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Ladies and gentlemen, I am sorry that I am making this final appearance before NEMA as FEMA's Administrator via satellite. As all of you know, serving in emergency management requires us to put our personal preferences aside in support of a greater cause. I join the President in thanking you for your service to your communities, your states and our nation.

You might not know that I was an English Literature major in college, before joining the fire department. Our challenges this hurricane season bring to mind John Milton's words from *Paradise Lost*. In these disasters we face the "ever-threatening storms of chaos blustering round, inclement skies." But as we prepare and respond to these storms and the other challenges that we have overcome together in the past years, we can see that our partnership is improving, and that we are truly moving forward together.

It helps to see the progress if you look back to where we were.

Three years ago, FEMA had no preparedness mission – none whatsoever. The Agency had fewer staff than the average high school has students, and like teenagers, too often we just sat by the phone and waited for you to call. We were reactive. We waited for a disaster to strike, and only then considered our options, which were limited. Our response usually started with giving someone a check and hoping they could use the money to handle the situation themselves. Three years ago, our limited resources supported you only after the fact, not before, and when we did arrive, we often tried to take control from officials on the ground. I know, because I saw it myself as the Fire Chief in Miami. Seeing federal officials on the scene didn't reassure me. In fact, all too often, it concerned me.

But as President Truman said, "The reward of suffering is experience." We suffered through some tough times, but the valuable experience led us to make changes. We learned, we grew, and we improved.

Look at where we are today.

In the past three years, with NEMA's support and the leadership of President Bush, Secretary Chertoff and our friends in Congress, FEMA has secured the resources we need to build a strong organization that will carry out the mission the American people have given us.

It begins with people. We have doubled the size of the organization, not just by putting bodies into slots, but by bringing in new, experienced leaders to fill key career positions. We reorganized our shops to focus on our new goals. We integrated the preparedness mission back into FEMA, have spread its message across the organization, and learned to live that mission day in and day out. We are expanding our regional operations, to become stronger in the field and closer to all of you.

It had been years since there had been a Regional Administrator in all 10 of our regions. Now it is expected. We also provided additional training and opportunities for all levels of our staff – from the highest level managers, to our administrative staff – to help them grow professionally and expand the depth of the organization. We created new positions to fill key needs. Did you know when I took the reins at FEMA we had no full-time operational planners? Today we have them not just in Washington, but in many of our regions as well. On this strong foundation of good people, we began to rebuild the organization, in a fundamental and hopefully, lasting way.

It was not just FEMA that got support during this time. Over the past five years FEMA and DHS have provided through our various grant programs more than \$26 billion to our partners across state and local government as well as to non-profit and private sector elements. These resources are directly helping to improve our nation's preparedness for any disaster.

In fact, I am proud today to make the Emergency Operations Center Grant Program and the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program announcements.

The Emergency Operations Center Grant Program will help address identified deficiencies and needs in order to support flexible, sustainable, secure and interoperable EOCs. In FY08, we're making \$14,572,500 available for grants for construction or renovation of a state, local or tribal government's principal EOC. The Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program is intended to improve local, tribal, regional, statewide and national interoperable emergency communications in response to natural disasters, acts of terrorism and other man-made disasters. We're making \$48,575,000 available in FY 2008 for planning, training, exercises and personnel activities. To date,

the Department of Homeland Security has spent approximately \$3.9 billion in grants to improve interoperable communications.

But assets are only useful if we know what to do with them. As president Truman also said, “You can always amend a big plan, but you can never expand a little one. I don’t believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation which we can’t possibly foresee now.” A wise guy, that Truman. I have the same goal, but I need you to be a part of it, and to keep this goal before you when we are gone.

FEMA has focused on reaching out to our partners to develop plans and systems that work for all of us. NEMA has been an important part of this effort. We might not always agree, but I have really appreciated the input that leaders like Ken Murphy and Nancy Dragani have provided to us. As members of FEMA’s National Advisory Council, they will continue to provide their input to my successor.

