



FEMA

On Call

Disaster Reserve Workforce News



8/13/08 Lunchtime teleconference “Legislative Process 101” (Panel: left to right) Anna Marie Baca, Office of the Chief Counsel; Donna M. Dannels, Disaster Reserve Workforce Division Director; and Pamela Williams, Acting Director Office of Legislative Affairs. The teleconference offered an opportunity for the disaster workforce to listen, to learn and to ask questions about laws – past, present, and future - governing FEMA’s disaster operations. DRWD’s July issue of *On Call* featured “It Takes an Act of Congress: How a FEMA Proposal Becomes Law.” The following concludes DRWD’s series on the legislative process.

History of Disaster Legislation

Anna Marie Baca, Office of Chief Counsel

Prior to September 30, 1950, Congress funded disaster recovery on an incident-by-incident basis. The inefficiency and inconsistencies of passing an individual law every time a community was in distress prompted Congress to enact the Federal Disaster Relief Program.

The Federal Disaster Relief Program was not intended to supersede existing State relief programs, but was created to “provide an orderly and continuing means of assistance by the Federal Government to States and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to alleviate suffering and damage resulting from major disasters,” and was designed to “supplement the efforts and available resources of

States and local governments.” The Federal Disaster Relief Program of 1950 only authorized the Federal government to assist local and State governments in disaster *response* efforts.

Realizing that reestablishment of the community was often outside of the scope of the local government’s abilities, Congress passed the Disaster Relief Act of 1966 to update existing legislation and expand Federal assistance into the *recovery* arena.

President Jimmy Carter created FEMA by Executive Order on March 31, 1979. On July 15, 1979, President Carter then transferred all the disaster related statutory authority that had been vested in the Presidency, or in other Federal agencies, to FEMA.

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Credentialing Plans ... for one and all ...

By Crystal Payton, R7 DAE

A Credentialing Plan Review Team (CPRT) convened in Washington, DC, and on the Web via data-sharing, July 24 to provide input on the development and implementation of a plan aimed at credentialing the disaster workforce. CPRT is a 12-person team – drawn from across cadres and full time and Reserve forces – tasked with providing input and recommendations to the Executive Credentialing Committee (ECC) for review and guidance.

Results of this first ‘gathering’ were presented to the ECC on July 31. The first big question addressed: what actually is the ‘disaster workforce’? For the purposes of the Credentialing Plan, the planning team and the ECC agreed that the credentialing requirements would apply to ALL individuals who fill positions at a disaster operation – the disaster workforce – be they DAE, CORE, or PFT employees. The team identified the top issues to address

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The Administrator's Corner



Administrator
R. David Paulison

*Business
As
Usual*

Over the past three years, FEMA has implemented numerous reforms. This is a New FEMA that is stronger, more robust and more nimble than it was in the past. These reforms will continue to move forward throughout the transition of Administration that will occur this winter.

We have a robust transition plan in place. The initial focus has been on filling career deputy slots with experienced and qualified people who will be ready to "hold down the fort." I have named one of our career Regional Administrators, Nancy Ward, to serve as our Senior Career Transition Officer in the event that a new Administrator is not in place at the time of official transition.

We are working across FEMA's components and Regions to develop simple, useful, and uniform means to transfer knowledge, experiences, and lessons learned to the new leadership.

FEMA and our Disaster Reserve Workforce must be prepared to help those in need. A well-managed transition will ensure that the right people are in place to make sure we are all ready to answer the call.

Letter from Donna M. Dannels, DRWD Director

To our Reservists,

We continue to reach out with many hands to open the multiple doors that will take us to a stronger and more consistently effective Disaster Reserve Workforce. Behind one such door are two initiatives running parallel in design and development to ensure consistent standards of job skill proficiency and qualifications for anyone serving in a Joint Field Office (JFO) position, including local hires, Reservists, COREs and PFTs: the Position Task Books and the Credentialing Plans.

The Position Task Book Project has roots in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the idea to create job guides *similar* to those used in the Incident Command System (ICS) for local responders. FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) initiated data collection for the project from 2004 to 2008, producing NIMS-compliant task books and accompanying assessment guides that were introduced in JFOs for pilot testing in 2007. The task books are the foundation on which the partner credentialing element is constructed.

