

Written Statement of
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FEMA

**“FEMA Reauthorization and Cutting the Red Tape in
Recovery”**

Before the

**House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
Subcommittee of Economic Development, Public
Buildings, and Emergency Management
U.S. House of Representatives
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Good morning Chairman Denham, Ranking Member Norton, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It is an honor to appear before you today on behalf of FEMA to discuss our efforts in helping America's communities recover from disasters. Recovery is a top priority at FEMA, and we appreciate the Subcommittee's attention to this important matter.

Recovery is at the heart of disaster response and it is often where FEMA is asked to contribute its resources and expertise. Collaboration with our many partners is critical to FEMA's ability to assist communities and individuals in the recovery process. Successful recovery also depends on all stakeholders having a clear understanding of pre- and post-disaster roles and responsibilities. FEMA is just one part of the team, and the success and speed of recovery depends heavily on the whole community's involvement.

In my testimony today, I will highlight FEMA's different recovery capabilities and programs that can be provided when a State requests federal assistance. Many of these programs begin immediately following disasters and others are longer term efforts. In some of the nation's most recent disasters, FEMA has had the opportunity to test many new programs and strategies.

The magnitude and severity of destruction in Missouri, Mississippi, and Alabama is truly heartbreaking, and I would like to express my sympathy to all of the families who have lost loved ones during the recent tornadoes and flooding around the country. While we mourn the lives that were lost, these events serve as an important reminder that disasters can strike anytime and anywhere, and that all citizens must be prepared.

Recovery Philosophy

Recovery plays an integral role in FEMA's overall mission, ensuring that individuals and communities affected by Presidentially-declared disasters of all sizes, including catastrophic events and terrorist attacks, receive rapid disaster assistance and can return to normal functions with minimal suffering and disruption of services. This process begins with a prompt and effective response effort, which includes the efficient processing of State requests for supplementary disaster assistance, and the provision of rapid and compassionate care to communities, families, and individuals. The success of recovery efforts depends upon strong coordination between FEMA and our partners across the Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, the private sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This "Whole Community" approach also includes individuals, families, and communities, who continue to be our greatest asset.

Once life-saving and life-sustaining operations have ceased, the recovery process requires the restoration of basic services within 60 days. This includes restoring meaningful operating capacity for essential city service facilities, utilities, transportation routes, schools, neighborhood retail businesses, and other workplaces. In situations in which complete restoration of these facilities is not feasible, FEMA provides temporary facilities in order to bring services and systems back online. As the stabilization process unfolds and communities continue to recover, we work closely with our partners to restore, redevelop and revitalize the physical, economic, and natural environment and infrastructure.

Recovery encompasses more than the restoration of a community's physical structures; it also includes a continuum of care to meet the needs of disaster survivors as well as positioning the community to meet the needs of the future. Strengthening health and human services, housing and educational systems, environmental sustainability and cultural resources enhance the overall resiliency of the entire community. In order to carry out this mission, we will continue to work with our Federal, state, and local partners on preparedness efforts and mitigation measures to ensure that when a disaster strikes, communities are prepared.

Assistance to Individuals

FEMA's Individual Assistance (IA) program ensures that disaster survivors have prompt access to a full range of programs and services provided by Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments; voluntary agencies; and the private sector. IA programs include emergency assistance, the Individuals and Households Program (IHP), Crisis Counseling Program, Disaster Legal Services, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, and the Disaster Case Management Program.

IHP provides housing assistance and other needs assistance, through financial assistance or direct housing assistance. Housing assistance includes, temporary housing (rental or temporary housing unit), repair and/or replacement assistance. IHP also authorizes FEMA to construct permanent housing under certain circumstances, in cases where alternative housing resources are unavailable, or other forms of FEMA temporary housing assistance are not feasible or cost-effective. For more than three decades, FEMA

has provided a range of temporary housing assistance options to help eligible disaster survivors with their housing needs.

Disaster housing needs reflect the varying needs of disaster-affected communities and individuals. FEMA housing programs enumerated under the Stafford Act are not intended to restore the applicant to their pre-disaster standard of living but rather to provide a bridge between short-term transitional sheltering and long-term, sustainable permanent housing. Rental assistance is the most common form of housing assistance provided by FEMA, enabling individuals and families to rent a housing unit while they locate and secure long-term permanent and sustainable housing.

One form of temporary housing provided under IHP is Temporary Housing Units (THUs), which address the housing needs of disaster survivors whose residences have been rendered uninhabitable or destroyed during a presidentially declared disaster. The THUs can be used as housing while the survivor works to find a sustainable long-term solution. Generally, a direct housing operation is activated after a large-scale disaster when available local resources do not meet the community's disaster housing needs. This assistance is available for up to 18 months after the declaration of a major disaster.

Another form of transitional housing available to individuals is the Rapid Temporary Repair initiative, which provides limited direct assistance for sheltering purposes during a federal major disaster recovery effort after a request for activation by a Governor. This initiative, a partnership between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA and participating State, expedites temporary repairs to disaster damaged windows and doors and provides debris removal to allow access to the dwelling, enabling disaster survivors to continue to live in their homes.

