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Thank you for inviting me to be with you today. I am excited to see so many supporters of volunteerism and other activities that support the American people in their times of need. Thank you for all that you do that makes our jobs easier.

I often speak of “engaged partnerships” and the commitment that all of us at FEMA share, to work together to prepare our communities for any disaster. None of us can nor should do it alone. The National Capital Area has unique challenges in this task, and your work is essential.

FEMA recognizes the importance of our nation’s capital, the challenges faced by a region with so many high profile events, and the need to prepare our capital for any event that may impact the lives not only of this community, but of the entire country. FEMA has specialized team in our Office of National Capital Region Coordination dedicated to these very issues.

The key word here is “coordination.” FEMA, even with all our partners in the federal government working in tandem, is not alone in our efforts to prepare for, respond to and recover from any disaster. We must coordinate with voluntary organizations, such as the Red Cross; with businesses, NGOs, and other private sector organizations; as well as with our local partners in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. Only when we work together as a team will we be truly successful. This is why our focus at FEMA on “engaged partnerships” is essential.

Our Director of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination – or NCRC – is Chris Geldart. Chris comes with experience working directly with local charities and officials. He served in state government in Maryland as the Assistant Director in the Office of Homeland Security, in the private sector, and served our country in the United States Marine Corps –*Semper Fi*. I know Chris will continue to be an “engaged partner” with all of you as we continue our joint efforts to prepare this vital community against any hazard.

FEMA is committed to developing new resources and operational capabilities directed at a local and regional response. We have added staff and capabilities to our regional offices and to our work on the ground.

Our new Logistics Management Directorate has developed supply plans to get you the resources you need quickly. Our new system includes contracts with suppliers near key regions – including Washington, DC – as well as new technologies that help us direct and track resources during a disaster. For example: when storms threatened the northeast last spring, we knew power could be interrupted and pre-positioned generators at the edge of the storm that could quickly be brought in to provide support. Similar plans are in place to bring resources here if needed to respond to any event.

These plans have themselves been greatly expanded as we have brought regional planners into FEMA – a change in just the past two years as there were no full-time operational planners when I took the reigns at FEMA.

All of our reforms are aimed at strengthening our ability to support you when we are needed. Chris' team is an integral part of this effort.

Of course, you have already been engaged in these efforts yourselves. Whether it is our new regional emergency support functions, the Sheltering and Evacuation Resource Guide, your role in providing shelter and mass care, or your full participation in exercises that test these structures and systems, the Red Cross and our partners in the District, Maryland and Virginia have been active and engaged partners.

What we have done here in the National Capital Region is emblematic of how we are building New FEMA nationwide. Let me just take a moment to talk about the larger effort to engage communities in our preparedness activities.

One example is our joint venture with the Aidmatrix Foundation to create the FEMA-Aidmatrix Network, a national donation management program. This Web-based system is setting the groundwork for an integrated and coordinated approach to donations management by connecting leading for-profit, nonprofit, voluntary, and other private sector organizations at the local, state and national levels.

FEMA continues to work with federal, state, and voluntary partners to build a robust system for evacuation, sheltering and housing, including our collaboration with the American Red Cross to implement the National Shelter System. We've established a National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and a National Emergency Child Locator Center to help those displaced find their loved ones. We have a new policy to help those with pets. We are strengthening our ties and relationships with

faith-based organizations who are often among the first on the ground offering aid and assistance to those in need.

FEMA is reaching out in new ways to promote personal preparedness. One example: our Citizen Corps Councils provide a ready means to foster participation by community and government leaders, and a way to inform, train, and engage citizens in community preparedness that can support our first responders in an emergency.

Nationwide, FEMA is doing everything we can to educate individuals on the need to prepare at home. I hope you will help us by driving home the message in your communities that the National Capital Region is at risk from natural disasters such as hurricanes and floods as well as from man-made hazards. Everyone in the region should make a kit and have a plan for any type of disaster. The Ready.gov site has information for everyone on how to be better prepared.

Together we can educate the public on their role during a disaster. Government – even with the Federal, tribal, State and local governments working perfectly in sync – is not the entire answer. All Americans need to be part of the emergency management process. Americans must understand and take responsibility for their role in disasters. We must continue to develop a culture of preparedness in America, in which every American takes personal responsibility for his or her own emergency preparedness.

I am dedicated to working hand-in-hand, day-by-day, with our partners at every level of government, in the for-profit and nonprofit areas of the private sector, and wherever I can find just one individual who wants to help those in need. I ask you to join us in this journey. Together we will make a difference.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.