

**Statement of**  
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**“A Review of the Preparedness, Response To and  
Recovery From Hurricane Sandy”**

**Before the**  
**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Washington, D.C.**  
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Chairman Mica, Ranking Member Rahall, and distinguished members of the Committee, I am honored with the opportunity to provide testimony on this important topic. My name is David Popoff. I am the Chief Emergency Management Coordinator of Galveston County, Texas.

I, along with my small, highly-skilled staff, am responsible for overseeing disaster preparedness, planning, response and recovery for all of the unincorporated areas and the eight joint-resolution cities in Galveston County. I report directly to the Senior Elected Official of the County Judge Mark Henry.

First of all, I would like to thank the committee for your strong support of the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program which is critical for building emergency management capacity at the local and state level. I would also like to thank you for your critical role in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act to strengthen FEMA, our vital federal partner.

As I begin my thirty-second year as a professional emergency responder and manager, I remember my first hurricane response in 1983. Hurricane Alicia struck Galveston County in the early morning hours of late August. This storm caused \$2.6 billion in damages and killed twenty-one people. It was the worst storm in our area since Hurricane Carla in 1961 and was the very first billion dollar tropical cyclone. It was also the first storm wherein the National Weather Service used probability forecasts.

As a District and State Coordinator at the Texas Division of Emergency Management, I have responded to every tropical storm and hurricane that has struck the Texas Gulf Coast since 2007. My various positions in emergency response and management have allowed me the opportunity to experience first-hand the devastation that can beset a community. Since my disaster response experience has not been limited to only Texas, I have a wide perspective on how different affected communities (and states) have responded to, and recovered from, large scale disasters.

Galveston County is that block of land wedged between the southern border of Houston/Harris County and the Gulf of Mexico. The county has a population of 300,000 and this population doubles during tourist season and the most active part of hurricane season. Most residents live on a land mass of 873 square miles and it is protected by two populated barrier islands.

Galveston County has a large industrial base of primarily petrochemical companies; it is transected by numerous rail lines and pipelines; and it is home to a thriving aquaculture industry.

Galveston County is located on the plains of the upper Texas Gulf Coast. The county is bounded on the northeast by Galveston Bay and on the northwest Clear Creek and Clear Lake. Much of the county covers Galveston Bay and this bounded to the south by the

famous Galveston Seawall and beaches on the Gulf of Mexico. The entrance to the ports of Galveston, Texas City and Houston divide the barrier islands of Galveston and Bolivar.

As people from throughout the state and country know, Galveston County is a great place to live, to work and to play.

Galveston County also has the unfortunate distinction of being the location of two of this nation's worst disasters.

In 1900, over 6,000 residents were killed. Most of Galveston Island was destroyed. At that time, the population of Galveston was larger than the population of Houston.

Forty-seven years later, the deadliest industrial accident in American history occurred in the Galveston County town of Texas City when a ship carrying 2,300 tons of ammonium nitrate exploded resulting in a chain reaction of fires and other explosions. The conflagration killed 581 people and injured over 5,000. All but one member of the Texas City Fire Department were vaporized in one of the secondary explosions. This series of blasts leveled 1,000 buildings and homes and shattered windows as far as forty miles away. Within days after the Texas City explosions, major companies that had lost facilities announced plans to rebuild and expand their operations. In all, the expenditures for industrial reconstruction were estimated at approximately \$100 million or \$1 billion in today's terms.

As you can see, I work in a dynamic threat environment. Since 1960 Galveston has been declared a Presidential Disaster Area nineteen times and has been involved in numerous large disasters that did not reach that level.

Today Galveston County is still faced with the very same threats mentioned above. We routinely prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate against natural and man-made hazards.

Recently the media has been inundated with stories surrounding the preparedness, response and recovery efforts for Hurricane Sandy. Our hearts go out to these communities as they respond and recover from the impacts of this storm.

My mission here today is simply to give you a brief overview of how we prepare, respond and recover from hurricanes in Galveston County. Everything you hear today, in fact, everything we do has been learned at the pointy end of the stick. We try mightily to learn from our experiences. We work hard to expand on our successes and to resolve and fix our failures. It is a never ending process.

The past is prologue ... learn from it.

One of the critical components of our hurricane doctrine is to always learn. Not only do we seek to learn from our experiences, but we make a sincere effort to learn from the experiences of others.

In the last decade there have been three signature hurricanes in our area which have taught us valuable lessons.

