify contracts and interagency agreements to improve administration and security processes. FEMA concurred or partially concurred with all recommendations.

Background

The Federal Emergency Management Agency operates three National Processing Service Center (NPSC) facilities located in Denton, TX, Hyattsville, MD, and Winchester, VA. A fourth NPSC in San Juan, Puerto Rico, closed in April 2009.

The NPSCs are call centers through which individuals register for federal disaster assistance following presidentially-declared disasters. NPSC Human Services Specialists (agents) accept calls from disaster applicants and enter information into the National Emergency Management Information System and other FEMA-approved databases¹. The caller data is used by FEMA and transmitted to the other disaster assistance providers, including the US Small Business Administration and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as applicable. NPSCs perform a range of functions related to application processing, identity verification, case management, appeals, and recoupment. The NPSCs are central to the success of the applicant telephone registration process and the FEMA Helpline.

The hub of the call center activity is the Applicant Services Section, which consists of approximately 900 employees who perform registration intake, helpline, case processing, appeal, and recoupment functions. Managers and supervisors oversee floor operations and are responsible for both technical and administrative supervision, providing staff coaching, mentoring, monitoring, reviews, and feedback on a daily basis.

Results of Audit

The NPSCs are improving their capacity to provide services during large-scale disasters, but several systemic barriers continue to require management attention. The NPSCs have enhanced their ability to meet staffing and training requirements through detailed staffing forecasts, surge planning, greater internal coordination, standardized training, and upgraded information systems. Enhanced human capital management practices have produced capable staff and measurable performance improvements, which were demonstrated in the organizational response to Gustav and Ike.

¹ Other databases include the Applicant Issue Form, Relocation Assistance Application, and the Continued Assistance Calculator, among others.

Concerns remain regarding the length of time needed to obtain security clearances for temporary staff, and the operational challenges of managing workspaces, equipment, and personnel during surges in workload. In particular, the use of inexperienced staff requires a flexible and innovative approach to training, knowledge acquisition and sharing, and performance management.

A longer-term strategic challenge is to facilitate online registrations, which would reduce call volume and potentially result in more accurate information.

Surge Planning

Effective surge planning is critical to the NPSC staffing process. The NPSC Enterprise Agent Coordination Team (E-ACT) at the Denton, TX, NPSC, is the primary entity responsible for determining, following a Presidentially-declared disaster, whether the surge plan should be activated. Fortunately, activation is rare; in the four years following Katrina and Rita, only two out of 108 Presidentially-declared disasters, Gustav and Ike, required a surge in NPSC capacity.

The E-ACT team has over ten years of experience in developing these forecasts, which are based on an integrated assessment of the following data elements:

- Disaster type and incident
- Census data on households and population
- Historical FEMA data from prior disasters within the same geographic area
- Historical FEMA data provided in support of state and county forecast needs
- Information gathered from government agencies, public media, and news organizations
- Information from the Preliminary Damage Assessment Report, if available at the time the forecast is prepared.

In terms of comparison, while Gustav and Ike were considered major disasters, they did not generate the registration volume of Katrina and Rita. Table 1 documents the registrations by type for these storms:

Table 1. Registration Comparison for Gustav/Ike vs. Katrina/Rita

Disaster	Total Reg	1 (800) Phone Reg	Phone Reg %	Internet Reg	Web Reg %
Ike ²	787,567	279,649	36%	507,920	64%
Gustav	446,685	187,820	42%	258,865	58%
Totals	1,234,252	467,469	38%	766,785	62%
Katrina/Rita	1,693,102	944,038	56%	749,064	44%

Source: 10-year Historical Data Tracking maintained by Texas NPSC.

Since Katrina and Rita, the E-ACT’s accuracy in forecasting registrations and thus estimating workforce needs has improved. The Katrina/Rita forecasted registrations were 53 percent of the actual registrations received. The Gustav and Ike forecasted registrations were 99% of the actual registrations.