The credentialing plans will be the cornerstone of our workforce transformation. This initiative grew out of requirements dictated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5. DRWD's Readiness Branch is leading the Credentialing initiative.

While Task Books have

been pilot-tested and are in limited use in the JFO setting, full official implementation will be coordinated with the Credentialing Plans initiative. Eventually the two initiatives will converge simultaneously in JFOs as credentialing requirements are implemented for each cadre nationwide. The credentialing plans will help identify gaps in the training curriculum, offer Reservists an objective set of advancement qualifications, provide cadre managers a standard qualifications tracking mechanism for each cadre member and, ultimately, help drive priorities for workforce success.

In the interim, the final development of the Credentialing Plans is supported by a Credentialing Plans Review Team (CPRT) - all subject matter experts from headquarters, regions, cadres, EMI and the Reserve workforce - and an Executive Credentialing Committee (ECC) to review CPRT recommendations and make recommendations to me. The ECC is chaired by Mary Lynne Miller, the Deputy Administrator for Region IV. See the "Credentialing" article on page one of this issue for more about these teams.

I look forward to sharing details of this project with you as this transformation continues.



Donna M. Dannels,
DRWD Director

DRWD Welcomes!



*S. Layne Smith, Branch Chief
Program Management*

Mr. Smith grew up in Arkansas, and entered the U.S. Navy after graduation from the University of Arkansas. As a Naval Aviator, he has served in a variety of assignments, including several in Navy Reserve Operations and Administration. He was instrumental in the integration of the Navy's Reserve component with the active duty Navy, achieving equity in benefits and operational opportunities.

After retiring from the Navy, Smith ran a non-profit that focused on identifying and resolving issues in care and support of returning combat warriors.

A career in the Navy set the physical bar for his civilian life. He states that since his military retirement, he makes every attempt to run at least three days a week to stay physically and mentally fit. "Part of the responsibility of your job in the Navy is to be in shape, and that has stayed with me."

Layne Smith joined FEMA in July of this year as DRWD's Program Management Branch Chief. He states that his goal for the Branch is to develop policies, develop systems and secure resources to enable a professional Reserve Workforce that is ready to respond to any national disaster.

Disaster Legislation

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Under Executive Order 12148, FEMA absorbed "functions from the Departments of Defense (civil defense) and Housing and Urban Development (federal disaster assistance), [the] General Services Administration (federal preparedness), and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (earthquake hazards reduction)." These programs include some that were created to provide civil defense from malicious attacks against the homeland. Executive Orders 12127 and 12148, therefore, consolidated authority for both manmade and natural disaster preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery within a single federal agency.

With concern about the use of the disaster authority for responding to non-major disasters, Congress undertook a comprehensive study and review of its disaster programs, and subsequently passed the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 ("Stafford Act").

The Stafford Act, still the major legislation under which FEMA operates today, provides a framework for continued disaster relief.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 was passed on November 25, 2002, to restructure various aspects of the Federal government following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Stemming from the Homeland Security Act was the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) - a consolidation of many different

existing agencies, specifically those with aspects devoted to combating terrorism. FEMA was incorporated into DHS due to its mission to respond to disasters in the United States, regardless of their cause.

Following the deficiencies in the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina, on October 4, 2006, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 ("PKEMRA") was passed. PKEMRA overhauled the government's approach to managing preparedness at the federal level.

Disaster legislation is not just for people. Two days after the adoption of PKEMRA, Congress passed the Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act ("PETS Act"). This Act mandates that FEMA's preparedness plans "take into account the needs of individuals with pets and service animals prior to, during, and following a major disaster or emergency."

The legislative genealogy of FEMA is very much alive. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee recently reported a bill, HR 6658, which included Sec. 103, a provision to allow disaster Reservists access to the same health care system available to full-time FEMA employees. Currently this bill awaits consideration by the full House after the summer recess. This is exciting news for Reservists, but keep in mind that the road from proposal to the required Presidential signature is often long and rocky.

that will drive the process to a well-integrated, comprehensive credentialing program that measures all employees by the same standards, and ultimately allows Reservists to play a more significant role in their own professional development.

The pace is aggressive, with the pilot plan rollout for five cadres this fall: Public Affairs, Community Relations; Congressional, Security, and the Disaster Field Training Office.