#### Hurricane Katrina August 2005

From Hurricane Katrina we learned valuable lessons about mass care and sheltering. I, personally, spent over a week working in the Unified Command at the Reliant Center in Houston. I still stand in awe of the immense effort that went into the in-take process, providing for the immediate needs and then placing tens of thousands of people who were displaced by the storm. It was not just me who learned from Katrina, everyone across the entire state who spent the weeks and months involved in the sheltering process were moved to make it more efficient. We had sheltering plans, but they were inadequate for the large number of people we received.

From that experience came initiatives to pre-identify sheltering facilities; to develop more detailed sheltering concepts of operations and plans; and, perhaps most importantly, to develop systems that will assist with tracking shelterees to help ensure that people do not get lost in the system.

One of the most heart wrenching issues that we all dealt with during the post-Katrina sheltering operation was trying to reunite families that were separated during the evacuation. In the rush to move people from the heartaches of New Orleans, the well-intentioned efforts inadvertently inflicted another form of heartache: separated families. Nothing focuses the mind on the need for knowing the whereabouts of individual evacuees as much as spending days and weeks trying to reunite children with their parents and parents with their children.

As a result, the entire state of Texas has invested considerable effort and resources into making sure that families do not get separated and, if they do, that we have a better than fighting chance of knowing exactly where each individual is in the system.

#### Hurricane Rita September 2005

From Hurricane Rita we learned incredible lessons about mass evacuation. Who will ever forget the pictures of cars stuck in grid-locked traffic jams as they spent literally hours to travel a few miles, if at all. Certainly, none of us who were there will. To the emergency management and response community who were trying mightily to deal with issues raised by literally millions of people trapped in their non-moving vehicles in the September heat and humidity it was another singular moment of clarity.

I will never forget the strongly worded admonitions from the then State Emergency Management Coordinator, the late Jack Colley, as he made clear to the entire emergency management structure in the state that what had happened was not acceptable in our state and that it was everyone's responsibility to fix the problem.

From that experience has come:

- Well developed concepts of operations and plans for managing evacuations routes. The Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Department of Public Safety and local agencies across the width and breadth of the Texas Gulf Coast have worked closely together to identify and clearly mark the most effective evacuation routes. Included in the evacuation routing system are plans for the early implementation of an extensive traffic contra-flow plan. Much work has also gone into developing plans for managing those routes during the evacuation. Law enforcement and other resources will be strategically positioned in order to make sure that the evacuation traffic moves as smoothly as humanly possible.
- An emergency contract with a major fuel distribution company aimed at ensuring that there is plenty of fuel available pre-storm -- to support evacuation operations and post-storm -- to support response and recovery operations. This created the State of Texas Fuel Supply Team. One of the unknown unknowns prior to Rita was the fact that automotive fueling stations routinely carry as ready inventory less than fifty percent of their fuel storage capacity. As was discovered after the storm, this is done in order to help protect the businesses from the fluctuations in the prices that suppliers charge them. By keeping their fuel inventories low, they are better able to control their costs and to adjust to retail price changes.

While this may be a good and efficient business model it created significant distress during the Hurricane Rita evacuation. Early in the evacuation, gas stations all across Texas upper gulf coast area began running out of fuel inventory. The shortages resulted from both the surge in demand of those trying to flee the storm and those intending to shelter in place who were simply seeking to top off their vehicles and emergency generators.

In the spectacle that was the Rita evacuation, there were any number of vehicles that simply ran out of gas while sitting in the middle of the road and, thereby, leaving occupants stranded away from their homes in unfamiliar surroundings without the ability to self-transport to safety.

Re-supplying the network of gas stations was seriously hampered by the lack of an established mechanism to track emergency inventory needs and the lack of a plan to cause fuel to be delivered to the stations in the areas with the most critical needs. But even if those two components had been in place at the time, the resupplying of gas stations after the beginning of the evacuation traffic piled up would have been nearly impossible owing to the region-wide gridlock. Tanker trucks filled with gasoline and diesel would simply have become part of the ocean of vehicles that were not moving.

Since Hurricane Rita, it is procedure in the state for fuel distribution companies to ensure that their retail customers are well stocked in advance of an approaching

storm. The intent is to make available a ready supply of fuel to both the evacuating public as well as to support the needs of those who are not leaving. The Fuel Supply Team is strategically placed at the State Operations Center in order to quickly respond to inventory supply needs throughout the potential impact area. After the storm has passed, the Fuel Supply Team remains active in order to meet the post-impact needs of the public and emergency response and recovery efforts.

