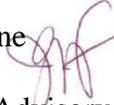June 13, 2017

MEMORANDUM FOR:  Robert Fenton
         Acting Administrator
         Federal Emergency Management Agency

FROM:        James Featherstone
         Chairman
         FEMA National Advisory Council

SUBJECT:      Recommendations from the May 2017 NAC Meeting

The purpose of this memorandum is to forward the FEMA National Advisory Council (NAC) recommendations from the May 2017 meeting in Tampa, Florida, for your consideration. The NAC met in a public session at that meeting to discuss and deliberate potential recommendations brought forth by its subcommittees.

The NAC approved 18 recommendations to you in the following areas: Public Assistance Deductible Concept, Data and Information Sharing and Technology, Nuclear Power Plant Decommissioning, Training for Incorporating People with Disabilities and others with Access and Functional Needs, including Children, and Geospatial Information Systems.

For your awareness, the NAC is particularly concerned with Issue 8 in Section IV. The NAC has previously identified this issue, yet it remains unresolved.

## I. Public Assistance Deductible Concept (1 recommendation)

**Issue 1:** The NAC believes that the original concept of the disaster deductible ultimately shifts the cost of disasters disproportionately to the state and local government level, even though they are the least able to assume the cost.

FEMA's disaster deductible proposal only counts mitigation investments toward the deductible if those investments are made directly by state governments. The proposal does not count or encourage local mitigation investments, which typically make up the majority of statewide mitigation investments.

FEMA's disaster deductible proposal does not adequately consider the bureaucratic burden placed on state governments, as well as FEMA's own internal organization, in the annual determination of the disaster deductibles.

**Recommendation 17-16:** FEMA should not adopt a disaster deductible proposal, unless it actually reduces the cost of disasters to the Whole Community.

## II. Data and Information Sharing and Technology-Related Issues (6 recommendations)

**Issue 2:** FEMA's data sharing formats (i.e., APIs (Application Program Interface)) are non-standard, which means it is not readily accessible for private technology sector and other partners to access and leverage.

**Recommendation 17-17:** FEMA should engage private sector partners, including the Tech Sector Collaboration Program, to review and ensure FEMA's data sharing formats are effective and accessible.

**Issue 3:** Emergency management agencies currently have difficulty answering the following questions about technology:
- Which technologies can and should be used in disaster operations;
- Which technologies an emergency management agency should be using; and
- How can one tell if their technology programs and systems are configured properly and are "disaster-ready"?

**Recommendation 17-18:** FEMA should develop a technology readiness self-assessment document for state, local, tribal, territorial (SLTT) and private partners with the goal of accomplishing the following:
- Listing and defining commonly used disaster-related technologies, including assistive technologies;
- Defining methods for achieving levels of readiness for those technologies; and
- Suggesting recommended actions/next steps the agencies can take, based on their self-assessment, to improve their level of readiness.

FEMA is not expected to receive, manage, or act upon the results of the self-assessments. This is meant to serve as a stand-alone resource for SLTT partners. The Logistics Capabilities Assessment Tool (LCAT) provides a successful example and precedent for such a tool.

**Issue 4:** Emergency management agencies currently have challenges understanding what FEMA is doing from a technology standpoint or understanding region-specific technology issues/capabilities such as:
- What FEMA capabilities are and how they can leverage them;
- Understand how they can be better technology ready;
- Understand region specific capabilities; and
- A point of contact to establish future programs and partnerships.

**Recommendation 17-19:** FEMA should develop specialized staff support to work directly with SLTT partners on enhancing technology-related understanding, building capabilities, and integrating regional solutions. This capability should have the ability to do the following:
- Understand what FEMA capabilities are and identify shared technological-resources, to include region-specific capabilities;
- Know how to help SLTT be better technology ready; and
- Provide a point of contact to establish future programs and partnerships.

**Issue 5:** Technology-related training, to date, is narrowly focused and largely, and almost exclusively, focuses on radio communications.

**Recommendation 17-20:** FEMA should expand, and offer new, technology-focused Incident Command System (ICS) courses and awareness training to include a broader view of communications and disaster technology solutions. This training should focus on how technology can be further integrated into the National Incident Management System.

**Issue 6:** The emergency management community is not aware of the vast array of tools and resources that currently exist.

**Recommendation 17-21:** FEMA should consolidate technology-related topics and available resources on the fema.gov website so issues fall under one umbrella. This consolidation would create a landing page/awareness portal. Examples of tools and topics include, but are not limited to applications, websites, OpenFEMA, and assistive technologies.

**Recommendation 17-22:** FEMA should overhaul and reorganize www.fema.gov more comprehensively to make the website user-friendly.

### III.    Nuclear Power Plant Decommissioning (3 recommendations)

**Issue 7:** The FEMA Regional Administrator has the authority to prevent a nuclear power plant from operating if they deem the plant's emergency plans are not sufficient.