Surge Response

The FEMA strategic plan states that an overarching theme is to provide a “professional workforce of motivated employees who are empowered and equipped to act.” All personnel need to possess and maintain a level of competence that allows them to accomplish their assigned duties. The challenge for NPSC management is to build additional workforce capacity that meets these standards rapidly and efficiently during surge periods.

Based on the required staffing levels developed in the surge plan described above, NPSC management accesses three pools of temporary call center employees: selected federal agencies, contractors, and the public at large. In the case of Gustav and Ike, the NPSC workforce temporarily doubled in size, from 900 to over 1700 employees. The additional staff were contractors and IRS employees temporarily detailed to FEMA. The IRS employees did not physically relocate to the NPSCs, but instead handled incoming

² Katrina and Rita were declared August 29, 2005, and September 24, 2005, respectively. Gustav was declared September 2, 2008 in LA and September 22, 2008 in MS. Ike was declared September 13, 2008.

calls that were re-routed to their current duty stations. The NPSC Contract Management Oversight Section sends trainers and IT staff to the IRS locations to prepare them for the surge.

The NPSCs have used contractors of varying sizes to provide temporary staffing during Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike. The contractors provide the staffing and supervisors as appropriate for the number of agents. The NPSCs provide adjudication for security clearances, training, work spaces within NPSCs, and quality control. The contractors provide supervisors, but most of the quality control information flows through the NPSC supervisors to the contractor supervisors via the NPSC contracting technical representative. One contractor provided training at its facilities and established a satellite location during Katrina.

The demand for NPSC call center employees spikes shortly after a disaster. During a surge, registration intake call volume spikes immediately following a disaster declaration and begins to taper off after several weeks. Applicants then begin calling FEMA’s helpline to change information initially provided or to seek information on the status of an application. Table 2 illustrates call activity and service levels following Gustav and Ike. Service levels reflect the percentage of calls that were answered within targets of 80% for registration intake and 70% for helpline, i.e., 80% of the intake calls answered within 20 seconds and 70% of helpline calls answered within 120 seconds.

Table 2. Service Levels During Gustav and Ike

Date September to November 2008	Helpline Service Level	Helpline Calls Offered	Registration Intake Svc Level	Registration Intake Call Volumes
September 1–7	19.7%	59,801	8.7%	227,096
September 8–14	0.6%	140,934	23.0%	132,991
September 15–21	0.0%	166,698	9.0%	276,685
September 22–28	20.0%	177,634	62.0%	69,960
Sept 29 – Oct 5	0.9%	171,885	90.0%	27,857
October 6–12	11.0%	157,487	97.0%	31,509
October 13–19	18.9%	148,856	95.7%	42,672
October 20–26	30.1%	140,860	92.1%	39,597
Oct 27 – Nov 2	28.0%	125,989	95.0%	25,765

Source: Resource Performance Summary Data maintained by Texas NPSC.

Immediately after the disasters, the NPSCs experienced major staffing shortages due to security constraints for contractors, which affected the centers' responses to service calls. However, by the fourth week, progress was made as call volume decreased and external support had been added. Consequently, the NPSCs' registration intake service levels increased. Helpline service levels did not increase as quickly because the NPSCs focus most resources on registration intake for the initial four to six week period following a disaster.

The NPSCs face a number of challenges in preparing new employees to handle the demands of the job.

Applicants are required to pass a proficiency test with a score of 85% as a condition of employment. Training policies and procedures have been established to provide refresher and ongoing training to staff, contractors, and IRS agents, but these policies are not consistently implemented. For example, during Gustav and Ike, the proficiency test passing rate was reduced from 85% to 75%, but the number of times that a person could take the test was unchanged. However, the implementation of this policy change varied between NPSCs.

The lack of a centralized training approach is another challenge. Multiple systems and tracking inconsistencies complicate efforts to monitor employee development of skills and competencies. Development of a centralized training database would allow FEMA to maintain accurate information on training.