- More precisely defined evacuations zones. The boundaries that had previously been drawn along elevation lines were redefined in Galveston County to be along more easily identifiable zip code boundaries. These have been effectively communicated to the residents in the potentially affected areas. Within this context, those who lived within a zone that was most prone to flooding during a storm of particular characteristics would be advised to evacuate. Those who lived in the zones not expected to be flooded were expected to shelter-in-place. Based on this we now “run from the water and hide from the wind.” We borrowed this slogan from Craig Fugate when he was the Director in Florida.

While this zoning approach was sound in concept, during the reality of Rita it suffered from two significant issues. First of all, there was wide-spread public misunderstanding regarding who lived in which zone and what it meant to live in each individual zone with regard to the need to evacuate and when they should leave. This confusion and misunderstanding was compounded by the second issue ... fear and misinformation. Hurricane Rita, a catastrophic storm, coming as it did a mere three weeks after Hurricane Katrina had impacted New Orleans and the surrounding areas, caused a high level of concern in the residents of the upper Texas coast. Residents were, quite frankly, afraid that the same fate that had just befallen our neighbors to the east was going to visit our area. Residents who did not live in potential flood zones and even those who did but would not normally have left their homes for almost any reason, were primed and ready to get away from the hypothetical worst case and their perceptions of what might befall them if they stayed. It is also a sad and recognized understanding that mixed messages and confused signals from the emergency management community regarding who was really at risk and should leave and who was reasonably safe and should stay in-place compounded the situation.

Instead of the envisioned orderly, staged evacuation of only those who were reasonably at-risk, there was a headlong rush to the exits that one might expect in a theater where someone had just yelled fire. Residents who had no real need to evacuate hit the roads at the same time as those coastal residents who were at the highest risk.

As mentioned, the fix to this problem was to be more precise in the definitions of the storm surge area with more precise instructions for how and when those residing within each zone should leave. In the Galveston/Houston region the sharpening of the zone definitions and procedures has been accompanied by an extensive public education and outreach initiative aimed at calming potentially jagged nerves as well

as fixing in the public mind that those who are most at risk need to leave first and those at lesser risk should hold off until their neighbors have had a chance to pass by. We continue to conduct public outreach workshops and town hall meetings attended by thousands of people each year.

## Hurricane Ike September 2008

Even though in the last four years other storms have come and gone along the Gulf Coast, the story of Hurricane Ike is still fresh and new in my mind and those of my colleagues. It is a very personal story. It happened to us and our neighbors and we were part of the effort to help everyone live through it and get back to the new normal.

Pre-landfall, Ike was, for us, one of those nightmarish guessing games. Ike was not one of those storms where you could look at the so called "cone of uncertainty" and be reasonably sure of its potential impact area. Ike was a wanderer.

In its very early stages, Hurricane Ike looked as though it would turn north and drift up the Eastern Seaboard. Then it turned south and then east. It passed over the length of Cuba. And, at the time that critical resource deployment and evacuation decisions were being made, Ike gave every indication that it would continue east/northeast for a projected landfall along the northern Mexican or southern Texas Gulf Coast. However, ultimately, Ike's path would be a long arc trending from east/northeast to north/northwest and covering a large swath of the Gulf of Mexico.

With each new advisory from the National Hurricane Center the best guess projection of landfall moved closer to Galveston County. It was not just that no one knew precisely where the storm would go ashore, it was that no one knew at all where it might strike. Resources and staffing, first deployed to the lower Texas Gulf Coast, began to literally chase the storm up the coast as one after another community would at one moment begin to brace for the storm only to find in the next moment that they were out of danger.

Even in the final moments when it was clear that Ike would land in the Galveston County area, it was not done playing cat and mouse with us. As landfall approached, the general consensus was that the storm would come ashore just west of Galveston Island and would likely lay waste to the City of Galveston with its massive storm surge. However, a last minute wobble sent the storm just slightly eastward to a heading that took the center of the eye through the mouth of Galveston Bay and, generally, directly up the Houston Ship Channel. In the end, Hurricane Ike's path was eerily similar to the path of the 1900 storm.

