



Overview

FEMA will become part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in March 2003 as the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate. There will be challenges ahead as the new DHS divisions attempt to merge multiple cultures, systems, functions, and program delivery methods and approaches. At the same time, FEMA brings to the new department skills, knowledges, and abilities that add considerable value to meeting the mission of DHS.

FEMA provides disaster assistance to states by assessing damage and deciding what assistance is needed. FEMA then makes disaster aid available and manages the application, approval and disbursement process. In addition, FEMA coordinates other federal agency involvement, keeps the public informed, and identifies opportunities to mitigate future disasters.

FEMA works with state and local governments, professional groups, and the public to reduce or eliminate the risk to people and property from floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, and other hazards. The Agency does this by improving disaster resistance at the community level, promoting the adoption and enforcement of sound building codes and practices, preparing risk assessment maps to assist local planners with effective community planning and to inform property owners of the degree of risk associated with their property's location, and by helping local communities adopt hazard management ordinances.



Baton Rouge, LA, October 3, 2002

The Emergency Operations Center is staffed 24 hours a day during the approach of Hurricane Lili reaching land.

PHOTO BY BOB MCMILLAN/FEMA NEWS PHOTO



New York, NY

FEMA/NY State Disaster Field Office personnel meet to coordinate federal, state and local disaster assistance programs.

PHOTO BY ANDREA BOOHER/FEMA NEWS PHOTO

FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) offers federally backed flood insurance coverage in more than 19,000 communities. The NFIP works to identify the flood hazard and promotes floodplain management, flood insurance policy sales, and in partnership with the insurance industry, works to sell and service policies and make claims payments to assist individuals, businesses and communities facilitate recovery from flooding. The NFIP also provides flood insurance incentives to reinforce measures to mitigate future flood losses.

Through the United States Fire Administration, FEMA helps reduce fire deaths, injuries, and damage by developing new fire management technologies, training the nation's firefighters and emergency medical professionals through the National Fire Academy (NFA), educating the public on how to lower fire risk, and working with 30,000 fire departments to collect and analyze national fire statistics.

FEMA helps states and localities prepare for a wide range of hazards by training emergency management professionals and state and local officials at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute, sponsoring exercises that let people work together under conditions similar to a real disaster, pre-positioning personnel and supplies in disaster prone areas, and partnering with governments, the private, and not-for-profit sectors.

FEMA has a long history of partnering with states and local governments, the private sector, and not-for-profit groups. FEMA knows how to launch, maintain, and sustain such partnerships. FEMA has excelled at coordinating intergovernmental efforts and has skillfully developed cooperative relationships with state and community leaders. FEMA communicates openly with the public through one of the most active Web sites in the government, and through an open and sharing approach has cemented positive relationships with the electronic and print media. In order to realize the vision of the new DHS and accomplish the mission, we know it will take a determined intergovernmental effort and an all out citizen centered approach. FEMA is well positioned to support and provide leadership in this regard.

FEMA has demonstrated both responsibility and responsiveness in using evaluations, assessments, and audits to improve program performance and Agency operations. GAO and IG audits as well as customer input provided an impetus for reengineering the Public Assistance Program. This program continues to receive high marks from customers as the new Public Assistance Program fine-tunes operations and methodologies.

The Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA) has traditionally and consistently used evaluation information to refine and retool operations to make various programs and operations more cost beneficial and to increase program effectiveness and efficiency. The USFA always has used student evaluations and recommendations by the Board of Visitors of the NFA to improve performance and certify course offerings. FEMA's detailed responses to the Office of Inspector General's Program and Management Challenges (see Section III of the Report) demonstrates all that has been done to both strengthen and improve program performance and management practices.

The success of FEMA's award winning Web site instilled confidence in the Agency's ability to support the President's electronic government initiatives DisasterHelp.Gov and Project SAFECOM. Both of these e-government initiatives are important to the overall success of DHS by providing a single location to keep the public informed about disaster preparedness and response and to significantly improve wireless communication capabilities for public safety organizations across all levels of government.

In FY 2002, our last year as an independent agency, FEMA achieved many internal and external goals in pursuit of its unchanging mission to save lives and protect property. As always, the FEMA family reacted swiftly and efficiently in response to 42 major disasters of all sorts, expending nearly \$3.9 billion in disaster aid to communities across the country, managing our first mainland hurricane in three years, and weathering one of the worst fire seasons in history.

FEMA's activities away from disaster sites were also successful this year. We were provided with \$225 million in national preparedness grants to distribute to states to upgrade their emergency communications apparatus, their emergency operations centers, and emergency response plans.

Internally, we approved our six-year strategic plan, "A Nation Prepared," to guide our progress in the future. FEMA also reformed its disaster assistance regulations to end a long-standing double-standard against certain non-profit groups. FEMA broadened its interpretation of other regulations to help lower Manhattan rebuild its transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of the 21st century. Finally, we also began our work to transition into the new Department of Homeland Security.

It was a pivotal year for the Agency, and this report documents the challenges and successes we met along the way.