According to staff, while specialized and refresher training is provided, the courses are compressed during surge periods. As a result, new or rehired agents may have difficulty keeping up with important policy changes. In an attempt to address knowledge retention, information is placed on the intranet, which is available to all agents. However, there is no easy way to search various sources and documents because of the limited search capabilities provided.

The NPSCs are working to address this issue and are developing a streamlined approach for storing information. Gustav and Ike required "hot seating," which is a method to replace an agent with another as soon as the shift is over. Without time to refresh or get updated on changes, the quality of service and average handle time of agents may be affected.

Most learning is on the job. To assist agents with questions, research, policy, problem-solving, etc, an enterprise-wide solution, the National Coordination Team Agent Group, was formed. However, per the NPSC managers the group's assistance is not always timely and thus loses its effectiveness.

Operational Challenges

Sufficient and appropriate staffing is vital to the NPSCs' ability to carry out their missions during large disasters. The ability to manage the staffing requirements of the complex environment of the NPSCs is challenging. Management must constantly assess the staffing requirements based upon the cyclical workload, the official status of the employees, and legislative requirements.

- Approximately 600 call center employees were released because of a decrease in work on 2006. In addition, in some NPSC locations it is not cost-efficient to maintain an on-call cadre of government or contractor resources due to the infrequency of surge events.
- Many of the positions in the call centers are Not-To-Exceed (NTE) 2 or 4 year positions.
- In 2009, approximately 300 NTE 4 year positions were converted to full-time positions in response to *Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006* guidelines. The NTE 4 year personnel are generally supervisors and managers who were required to re compete for their jobs.

Beyond these staffing issues, there continue to be a number of operational and strategic challenges that require consistent management focus and attention. The most important of these are outlined below.

- Surge periods impose additional pressure on an already high ratio of agents to supervisors; for example, during a surge, the ratio of staff to front-line supervisors can reach 100:1; in contrast, standard industry supervisory ratios in large call centers typically range from 10:1 to 20:1.
- Policy decisions are not consistently communicated to agents in a timely manner, which results in agents providing inaccurate information to applicants. This

situation appeared to improve during and following Gustav and Ike, when the NPSCs used a combination of video teleconferences, email, pre-shift meetings, and scrolling electronic messages to convey key information.

- DHS' security requirements make it difficult for the NPSCs to rapidly augment their staff when needed. New hires are required to undergo a suitability assessment which involves completing a security form and a fingerprint card that are processed by the FBI. This process adds at least 4 days to the staffing timeline. There does not appear to be a surge in security capacity to keep up with the requirements of rapid security clearances during a major disaster.
- The NPSCs may lack the physical space to house additional personnel during a surge. Since facilities are leased, the NPSCs must work with landlord restrictions, such as the non-use of open spaces, heat, ventilation, and air conditioning services.
- The NPSCs' ability to research and implement potentially useful technologies such as Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) is limited because NPSC funding is generally tied to the size and frequency of disasters.
- NPSC managers do not systematically assess and document "after action" reports that review the strengths and weaknesses of NPSC strategies and operations in order to plan future improvements.

Strategic Opportunities

There are several strategic opportunities for the NPSC to develop the capability to respond more forcefully and effectively to future major disasters.

The deployment of human capital assets could be improved through enhanced workforce planning. Although the NPSCs have general surge plans in place, there would be a benefit from analyzing the costs, benefits, performance requirements and indicators, and other factors that could inform and guide future staffing decisions, especially given the blended NPSC workforce, comprised of FEMA, other federal, and contractor employees.

FEMA would benefit by reducing the number of incoming calls from individuals who are not eligible for assistance. A 2008 customer survey indicated that only 50% of applicants were ultimately deemed eligible. Applicants said that having access to timely and relevant information would have allowed them to make better choices regarding other assistance programs, consequently reducing NPSC call volume and future staffing needs.