Although the City of Galveston was mostly spared a direct hit by storm surge on the "dirty side" of Ike, it certainly did not escape widespread flooding damage. As the storm surge pushed through the narrow opening of Galveston Bay, it was driven by the hurricane's counter-clockwise winds onto the "backside" of the island. Whereas the world expected Galveston Island to be destroyed by the storm surge overtopping the seawall, the real damage was done by a sneak attack from the east flank and the rear. Wind driven water

coming from the bay side completely flooded the city and did the same type of damage we have come to expect from hurricane storm surge.

To add insult to injury, as the storm passed and the winds naturally shifted from northeasterly to southwesterly, debris from the island was driven back into the bay. Much of that debris came to rest on the southbound side of the Galveston Causeway creating a several mile long plug of waste on one side of the only thoroughfare on and off the island with its population of 65,000.

Galveston Island was not washed away as it was during the 1900 storm but the damage done to residential structures, businesses, critical infrastructure and governmental buildings was nonetheless catastrophic. Even the University of Texas Medical Branch, the only hospital on the island and the only trauma center in the county, was completely incapacitated with damages that took months and years from which to recover.

Galveston Island was spared total destruction but the Bolivar Peninsula was not. Bolivar, a part of Galveston County that is located across the opening to Galveston Bay from the island, took the brunt of the direct storm surge. The massive surge coupled with the hurricane force winds destroyed very nearly every structure on the peninsula. The surging water completely breached the peninsula at a number of points and helped push debris into the Intercoastal Waterway and a large swath of a wildlife refuge across a narrow part of eastern Galveston Bay.

Other parts of Galveston County also suffered impacts from flooding. For instance those properties that fronted Galveston Bay, including the country's second largest petrochemical complex, were confronted with fourteen to sixteen feet of storm surge. The petrochemical complex and the cities of La Marque and Texas City were fortunately protected by the County's hurricane levee. Even those areas close to the Bay, but not directly on it, were subjected to intense flooding from the so called "bathtub effect" which clogged drainage creeks and bayous.

It would be an oversight not to mention Ike's impacts on our neighbors to the north. Areas to the north of Galveston County were not necessarily subjected to the tremendous storm surge, however, they did suffer mightily from the impacts of the winds.

All hurricanes are unique in their particular characteristic; however, Hurricane Ike was a particularly interesting one. The most educated consensus seems to be that Ike came ashore as a Category 2 hurricane. To be sure, a "Cat 2" hurricane was a windstorm to be reckoned with but the real story of Hurricane Ike was its sheer physical size and the amount water that it pushed ashore. At landfall, the outer bands of the storm covered an area from beyond Lake Charles, Louisiana, all the way to Victoria, Texas. That is a distance of several hundred miles. A hurricane of that massive size, driven by 100 plus mile per hour winds is going to push around a lot of water. Indeed, the storm surge of Hurricane Ike far exceeded what consensus would tell you is the likely result of a "normal" Category 2 storm.



Hurricane Ike was a dangerous storm beyond all preconceptions.

Here is a very brief overview of lessons learned from Hurricane Ike operations:

- *Early recognition of a threat is critical.*

As discussed above, Hurricane Ike defied attempts to accurately predict its eventual landfall until just before it came ashore. The landfall estimates “walked” up the coast as precious time slipped away. The Galveston/Houston area, although generally aware that it was potentially in harm’s way, did not come to understand the probability of a local landfall until very late in the game.

While much preparatory work was accomplished before the storm came ashore, there is still a lesson to be learned from the experience. Emergency managers should keep in mind that hurricane landfall is controlled by a myriad of factors many of which are difficult to predict and some of which are not particularly well understood. Therefore, when a storm is headed anywhere near you, it pays to be vigilant and proactive. It is better to be a little ahead of the curve and wrong than a little behind the curve and correct.

I cannot over emphasize the critical role which the National Weather Service local forecast offices play in providing critical information to help emergency managers make life saving decisions. In fact the Houston Galveston National Weather Service forecast office is located in my building a mere 10 feet from my office door. We know that budgets are tight, functions are being reviewed, and difficult decisions are being made, but we urge Congress to continue to strongly support these local forecast offices.

- *Cooperative relationships are critical.*

The concept is rather simple, when a region-wide disaster, such as a hurricane, hits everyone has “skin in the game” so we had better work cooperatively. In fact, cooperation amongst the various parties has evolved into another critical component of our hurricane operations doctrine.

It is simply impossible for any one entity, agency or organization to stand on its own during disaster operations. None alone can possess the necessary staff, resources, knowledge or legal authority to be effective while operating by themselves in a virtual silo.

