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Introduction

For nearly 100 years, men and women facing dangerous situations have trained and prepared on this site. This facility has a long and proud tradition of preparing young men and women, first as an army training ground and then, for the past decade, as the Center for Domestic Preparedness. As Americans, we recognize that training and preparedness are an important part of getting our men and women ready to properly handle the challenges they will face. Too often in history, whoever was nearby was called to respond with whatever they had in hand.

Not today. Today Americans are dedicated to making sure we have the right person with the right tools for the right job. As a firefighter, I know how important proper training and equipment is. As a former fire Chief, I know that being properly prepared can save lives – not only of those responding but of the public we are charged to protect.

Having seen first-hand the impact that good training can have, I am truly pleased to be here as we honor this tradition of excellence and the great work that has been accomplished by the men and women of the Center for Domestic Preparedness.

CDP's Critical Mission and Work

CDP provides first responders with a real opportunity for training that they can't find anywhere else. With 39 specialized courses crossing 10 disciplines, the Center for Domestic Preparedness incorporates not just classroom learning but hands-on training. CDP leaders know they need to be flexible to meet the needs of the community they serve. They offer extended classes for those who can spend extended time at the facility. They offer non-resident training for those who can arrange a day or two to commute to the site for their courses. They have mobile training units that can go "on the road" to train those who can not make the trip to Anniston themselves.

At FEMA, I often speak about our commitment to "Engaged Partnerships." We have renewed our dedication to working hand-in-hand with other federal agencies and with our partners at every level both inside and out of government. CDP is emblematic of this

vision, developing “Training Partners” with other federal agencies – including the Department of Defense – universities, and throughout the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium.

After training just over 2,500 responders in your first year, the CDP team now averages over 60,000 individuals trained each year. As of last month, CDP has trained a total of 355,203 personnel representing every state in the union, each of our territories and many of our international allies in its first decade of operation. In fact, CDP has already trained more people in the first six months of 2008 than you did in all of 2007. Each year your accomplishments surpass the previous years. You have set a high standard. This is truly a record of which you should be proud.

Perhaps the most wide-reaching element of CDP is its extensive “Train the Trainer” series. There’s an old saying, “Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach him how to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.” CDP is not just training a small group of responders from each community who alone will be trained to act if a disaster strikes. They are training a team that can go home and share their knowledge with the rest of their community. In other words, they are teaching them how to fish. This is a winning strategy for getting knowledge into as many hands as possible.

With us today are representatives of many of communities that have benefited from the Center’s programs. On behalf of all of us at FEMA, I want to thank you and your colleagues for your work on behalf of all our communities across the country. DHS, FEMA and CDP are committed to helping you. Our hats are off to all of you who are on the ground every day.

I would also extend my thanks to the Senators and Representatives who are with us today and who have done so much to support the Center through their offices. In particular, Senator Shelby, Senator Sessions and Congressman Rogers: thank you for your support for our efforts.

FEMA Is Better Prepared, Too:

It is important to note that Congress, Secretary Michael Chertoff and others back in Washington have all been involved in the progress of building up the Center to where it is today. CDP has managed its transition across the U.S. Government: starting under the Department of Justice and then joining the Department of Homeland Security when DHS was established in 2003. Within DHS, CDP joined the FEMA family only last year. It makes good sense as FEMA is an organization dedicated to helping our nation prepare for, mitigate against, respond to and recover from all hazards that could face our community or country. Our National Preparedness Directorate plays a role in this

expanded visibility, but the culture of preparedness is being woven into everything we do at FEMA: and rightly so.

Dennis Schraeder, our Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness, has been hands-on in his support for the Center. While his responsibilities representing us before a congressional hearing have kept him from these festivities, he has been here in the past and I am sure will be here again to show his support for CDP. Trust me, I know he would rather be with us today than testifying; and I appreciate his leadership and his work to strengthen the center.

Whether it is through our Emergency Management Institute in Maryland, the courses provided by the U.S. Fire Administration, our work one-on-one with the American public through the Citizens Corps or through grants and other programs, FEMA is dedicated to providing the tools and resources that will help us all to build a stronger network of prepared responders.

We have taken this message to heart at FEMA in our own actions.

Over the past two years FEMA has expanded our capabilities to respond to disasters. We have strengthened our operational capabilities with Incident Management Assistance Teams and stronger regional operations. We have new logistical systems in place to get what we need where we need it. And we have improved our ability to get people the help they need quickly: with mobile registration vehicles, expanded call centers and a commitment to cutting through the old “red tape.”

But, like for the organizations and communities who take advantage of CDP’s coursework, we recognize that our response will only be as good as our planning and preparedness.

We have placed special attention on our own planning and training needs. FEMA has brought on full-time operational planners, used a gap analysis tool to help us better target our resources and developed a wider range of pre-scripted mission assignments to help us bring in the best federal partner to accomplish key tasks.

All of these efforts are being done in conjunction with the National Response Framework. Training is critical to the implementation of the NRF in the NIMS environment. All stakeholders need to know how the Nation’s response structure works and their roles and responsibilities.

We have seen the results in FEMA’s successful response to tornadoes, storms and fires in recent months. In each case FEMA worked with our partners on the ground, many of

whom trained here at CDP, using the skills and procedures we've all set in place to help communities and people in need.

Conclusion

This is the message I ask each of you to take home. Preparedness and training are essential elements in any emergency management system. Even with all that has happened in recent years – 9-11, Katrina, the recent tornadoes and floods – a new national poll shows 56% of families have no disaster plan and 54% did not even feel vulnerable to hurricanes, tornados of floods. We must do more to build a culture of preparedness at every level. The Center for Domestic Preparedness if emblematic of the great institutions that help our nation's first responders build that culture.

To those of you serving at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, you have done fine and noble work. In just a few short years you have built a center that is the envy of the world. You have helped us all to build a foundation of knowledge across the land that is helping to make our country a little safer each and every day. Each and every day, you are adding to the long and proud tradition of training that has been present for close to a century here in Anniston, and which I know will continue to grow in the years ahead.

On behalf of a grateful nation, thank you all for your work, your dedication and your passion. I am honored to lead you and to have been here for the 10th Anniversary of the Center for Domestic Preparedness. I have no doubt my successors will stand here with equal pride a century from now.

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