In addition to housing assistance, FEMA provides supplemental funding to States for short-term counseling services following a disaster declaration. The Crisis Counseling Program is an interagency Federal partnership between FEMA and the Center for Mental Health within HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, providing services for up to nine months after the date of grant award. Outreach services under this program include public information, community networking, and education services.

FEMA is also working with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association to provide free Disaster Legal Services to disaster survivors, including help with insurance claims and consumer protection matters, legal advice and referrals, and replacement of wills and other important legal documents.

Disaster unemployment assistance may also be available through the Department of Labor. This assistance program provides federally-funded weekly benefits to workers and self-employed individuals who are unemployed as a direct result of a declared major disaster, and who are not eligible for regular unemployment benefits. This program helps to provide financial stability to disaster survivors, while supporting the local economy.

The Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 authorized FEMA to implement a disaster case management services program. A Memorandum of Agreement signed in 2010 by FEMA and the HHS Administration for Children and Families outlines the first prong, or the Direct Federal Disaster Case Management Program. Once a State requests and is approved for the Direct Federal Disaster Case Management Program, FEMA notifies the Administration for Children and Families to initiate the rapid deployment of disaster case management assistance to individuals and

families in the affected disaster area. The second prong of the State Disaster Case Management Program is a State-administered program funded through a direct grant from FEMA. The State Disaster Case Management Program ensures that the State is an essential partner in the delivery of ongoing disaster case management services and that the use of local service providers in the recovery for disaster survivors and their surrounding communities is maximized.

Public Assistance

Public Assistance (PA) provides Federal disaster grants to eligible State, Tribal, and local governments, as well as certain Private nonprofit entities for the repair, replacement, or restoration of publicly-owned facilities and infrastructure damaged during a disaster.

As part of the overall recovery strategy, the PA program provides immediate assistance to local governments through debris removal operations. For example, the Expedited Debris Removal Program used geospatial imagery provided by the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency to make rapid assessments and identify the areas with the most catastrophic damage in order to expedite the removal of debris.

In Mississippi, Alabama, and Missouri, local governments volunteered to participate in the expedited debris removal program in response to the recent disasters. Supported by a 90 percent federal cost share, this program allowed communities to use their municipal funds for other recovery needs.

As part of the PA program, FEMA also funds the construction of other temporary facilities like schools, enabling communities to quickly restore critical public

infrastructure. Following the severe storms in the south, FEMA evaluated and expanded the funding of these temporary facilities to include the construction of safe rooms in schools.

National Disaster Recovery

As part of the National Response Framework, FEMA has recognized that recovery needs to begin immediately following a disaster. During response operations, FEMA will align with other federal agencies, such as Housing and Urban Development and the Small Business Administration, to begin to scope the recovery challenges.

The Emergency Support Function (ESF) #14 – Long-Term Community Recovery program provides a mechanism for coordinating Federal support to State, Tribal, regional, and local governments, NGOs, and the private sector to enable a community to recover from the long-term consequences of a disaster. This is accomplished through ESF #14 by identifying and facilitating the availability and use of sources of recovery funding, and providing technical assistance (such as impact analyses) for community recovery. Community recovery efforts build resilience by restoring infrastructure, housing, the agricultural industry, natural resources, community well-being, and the local economy, also contributing to mitigation of future impacts.

The federal government plays a critical role in supporting disaster recovery by providing local officials with expert technical assistance – particularly with regard to including all sectors of the community in the planning process – and with well coordinated information about the full range of assistance available. States act in support

of their communities, evaluate their capabilities and provide a means of support for local governments.

In preparation for the release of the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) and in response to the severe storms in the south, FEMA began to pilot many of the key concepts in the NDRF, such as the utilization of a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC). A FDRC deploys in large scale and catastrophic events when it is determined that significant interagency resource coordination, technical assistance and expertise of participating federal agencies is necessary. FDRC's work under the authority of the Federal Coordinating Officer, but are solely focused on assisting the community rebuild and recover. FEMA will continue to work with our local partners to ensure that communities receive assistance as quickly as possible and begin rebuilding efforts immediately.

Conclusion

Pre-disaster preparedness and mitigation are critical to recovery and resilience-building. Additionally, timely decisions can significantly reduce recovery time and cost. Therefore, it is important that all members of the team understand their role in disaster response and recovery and to begin to prepare for disasters before they occur.

Recovery is one of the most vital and sustained phases of the emergency management cycle. Coupled with pre-disaster planning and mitigation techniques, it can also be one of the most rewarding and positive phases following a disaster. FEMA remains committed to assisting our local, State, and Tribal partners in the aftermath of a disaster along with our partners in the private sector and voluntary agencies.

Thank you, Chairman Denham, Ranking Member Norton, and members of the Subcommittee. We look forward to working with the subcommittee as we continue to prepare for the recovery needs of the future.

I would be happy to answer any of your questions.