The results of our work together are clear. The National Response Framework is now that “big plan” we all look to together when planning and executing our actions and it has been battle tested in the floods across the Midwest and the Hurricanes we have already faced this year – particularly Gustav. The 2008 Disaster Housing Plan – highlighted by Housing Task Forces led by the states – provides guidance in housing disaster victims. The Disaster Housing Strategy, which is still open for public comment, will help us to develop this plan into a stronger and more robust system in the years to come. Rome wasn’t built in a day – and too often we have to house more people in a shorter time than ever lived in ancient Rome.

We have incorporated a lot of your suggestions in all these efforts, and today these plans are working. I’ve spoken before about our success responding to fires in the west, floods in the plains, tornadoes, hurricanes and storms across the country. It again brings Milton to mind, “Beyond this flood, a frozen continent lies dark and wilde, beat with perpetual storms of whirlwind and dire hail.” However, when we work together, we can face these challenges and overcome adversity.

I don’t need to bring up old examples. I can talk about what we are doing today. In recent weeks we came together as a team to prepare for and respond to Hurricane Gustav. This disaster did not just involve Louisiana. It did not just involve Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida – all of whom had to prepare for the storm as its landfall was hard to predict. It did not just involve the additional host-states such as New Mexico, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky – who accepted the evacuees. It involved almost every state. EMAC requests went out. Search & Rescue teams flew in from across the nation. National Guard and Law Enforcement officers came in from dozens of states. FEMA chaired a daily video-teleconference where I could to talk to a

group of friends like I am now and bring together the federal, state and local leaders so that we could iron out our problems and get the job done.

FEMA did not try to takeover – nor will we. We asked what you needed to get the job done and then went about finding ways to provide you with the tools to accomplish the task. But the lasting lesson of Gustav is the extensive preplanning that went into that evacuation: two years worth of work involving all levels of government and more than a dozen federal agencies. We all came together. We see the results today. Gustav was a terrible storm that with a small track change could have been devastating. People died, lost possessions, and were displaced from their homes – but we came together and accomplished great things.

Today we are building on that new tradition. Dozens of states dealt with the wind and rains of Tropical Storm Hanna earlier in the week. Ike has already had an impact in Florida and now threatens the Gulf Coast again. [ADMINISTRATOR PAULISON INSERTS MOST RECENT EXPERIENCE WITH IKE HERE]. I'm just hoping we won't have to deal with Winifred – the last name on the list this year.

We can't let this success go to our heads. There is still so much to be done. So let me talk for a moment about the future.

New FEMA is a work in progress. As I said earlier, it starts with good people. Please support our efforts as we build a stronger organization, with stronger resources and training for our staff so that we have the tools we need to support you. At one point we spent less than \$100 per staff member on training each year. We've started to change this, but still have a long road to travel.

FEMA is still implementing other needed reforms – and you can help. In addition to the Disaster Housing Strategy, we are reviewing the Declarations Process, and NEMA is already part of that discussion. The Management Cost Rule has been reopened for public comment. This is your opportunity to provide us with the hard data and specific facts about how the changes have impacted you. Please – we need this hard data in order to address your concerns. FEMA also has work to do on our operations and planning. We are working with you on the final rollout of CPG 101, the state and local planning guide and the Integrated Planning System. We need to continue and expand the GAP Analysis effort, which was the foundation for the Gustav response.

We need to continue to build FEMA's regional support structure to support you all. We need grant funding to become more steady and predictable so that you are not always wondering whether you will have base support from year to year. FEMA's business systems are only just beginning to be improved and we need to carry that effort forward. Our IT systems are slowly being modernized and our ability to manage multi-million

dollar programs is slowly being improved. The days of each FEMA directorate doing their own thing without coordination and efficiency are over.

Together we need to take steps to ensure that the future leadership of FEMA is truly future minded and not mired in land of “what was.” Our nation has evolved, our profession has expanded and the American public expects more. To deny it is folly, to embrace and manage those expectations will constitute success.

We’ve made great strides, and laid a strong foundation. Now we must build upon it to make FEMA what we all want it to be: the nation’s preeminent emergency management agency.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am disappointed I could not be with you in beautiful Portland today. But we all have a job to do. Today, I offer my thanks for the work you have done. I offer my thanks for the support you have given me. It has been an honor to serve you all as the Administrator of FEMA. I am so proud of what the staff of FEMA have accomplished in these past three years. And I wish you all success in the future.

God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.