

To Our Reservists:

Your work as a Disaster Assistance Employee is vital to FEMA's mission. In recognition of this, Administrator Paulison has taken a number of steps to acknowledge your past, present and future role with the agency and to follow through with actions to implement FEMA's Strategic Plan.

Recognition comes first by way of an office and program built solely around the unique needs of a geographically dispersed reservist force. The newly established Disaster Reserve Workforce Division (DRWD) is now in place, albeit not fully staffed, to provide consistent standards of support, training and deployment for you – the Reservist.

FEMA cannot successfully accomplish its disaster response and recovery mission without its reserve workforce. In the agency's strategic plan, one of Administrator Paulison's stated goals – "FEMA invests in people and people invest in FEMA to ensure mission success" – speaks directly to you. "These investments bring returns through a dedicated, motivated, resolute, and professional workforce that is fully prepared and capable of accomplishing FEMA's mission."

While some workforce enhancements require time to implement, I can assure you that we have enthusiastically started that journey. Repeatedly you have told me that we need to communicate with you more often and provide you more and better information. Some of the immediate communications improvements you will see include:

- An email in-box so that you can "talk" to DRWD at your convenience. The box is monitored daily, so that responses are timely. Send your comments to us at: FEMA-DRWD-Program@dhs.gov.
- A DRWD web portal will provide you access, *regardless of your deployment status*, to information for the entire reserve workforce and information tailored to cadres and regions. This portal will allow us to continuously share information with you so that you are aware of changes before your next deployment. This letter has been personalized and mailed to each of you with your individual user name and password. Use your personalized information to access the new secure portal via the public internet at: <https://portal.fema.gov>
- The *On-Call* newsletter, formerly produced and distributed through External Affairs, has been expanded to "speak" to all cadres. We will publish this on-line newsletter bimonthly. You can access it through the DRWD web portal via your home computer, and within the FEMA firewall. Issues are also available at <http://www.fema.gov/pao/daeinfo.shtm>.

The status of other DRWD initiatives underway to help us meet mission include:

- A Web-enabled version of the Automated Deployment Database (ADD) system will allow you the option of checking in and out of a Joint Field Office (JFO) through online.fema.net, as well as to update your emergency contact information. This new application is in its final testing stage.
- Job specific task books are being field tested in JFOs. Learn more about them at: <http://www.learningservices.us/FEMA/TaskBooks>.
- Consistent credentialing plans are being established for each position and will be phased in for all cadres.
- An advisory group, which includes Reservists, is being established to provide me with input and recommendations on reserve workforce transformation.
- Policies and implementing instructions are in development to allow sick leave and paid administrative/holiday leave for the reserve workforce.

Know that we are moving forward in other areas as well: we are aggressively pursuing a legislative proposal that will allow you access to health insurance and retirement benefits, and that will eliminate the offset to salary for retired FEMA annuitants. We are also pursuing authorities and funding to ensure annual reserve training, and crafting policies to provide equitable access to training for all Reservists. If we are successful, these benefits will become available to you within the next two years.

During my 25-plus years with FEMA, I have witnessed your dedication to FEMA's mission and to our country; so, when I was asked to accept the responsibility of implementing and institutionalizing functional and holistic changes for our reserve workforce, I proudly accepted.

I say to you now, quite simply, that the value you bring to FEMA, and ultimately to the American public, *is* greatly appreciated.

This is the first of many thanks to you.

Donna M. Dannels, Director
Disaster Reserve Workforce Division

Enclosures: Administrator Paulison Memo
DRWD Frequently Asked Questions
May Issue of On Call – Reservists' News