The “Transition Survey” Team Says . . .

Your support and contribution to FEMA’s administration transition activities is critical to the Agency’s success. Therefore, we would like to establish a regular dialogue with you on this topic.

In August, we distributed a survey to employees FEMA-wide to better understand your thoughts and ideas on the transition to ensure we fully address your questions and concerns; this will allow us to seamlessly execute our mission throughout the transition period.

We received more than 1,500 responses to the survey and plan to use the feedback to design outreach activities to keep you informed about the administration transition.

You will soon see more frequent communications about the transition with a particular focus on the issues you identified in the survey.

If you have questions, please send them to FEMA_Communications@fema.gov.

Program Management Branch

A Look at “Conditions of Employment” (COE)

Layne Smith, Branch Chief

A key function of the Program Management Branch within the Disaster Reserve Workforce Division (DRWD) is reviewing, updating and establishing policies and procedures that will enable Reservists to better meet the FEMA mission while improving standardization, training and career advancement opportunities for Reservists.

FEMA’s ability to communicate clear and understandable policies and expectations to you enables you to successfully meet your responsibilities and obligations to the agency. Understanding and acknowledging those expectations is critical to rewarding participation and progression as a Disaster Reservist.

You may recall first seeing your obligations expressed in writing when you read, signed and returned the Conditions of Employment (COE) document. The COE describes the various appointment types and the

obligations you have as a Stafford Act Employee. Its goal is to ensure you understand your role in the FEMA organization.

While the current COE is explicit in its description of your responsibilities, DRWD is looking at reissuing it as a COE applicable to Reservists only, to not only convey your obligations but also reflect our efforts to improve communication and our awareness of the contributions you make to the mission.

DRWD wants to ensure you have confidence in the fact that, as a Reservist, you are a valued team member and that FEMA wants your affiliation to be meaningful, productive and long lasting.

After agency approval, the updated COE will become part of the new-hire package and will be available for you to review, sign and submit for inclusion in your personnel file following your reappointment.

Attention DRWD Web Portal Users!

DAE Edie Gilligan Rosen recently visited our web portal site at <https://portal.fema.gov>, fully expecting to see new and fresh information. She was dismayed by what she saw: content that was months old. Concerned, Edie emailed us at FEMA-DRWD-Program@dhs.gov and asked, “What’s up with this?” Upon investigation, it was discovered that while new content submitted was visible to us, it was not visible to those of you who connect through the portal outside the firewall. Because of Edie’s email to us, the problem was diagnosed and remedied within a matter of a few hours. Thank you Edie!

Sincere apologies to our Disaster Reserve Workforce!



External Affairs

CR and the Farmer

by Russ Edmoston, HQ EA DAE

Two FEMA Community Relations Field Specialists recently approached a Butler County, Iowa, farm house to see if the inhabitants needed help to recover from possible flooding or tornadoes that devastated the state in May and June.

The farm owner, fresh from an exercise run and dressed in shorts and T-shirt, asked several questions about what FEMA was doing in the state, what help is available and what the two were doing in the area. The CR specialists politely answered the questions to the best of their abilities. The farm owner thanked the CR specialists for the visit and the CR specialists went on to the next household.

Just a typical day in the life of a CR specialist doing one-on-one visits with households in declared counties. Except in this case the farm owner was a bit atypical. The farm owner was Senator Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa.

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Are you Planning a Trip Out of the Country?

DHS/FEMA has travel security measures for those of you planning foreign travel! All employees should call their servicing security officer prior to departure. For DAE/Reservists that contact is Agency Information Security Specialist Gene Griffe at 202-646-1350.



(From Left:) Chris Grosso, Alice Clark, Paul Nichols, Jennifer Thompson, Tara Arthur, Spencer Wilkins, Kim Murphy, Dottie Firestone, Bob Mongold, Mike Melnyk, Butch Gates, Josh Franz, Kathy Martin
Photo: Mary Pellegrino, MWEOC

Failure to Respond When "Available"

The above "faces you never see" want you to know about a domino effect that can occur during times of rapid deployments. Here's the lineup:

