

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
Office of Inspector General

**Review of FEMA's Recommendation
Tracking Process**



OIG-07-66

August 2007



Homeland
Security

August 14, 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR: R. David Paulison
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency

FROM: *Richard L. Skinner*
Richard L. Skinner
Inspector General

SUBJECT: Review of FEMA's Recommendation Tracking Process
Report Number: OIG-07-66

The purpose of this memo is to inform you of the status of recommendations contained in reports that we previously issued to FEMA. We understand that legislative mandates are a priority and recognize the pressures you are under to fulfill those requirements. Many of our recommendations are similar to legislative mandates and recommendations from other audit and investigative reports. As a result, we request that you respond to our open and unresolved recommendations and provide an implementation plan describing the actions taken or plan to take and address them within 30 days (please see the attached Appendix for a list of recommendation status definitions).

As required by the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, and OMB Circular A-50, agency management officials are responsible for receiving and analyzing audit reports and taking prompt corrective action where appropriate. Our responsibility is to monitor the resolution and implementation actions to ensure that disagreements between us and management are resolved as promptly as possible, and that corrective actions are implemented as agreed upon by management officials. The DHS Deputy Secretary will decide any unresolved disagreements between our office and management. In the coming weeks we will initiate an audit of FEMA responses to audit and management advisory report recommendations pertaining to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Between October 5, 2005 and June 12, 2007, we issued 85 reports with 162 recommendations. Of the 162 recommendations, 22 are open and resolved, 86 are open and unresolved, and 54 are closed and resolved as of June 12, 2007. Of the 86 open and unresolved recommendations, 64 are open and unresolved because we have not received a response from FEMA. A majority of our reports cover housing and debris removal activities and include issues regarding questionable contract costs and other contracting concerns.

In addition, our March 2006 Inspections Report, *A Performance Review of FEMA's Disaster Management Activities in Response to Hurricane Katrina*, OIG-06-32, contained 38 recommendations, of which 32 were directed to FEMA. FEMA concurred with most of the recommendations and provided a detailed draft action plan to specifically address how they intend to comply with the recommendations. However, the official response has not been received.

Other DHS components have faced similar problems organizing and resolving report recommendations. For example, TSA has implemented a web-based recommendation database to help track its progress on recommendations more efficiently and resolve them in a timelier manner. FEMA has recently developed a recommendation-tracking database. Given FEMA's staffing constraints, only a portion of the data for this system has been entered. We have no basis to determine the effectiveness of the system.

We look forward to working closely with FEMA on follow-up of our recommendations. Specifically, we are interested to learn about the status of the resolved and open, and unresolved recommendations, as well as FEMA's plans to address the tracking and communication concern in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Administrator, FEMA:

1. Respond to our previously reported recommendations and provide initial comments, including implementation plans, describing the actions taken or to be implemented and address them within 30 days of this letter.
2. Describe the actions to be implemented and address all future OIG recommendations within 30 days of report release.
3. Ensure that FEMA's recommendation-tracking database contains all necessary information to provide adequate and timely follow-up, as required by OMB Circular A-50.

DISCUSSION WITH MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT FOLLOW-UP

Please advise us within 30 days of the actions taken to implement our recommendations. Should you have any questions, please call me, or your staff may contact Matt Jadacki, Deputy Inspector General for Disaster Assistance Oversight, at 202-254-4100.

Attachment

cc: Deputy Administrator and Chief Operating Officer, FEMA
Director of Management and Chief Acquisition Officer, FEMA
Director, GAO/OIG Liaison Office
Audit Liaison, FEMA

Recommendation Status Definitions

Recommendation status is generally defined, as follows:

Open and Resolved	The agency's management accepted the recommendation (or a satisfactory resolution was negotiated) and an acceptable action plan was presented along with a target date, but the final action has not taken place.
Open and Unresolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The agency's management accepts the recommendation but has not provided an acceptable action plan or a target completion date; 2) No response has been received from the agency's management; or 3) The agency's management does not agree with the recommendation and has not offered an acceptable alternative.
Closed and Resolved	The agency's management accepted the recommendation (or a satisfactory resolution was negotiated) and an acceptable action plan was presented along with a target date. Documentation was received that supported the completion of the action steps and final resolution of implementation of the recommendation was confirmed.

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