



FEMA

NOV 19 2009

Dr. G. Kemble Bennett
Office of the Vice Chancellor
Texas A&M University
301 Wisenbaker Engineering Research Center
College Station, TX 77843

Dear Dr. Bennett:

Thank you for your memorandum, dated April 24, 2009, regarding the National Advisory Council's (NAC) recommendations concerning the National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Program. I appreciate the work of the NAC's US&R Working Group over the past year, in developing the specific recommendations, as outlined in your memorandum, to help strengthen the partnership between FEMA and the US&R Chiefs. I have also shared your recommendations with our ESF-9 partners. My response to your recommendations follows below:

Recommendation #1: Create an US&R Strategic Group to become part of the FEMA Program Office decision making process.

Creating a US&R Strategic Group to review recommendations and participate in higher level decision making processes would be beneficial to the US&R Program. I feel the proposed membership of the US&R Strategic Group as outlined in your memorandum would provide great value in meeting the objectives of this group.

Recommendation #2: Establish regular meetings between the Strategic Group, Emergency Support Function 9 (ESF-9) Search and Rescue partners, and Department of Defense.

We have contacted our other ESF-9 partners (including the Department of Defense) and they have agreed to conduct these meetings, as necessary.

Recommendation #3: Continue to send US&R representatives to State US&R Alliance conferences.

I recognize the importance of US&R representatives attending these conferences and agree with your recommendation. I understand travel costs to attend these conferences will be paid by the yearly grants provided to the Task Forces.

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Recommendation #4: US&R Chiefs are encouraged to independently continue legislative efforts.

FEMA has made US&R issues a priority for our recent legislative requests.

Recommendation #5: NAC US&R Working Group will provide oversight of the formation and initial operations of the Strategic Group.

I agree with your recommendation of having the NAC US&R Working Group provide oversight of the formation and initial operations of the Strategic Group.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a response to your recommendations, and look forward to working with your organization. If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact Mr. David Webb, US&R Acting Branch Chief, at 202-646-3456.

Sincerely,



William L. Carwile, III

Assistant Administrator for Disaster Operations