Often a Deployment Specialist will not reach an employee through the contact number/s during the first callout, and must leave a voicemail message (or several) for the employee to call the Deployment Branch at 888-853-9648. If the request quota is filled before the employee returns the call, the employee names go into a "callback required" queue in ADD. They then are still available to be candidates on another deployment request. When this happens, the Deployment Specialist must make another call to take the employee off alert and resolve the system record. When large quotas are needed for a particular job title, subsequent standard requests are created to meet the number required. Employees at the top of the callout list who do not answer their phones or respond to Deployment voicemail messages come up repeatedly on consecutive deployment requests. They are left multiple messages and are

responsible for a flood of "take off alert" efforts by Deployment Specialists. By not responding, these employees are technically "NOT Available," contrary to the ADD deployment status indicated. "Failure to respond" notices are forwarded to the employee's Cadre Manager.

A small number of employees falsely showing as available absorb the efforts of many Deployment Specialists. In less than a week, six employees with status of "Available," who failed to answer their phones, were responsible for more than 50 non-productive attempts at contact.

For DAEs, a telephone is the path to employment. Make sure that your deployment status accurately reflects your availability, that your phone numbers are correct in ADD, and that you promptly respond to voice mails from 888-853-9648.

Failure to respond delays the processing of candidates who are truly available, which delays staffing the JFO, which hinders implementing programs, which slows delivery of services in the stricken communities, which. . . you get the picture: a domino effect!

CR and the Farmer

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Sen. Grassley went on local radio later. During the interview he mentioned the visitors he had to his farm. He spoke highly of the polite and informative way the CR specialists responded to his questions. He also was impressed that FEMA would reach out to Iowans this way.

While the visit in this case may be atypical, there is nothing atypical in the way FEMA CR specialists dealt with the farm house visit.

It does not matter how high nor how low one's estate. CR treats all with caring, empathetic respect, dignity and professionalism. And, Sen. Grassley's radio comments give credence to that truism.

Your Travel Matters

If by Air . . .

Airlines now charge additional baggage fees. The maximum amount that FEMA will reimburse for *personal* excess baggage is \$125. A receipt for any amount expended must be provided with the travel voucher. Baggage solely containing FEMA *equipment* is reimbursed at the full rate.

If by Land . . .

The privately owned vehicle (POV) rate increased from 0.505 to 0.585 per mile on August 1, 2008.

Questions?

Call . . . 202-646-3179 or
202-646-2983

Questions about the status of your travel voucher? Call the Travel Helpline @ 800-310-3169.

Touches From Home

By Sharon Sanders, R5 CR DAE

It was a dark and stormy morning at the Joint Field Office (JFO) in Indianapolis. After the *required* ID flash-greeting to the security guard, I shook off the rain and headed straight to the break room for the *required* cup of coffee. I thought I had the break room all to myself - until I heard a familiar tune drifting through the air - - that great little song from our childhood....



R9 DAE Julian Ramiu proudly shows off photos of his son Photo: Sharon Sanders

... A B C D ♪ .. E F G ♪ ...
H I J K ♪ ... L M N O P ♪

There, huddled in the corner with a cell phone to his ear, was a big, burly logistics guy singing the ABC song to his young grandson.

This poignant moment got me thinking about family and home as I wandered through the JFO saying hello and good morning to my fellow FEM-ites.

On Maria's desk was a beautiful

bouquet of fresh flowers sent by her husband for their 42nd anniversary; further down was Julian's cubicle with photos of his son pinned to the fabric of his dividing wall; at the senior staff meeting we closed with the "happy birthday" song for the

FCO and cake all around; and then there was Jim, wearing his silk-screened T-shirt with a picture of his golden-doodle dog, "Simon".

Later that day

Mary gave us all a show-and-tell of the ruby slippers she was sending home to her grandbaby, and Steve was heading back to his hotel room to assist his son with homework via instant messaging.

It's these little things, "these touches from home," that cheer the heart and put those 12-hour days, seasoned with large doses of high-stress and looming deadlines, in their proper perspective.

Useful Sites

DRWD latest news, current FAQs and more: Enter your user name and password at <https://portal.fema.gov>

EMI Online Independent Study Courses: <http://training.fema.gov/IS/>

Disaster Workforce Task Books & Online Assessment guides: <http://www.learningservices.us/FEMA/TaskBooks/>

External Affairs Initiatives and Activities: www.fema.gov/pao/daeinfo.shtm

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