State and local awareness campaigns should be used to convey information about the specific assistance offered; eligibility criteria; and the registration options of telephone, Internet, and the mobile disaster recovery centers. Online registration information should be displayed and communicated as prominently as the information about the toll-free telephone number, to increase the use of online registration tools.

Finally, the timeliness and accuracy of NPSC call responses could potentially be improved through technology upgrades. NPSC management wants to enhance the current systems so that automated telephone intelligence can be used to reduce the need for additional staff. An increase in “self-help” options available on the telephone and the use of CTI technology could result in shorter calls and consistent service levels. The cost benefit ratio of new technology should be examined.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency:

Recommendation #1: Assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of various options for enhancing the NPSCs’ capacity for handling surge call volumes, including, but not limited to:

- a) Expanded deployment of technology support tools such as computer telephony integration,
- b) Expanded use of mobile registration centers,
- c) Expanded use of current DHS and FEMA staff to provide short-term on-call response support,
- d) Enhanced public awareness campaigns with an emphasis on promoting online registrations, and
- e) Development of a cadre of on-call contractor resources

Recommendation #2: Improve the quality and consistency of training and staff development for supervisors and agents through:

- a) implementation of a centralized training approach and database for use by all NPSCs
- b) establishment of consistent training requirements for employees and contractors
- c) identification and deployment of qualified temporary supervisors during surge periods
- d) consistent and timely communication of policy changes

Recommendation #3: Identify and implement modifications to contracts or inter-agency agreements to address critical administrative aspects of surge requirements such as the need for increased security personnel to handle adjudications, and overflow space.

Management Comments and OIG Analysis

Appendix B contains a copy of the written comments we received from the FEMA Director, Office of Policy and Program Analysis. FEMA concurred with Recommendations #2 and #3, and with parts of Recommendation #1.

We agree with FEMA's responses. As far as Recommendation #1, we listed a number of potential options for enhancing the NPSCs' capacity for handling surge volume, but it was not our intent for FEMA to implement all of them as a group. We concur with FEMA's reasoning for not expanding use of mobile registration centers or current DHS and FEMA staff to provide short-term on-call response support.

FEMA's response to Recommendation #2 outlined approaches underway to implement a centralized training approach and database, establish consistent training requirements, identify and deploy qualified temporary supervisors during surge periods, and communicate policy changes timely and consistently. We agree with these approaches, but we consider this recommendation open until we are provided evidence of the specific actions taken and results achieved.

FEMA's response to Recommendation #3 indicated that a new interagency agreement with the IRS addresses administrative and security concerns we noted during the audit. FEMA also outlined several steps underway to improve the security check processes that at times function as a barrier to timely deployment of surge staff. We agree with the outlined steps and will consider this recommendation open until we are provided evidence of implementation and results achieved.

Appendix A

Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this audit was to determine the extent to which FEMA's NPSCs are prepared to meet staffing requirements and address increased volume of inquiries and applications during large-scale disasters. Specific areas we examined in the course of this audit included:

- Staffing mix and levels
- Utilization of permanent and temporary FEMA staff, other federal agency personnel, and contractors
- Training and employee development
- Achievement of key customer service and call quality performance metrics

We conducted work at FEMA Headquarters and at the three NPSCs responsible for assisting disaster victims. We analyzed data, reviewed documentation, interviewed key personnel, and observed call center processes.

We conducted our fieldwork between January and April 2009 in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards, 2007 Revision, as prescribed by the Comptroller General of the United States.

Appendix B Management Comments to the Draft Report

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472



FEMA

MAR 3 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: Matt Jadacki
Deputy Inspector General
Office of Emergency Management Oversight
Office of Inspector General

FROM:  David J. Kaufman 
Director
Office of Policy and Program Analysis

SUBJECT: Comments on OIG Draft Report, *NPSC Preparedness for Large-Scale Disasters*

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Office of Inspector General's (OIG's) subject draft audit report. As the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) works toward refining its programs, the OIG's independent analysis of program performance greatly benefits our ability to continuously improve our activities.