Local emergency management funding is sometimes dependent on commercial nuclear power plants. When those shut down it can make it challenging to sustain funding.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) does not plan, or require industry to plan, for beyond design base events.

**Recommendation 17-23:** FEMA should provide provisions to ensure that the licensee provides a clear and concise explanation of the hazards associated with the nuclear power facility throughout the decommissioning process.

**Recommendation 17-24:** FEMA should make a provision to ensure state and local offsite response organizations are in agreement to any NRC granted exemptions that the licensee receives in relief of emergency preparedness requirements set in 10 CFR 50.47 and 10 CFR 50 (Appendix E).

**Recommendation 17-25:** FEMA, in collaboration with state and local offsite response organizations, the NRC, and licensees, should develop emergency preparedness standards for a nuclear power plant that is decommissioned or decommissioning.

### IV.   Training for Incorporating People with Disabilities and others Access and Functional Needs, including Children (3 recommendations)

**Issue 8:** There is a lack of emergency management, response, and recovery training incorporating people with access and functional needs and children. This puts these populations at risk.

> *Note: the NAC has made previous recommendations regarding this issue (see 2016-28 and 2017-09) and it remains unresolved.*

**Recommendation 17-26:** FEMA should create and support a Center of Excellence (CoE) type training program for emergency management personnel that enables experts to acquire, adopt,

disseminate and deliver content specializing in how to fully integrate the needs of individuals with disabilities and others with access and functional needs and children into all aspects of emergency planning, response, recovery and mitigation.

**Recommendation 17-27:** FEMA should more fully integrate content related to persons with disabilities, access and functional needs and children into all existing and future emergency management trainings.

To fulfill this objective, FEMA should map and prioritize FEMA courses delivered to emergency management personnel and first responders.

**Recommendation 17-28:** FEMA should partner with known organizations (such as the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) or National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)) to establish rigorous criteria for identifying and evaluating course developers, trainers, and reviewers to ensure they are truly subject matter experts (including relevant specialized experience).

## V.    Geospatial Information Systems (5 recommendations)

**Issue 9:** There is not a common agreement as to what GIS data elements are most useful to emergency management programs.  This leads to gaps in critical data, as well as time and effort wasted collecting less-useful information, and complicates information sharing between jurisdictions and between different levels of government.

**Recommendation 17-29**: FEMA should identify critical subsets of GIS data and schema, and establish minimum attributes that should be maintained by SLTT emergency management programs in order to better facilitate information sharing with FEMA, and with other SLTT programs, to ensure accessibility during events.

This may include studying existing lists, such as those in the Homeland Security Enterprise Geospatial Concept of Operations (GeoCONOPS) and would not exclude other lists.

**Issue 10:** A considerable amount of useful GIS data has already been collected.  However, many programs are unaware what data exists, where to find it, or how to access it.  Similarly, data collected for planning and mitigation purposes – using tools such as HAZUS, the HIRA/THIRA, and Hazard Mitigation planning process – is not always readily accessible during response and recovery.  While there are numerous best practice examples of emergency management programs effectively sharing GIS data with each other and with FEMA, too often these instances are unique to those particular jurisdictions or are developed on the fly during an incident.

**Recommendation 17-30**: FEMA should develop a protocol for sharing GIS data between emergency management programs at all levels of government (intra- and inter-agency) before, during, and after incidents.

**Recommendation 17-31**: FEMA should create an online portal or landing page that directs users to all existing FEMA GIS data, resources, and applications.

**Issue 11:** There is low awareness with SLTT emergency management programs on the value of GIS and what geospatial resources already exist within FEMA.

**Recommendation 17-32**: FEMA should promote and raise awareness of the geospatial tools, applications, and resources in its inventory.  To do this, FEMA should develop a resource, which

will provide data (examples) and return on investment, which demonstrates the value and importance GIS for emergency managers.

**Issue 12:** Current GIS training courses available through EMI are overly focused on preparedness activities, in particular HAZUS. For example, resident course E190 ArcGIS for Emergency Managers focuses on the use of HAZUS-MH software. The Independent Study course IS922 Applications of GIS for Emergency Management is a good start for awareness, but does not go into enough detail about practical applications in all phases of emergency management.

**Recommendation 17-33**: FEMA EMI geospatial courses should be refreshed to address the current capabilities of geospatial technology.  A course should be developed, geared towards non-technical practitioners, that speaks to the value and purpose of GIS to include a high-level overview of how GIS is integrated into disaster operations.  Another course, directed at GIS practitioners, should provide technical guidance on how to effectively integrate GIS into all phases of the emergency management cycle.  Finally, use of GIS should be integrated into other courses (i.e., operations, planning, etc.) in order to institutionalize the use of GIS.