Texas has put great effort toward bringing together the entire spectrum of local, regional and state agencies as well as non-government organizations, private industry, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters and citizens under policies, procedures, mechanisms and legal documentation to allow cooperative planning, training, exercising and operations.

Speaking as an experienced emergency manager, I cannot overemphasize the importance of being able to rely on the cooperative relationship with others to the success of any disaster operation.

- *Evacuation is a difficult and resource intensive process but it needs to be done.*

While well over a million people evacuated without significant incident from the Texas Gulf Coast before Ike's landfall, there were still vast numbers in Galveston County who stayed behind. It is estimated that only twenty-two percent of the population evacuated even after we warned people that they would face "certain death" if they stayed. It is estimated that 32 died and many more are missing.

While I, as an emergency management professional, believe that everyone in a potential impact zone should leave and leave early, the decision on whether or not to leave your home to whatever might befall it is a deeply personal one. I recognize that it is difficult to leave behind memories, heirlooms, family pictures and other personal items with the uncertain knowledge of what may greet you when you return.

Nonetheless the fact remains that those who stay behind become the very first victims of the storm. Many calls to the local 911 centers asked for rescue when waves from the storm surge were crashing under their homes and would require first responders to risk their lives. Whether or not the storm leaves them in need of immediate rescue, those who inadvisably remain in harm's way will require that their immediate needs be met. These needs include food, water and shelter the provision of which will absorb resources and time.

We, the emergency management community, must do a much better job of communicating to our residents the importance of them leaving the potential impact area before the storm hits. We also must do a better job of removing any perceived barriers to evacuation that may cause people to feel that they are better staying in place than they are leaving and going to a safer area.

- *Search and rescue*

As with any hurricane there are two phase of search and rescue operations. The first phase comes just before a storm makes landfall. This is that time that individuals who are in harm's way and have, for whatever reason, not yet left realize the danger that they are in and reach out to emergency responders for help. During these moments of grave danger is when the United States Coast Guard and Texas Air National Guard put their own lives at risk to help. Pre-landfall of Hurricane Ike, air assets from the Coast Guard and Air National Guard affected the rescue of the 364 souls trapped by rising waters on Bolivar Peninsula.

Then, after the storm, another wave of search and rescue workers from the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Teams were deployed to the impacted area and rescued numerous people who were trapped.

The State of Texas also deployed charter buses to transport residents who took shelter during the storm at Galveston Ball High School.

- *Communities need to develop cooperative agreements for emergency sheltering.*

Galveston County has a long history of planning for sheltering its displaced population. The first point-to-point shelter agreement was penned by the City of Galveston and the City of Austin after Hurricane Rita. No longer would we just tell our residents to flee north and hope to find lodging. Other jurisdictions along the Gulf Coast have followed this model and, as a result, point-to-point sheltering has been adopted statewide.

Another initiative was that of the first shelter hub plan established by Austin/Travis County. In this model a central arrival location was set up and the evacuees would subsequently be rerouted to local shelters accordingly. This plan worked extremely well during Hurricane Ike. One of the key successes to this plan is partnerships and the State of Texas disaster contingency fund.

More than 85% of the housing stock in Galveston County sustained damage in Hurricane Ike. People either evacuated prior to the storm or were evacuated after the storm. In order for people to return to their jobs, check on their uninhabitable homes, cleanout their houses, pack their belongings, and meet with FEMA representatives and/or insurance agents, citizens needed to be able to stay close to the County. Hotel accommodations were scarce and where there were accommodations, they were often filled with Red Cross, Salvation Army, or FEMA representatives.

As much as FEMA made itself available to the public, the difficulties met with in the application process for assistance were compounded by requirements for citizens to reapply for their vouchers every two weeks.

Also, FEMA's rule that prohibits the placement of temporary housing in coastal V-zones has made it nearly impossible to place sufficient housing stock to meet community and business needs.

- *Reentry and recovery*

Hurricane Ike destroyed public infrastructure and disabled most modern conveniences. Utility companies from across the county responded to Galveston County to restore power, water and communications. The State of Texas deployed their Public Works Response Team which is made up of public works professionals

from across the state. The Public Works Response Team proved to be an invaluable asset. As infrastructure started to come online elected officials made the decision to reopen impacted areas. The first wave was emergency responders and utility workers. The second wave was business owners. The City of Galveston implemented a system called “look and leave” a concept in which residents were allowed to return to their home to assess damage and then expected to leave the area prior to a defined curfew. This proved to be a mistake and has been removed from our future plans as residents often simply stayed.