FEMA concurs with two of the draft report's three recommendations and non-concurs in part with one of the recommendations. Our responses to the recommendations, including our reasons for non-concurrence are as follows:

Recommendation 1: *Assess the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of various options for enhancing the NPSCs' capacity for handling surge call volumes, including, but not limited to: a) Expanded deployment of technology support tools such as computer telephony integration; b) Expanded use of mobile registration centers; c) Expanded use of current DHS and FEMA staff to provide short-term on-call response support; d) Enhanced public awareness campaigns with an emphasis on promoting online registrations; and e) Development of a cadre of on-call contractor resources.*

Response:

a) Expanded deployment of technology support tools such as computer telephony integration;

FEMA concurs with this part of the recommendation. FEMA has been working on several computer telephony integration projects to allow capture of critical applicant information through prompts on our Interactive Voice Response (IVR) platform. The IVR would then pass the data to our registration module, which would pre-populate the registration screens with applicant data, saving significant time. This project will be defined in 2010 and if the IVR prototype is a success, implementation could begin in 2011, pending budgetary approval. In

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the interim, FEMA has worked with Lexis-Nexis, our data validation vendor, on pre-population of registration data to the call center. Pre-population of applicant names, addresses and phone numbers was implemented in 2008. FEMA is working with the vendor to begin pre-populating insurance and vehicle data. Pre-population through the identity verification contract also results in reduced time to complete registrations, thereby increasing our capability of taking registrations.

b) Expanded use of mobile registration centers;

FEMA does not concur with this part of the recommendation as a means of expanding our ability to take a significant number of registrations. During the first few weeks of a disaster using mobile registration centers we often find that those who visit the mobile registration centers have already registered and are seeking information about the status of their application or other programs and services.

c) Expanded use of current DHS and FEMA staff to provide short-term on-call response support;

FEMA does not concur with this part of the recommendation. The NPSC has previously attempted to use other FEMA and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) staff to supplement our agent capacity, but the results have not been satisfactory. Other FEMA and DHS components have their own role in disaster response and recovery that makes the bulk of their staff unavailable at the time we would need them. Additionally, in the past, supplemental staff was only available on a volunteer basis, which further limited the number of staff we could add to our call centers.

In 2006, the DHS Human Capital Division invited employees from other DHS components to volunteer at the NPSCs to take Registration Intake calls during large disasters. FEMA received fewer than 30 volunteers for this assignment. Unless other DHS components and DHS leadership directly assign a large number of staff to support FEMA during a disaster response, we do not believe that DHS staff will improve our ability to take a significant number of registrations, and that our resources are better applied to obtaining temporary staff through a contract.

d) Enhanced public awareness campaigns with an emphasis on promoting online registrations;

FEMA concurs with this part of the recommendation and will discuss with the Office of External Affairs stronger messaging to the public about the availability of online registration. Since FEMA's Internet registration module was deployed in 2004, FEMA's standard outreach effort in declared areas has included messaging to applicants about the ability to apply on-line. In addition, applicants who enter our IVR system to register with a phone agent are advised that they can apply on-line. It is evident that the public is aware of the ability to apply online; in disasters declared since May 2008, we have taken approximately 54% of all registrations over the Internet. During Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, 62% of total registrations were taken on the Internet.

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e) Development of a cadre of on-call contractor resources.

FEMA concurs with this part of the recommendation and is prepared to support use of private sector temporary staffing contracts to perform registration intake duties. An acquisitions package has been submitted for securing staffing services using an existing DHS contract. By using the DHS Program Management, Administrative, Clerical, and Technical Services (PACTS), the NPSCs expect to improve NPSC readiness should disaster activity exceed current capability. The NPSCs continue to seek funding for this contractor resource.

In addition to private sector temporary staffing contracts, FEMA has maintained a long-term relationship and Inter-Agency Agreement with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide call center staff in support of large disasters, and the NPSCs have maintained a cadre with experience in performing registrations who are available for call-back in the event of a disaster.

The Housing Inspection Services contract is currently being re-written for a new award in 2011. The current draft of the contract includes a requirement for each contractor to provide call center staff. The current contract provides the ability to write a task order for each contractor to provide staff to the NPSC.

Recommendation 2: *Improve the quality and consistency of training and staff development for supervisors and agents through: a) implementation of a centralized training approach and database for use by all NPSCs; b) establishment of consistent training requirements for employees and contractors; c) identification and deployment of qualified temporary supervisors during surge periods; and d) consistent and timely communication of policy changes.*

Response:

a) Implementation of a centralized training approach and database for use by all NPSCs;

FEMA concurs with this recommendation and has already taken steps to address this. A new section has been established at the Texas-NPSC that is responsible for a centralized approach to training. The new Training, Applicant Support and Communications (TASC) section is chartered to oversee improving and aligning training with NPSC objectives. The NPSC is also refining a centralized database (ePDS) that will be a secure single repository for all staff training and development records. This database is scheduled for the training data upgrade on June 1, 2010.

b) Establishment of consistent training requirements for employees and contractors;

FEMA concurs with this recommendation and has already taken steps to address this. All call center staff have the same basic job description and conditions of employment, which includes successful completion of Registration Intake Computer Based Training (RI CBT). Upon contract award for call center support, the RI CBT will be provided to the contractors, and contractor staff will be required to successfully complete the CBT. The same scoring standards

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Management Comments to the Draft Report

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will be applied to contract and FEMA staff in order to determine whether they are ready to perform registration duties.

c) Identification and deployment of qualified temporary supervisors during surge periods;

FEMA concurs with this recommendation and has already taken steps to address this. FEMA will require the contractor to provide qualified supervisors to support their contracted staff, and FEMA would also provide subject matter experts to support the contractors.

d) Consistent and timely communication of policy changes.

FEMA concurs with this recommendation. FEMA is currently overhauling the Individual Assistance Content website where the majority of policy information is stored. This will provide better access to information, whether changed or not, to our casework and contract staff through improved search capability and better functional design. In addition, FEMA is working to improve the help text available within our registration and other National Emergency Management Information System (NEMIS) modules. These help texts can be modified to include changed policy and other information and can provide information to our call center staff without them having to navigate to an external site. We have developed a new Processing Procedure Manual that is a comprehensive guide to all processing procedures to ensure that agents have the most important and current information about policies readily available. It will be available on the Intranet for full access by our agents and other FEMA personnel.

Recommendation 3: *Identify and implement any required modifications to existing or planned contracts or inter-agency agreements to ensure that critical administrative aspects of surge requirements are addressed, such as the need for increased security personnel to handle adjudications and the availability of additional workspaces.*

Response: FEMA concurs with this recommendation. An Inter-Agency Agreement with the IRS has been developed to address the administrative and security concerns. New solicitations for contracted staff will include requirements for offerors to address and plan for the administrative and security overhead.

In addition, we are working to improve the security check processes. We have discussed the concern about the logistical difficulty of hiring and adjudicating personnel with FEMA Security personnel, and have also obtained equipment for use at the NPSCs in order to expedite obtaining fingerprints. We will continue to have discussions about the timeliness of the adjudication process for background checks with FEMA security. In addition, we have actively participated on a Contractor Surge Capability Task Force established specifically to improve processes and procedures to implement a responsive (timely and effective) contractors' surge capability for large-scale and catastrophic disasters. The majority of recommendations resulting from this Task Force are directly related to the improvement of personnel security practices.

Appendix B

Management Comments to the Draft Report

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Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this draft report and we look forward to working with you on other issues as we both strive to improve FEMA.

Appendix C
Report Distribution

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