One of the most challenging issues with recovery was locating a suitable location for a local emergency shelter so people could return home and start the rebuilding process. It took us days to locate a building and none could be found. Galveston County with assistance from the state and FEMA were able to erect a tent that was used for 27 days as an emergency shelter. This tent shelter at the airport was operated by the Baptist Children Family Services.

As residents returned, it was clear that debris removal would be the most urgent action. Most debris was located on private property and as we are painfully aware this causes challenges. Jurisdictions in Galveston County were able to obtain private property waivers in order to start the debris removal process. While the waiver process is detailed some consider it tedious. Debris contractors converged upon Galveston County very quickly due to pre-disaster contracts and memoranda of understanding. This was a true success leading to the quick removal of debris.

Non-governmental partners played a vital role in assisting Galveston County by providing goods and services. Galveston County and the State of Texas have fostered partnership with area businesses and developed formal relationships with retail, banking and telecommunications industries.

As the debris removal process continued we entered into the recovery phase. Residents and local governments attempted to achieve societal restoration. Joint and Area Field Offices were established within the county. Disaster recovery centers were also opened.

As the recovery phase continued jurisdictions struggled with a wide variety of FEMA interpretations of rules and policies. This slowed the documentation of requests for public assistance and the completion of project worksheets. The general consensus among emergency managers in the area was that the need for rotating FEMA officials in and out of the impacted area contributed to the confusion and conflicts experienced. We applaud FEMA Director Fugate’s efforts to obtain consistency and his urging for the recovery officials to get it right the first time.

Many rebuilding projects were approved and implemented with the most notable being the Bolivar Blue Print. With grant funds from FEMA and HUD we were able to start rebuilding Bolivar. Grant funds arrived and many projects were undertaken to improve infrastructure and housing to help Bolivar weather the next storm. The

Blueprint, a long-term recovery initiative, helped the severely impacted Bolivar residents chart a better future. A Steering Committee, Technical Committee and multiple subcommittees were formed and many meetings were conducted.

A team from FEMA provided technical assistance and helped the county produce a draft Blueprint document that explained the process, offered alternate routes for the development of various community-driven projects, and included comments from many citizens about how to proceed. Citizens were encouraged to download the documents and stay involved in the rebuilding. Bolivar is now a thriving community.

Galveston County has a large (over 60%) population of renters. FEMA has a very good program set up for homeowners with adequate insurance and also for homeowners with no insurance. Although the process is very tedious, if you follow all the steps the program works. However, there is minimal assistance for renters. It would be helpful, if there were assistance for owners of rental property to get them back in operation. In addition, when apartments were placed back in operation, FEMA set a rental rate which created an increase in the cost of living for renters. FEMA rental rates were in many cases 10 – 30% higher than was being charged for the same property prior to the storm.

When insufficient housing exists to handle displaced residents, the pace of recovery for rental properties directly impacts how quickly people can return to Galveston County and support both their personal as well as community recovery efforts. This creates a public-sector imperative to assist rental property owners, so that people can get out of FEMA trailers and government-provided housing and back into their communities.

It is worth noting that the difficulties associated with inconsistent interpretations of FEMA rules and policies have impacted disaster operations in other areas of the state. For instance, during the catastrophic Bastrop wildfires, a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) gave one interpretation of the rules to the state emergency management chief and then, after state funds had been expended, another FCO gave a different interpretation costing the State of Texas financially.

## Conclusion

Last Friday we crossed the finish line on the 2012 hurricane season. For emergency management professionals along the Texas Gulf Coast the work simply shifts. It has been said that there are really only two seasons along the Texas Gulf Coast ... hurricane season and pre-hurricane season. While it is certainly true that planning and preparing for hurricane operations is a year-round undertaking, it is also true that from the November 30 close of hurricane season until the June 1 opening of the next season, the entire coastal emergency management community is extremely busy. This is happening all over the

Texas Gulf Coast; in fact, actually scheduling our activities will be complicated by the need to accommodate the training and preparation activities of our state and regional partners.

Make no mistake, in a disaster such as Hurricane Ike, our partners from FEMA are welcome additions to our operations. The knowledge and resources that FEMA brings to the table are critical to our success. On the other hand there are some operational drawbacks that come with the way that FEMA conducts its business. We simply note that some tweaks to operational concepts will go very far toward enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the fine work that FEMA does.

As I have always said emergency management is open book and you will not fail if you follow the system.

Again thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.