

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE
THE

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Ready and Resilient?
Examining Federal Emergency Preparedness and Response Capabilities

Submitted
By

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Introduction

Chairman McSally, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of this distinguished Subcommittee, my name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss FEMA's preparedness and response efforts post Hurricane Katrina.

As you are aware, this year marked the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The widespread devastation of Katrina affected millions of people along the central Gulf Coast of the United States, and exposed the nation's vulnerabilities in how we prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate disasters. However, over the last decade, with the support of Congress and the additional authorities provided, including the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA) and the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 (SRIA), FEMA continues to significantly improve the way we respond to disasters so that communities are able to recover as quickly as possible and build back safer and more resilient in the long-term.

There is a shared recognition that FEMA cannot only plan for events we are capable of responding to; rather, we must plan for catastrophic events that will overwhelm capabilities at all levels of the government and private sector and challenge even the most scalable structures and systems. Further, we must constantly enhance preparedness, test systems, and exercise capabilities so we can support the whole community following a catastrophic event. Our systems and capabilities must be designed so that we are able to execute the mission whenever and wherever needed, including in austere conditions.

We continue to work collaboratively with our stakeholders, across the whole community, to ensure our nation is better prepared for current and future risks. By helping to build the capacity and capabilities of our state, local, tribal, and territorial partners, we are empowering communities and citizens across the nation – which, I believe, will have a far greater impact than the federal government alone ever will.

In my testimony today, I hope to highlight some of the ways in which our agency is transforming into a better prepared, more survivor-centric agency that is capable of effectively responding to catastrophic disasters.

Leaning Forward

Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA)

The importance of PKEMRA cannot be overstated, and we are grateful to Congress for the additional authorities this legislation provided FEMA to become an even more effective agency in carrying out its mission. PKEMRA was enacted, at least in part, due to challenges identified during FEMA's response to Hurricane Katrina. As clearly demonstrated before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina, FEMA needed additional, more robust authorities to lean forward as a federal agency.

PKEMRA provided FEMA clearer guidance on its responsibilities and priorities, and the authorities and tools we needed to become a better partner to our state, local, tribal, and territorial governments. PKEMRA required several major changes and established FEMA's place within DHS. First, PKEMRA consolidated many of the responsibilities of DHS's Preparedness Directorate under FEMA, returning programs that had been removed, as well as adding significant new authorities and new training, exercise and grant programs. This has enabled greater unity of effort for national preparedness across the entire Department.

Additionally, existing activities were reorganized to form FEMA's Response, Recovery and Logistics Management Directorates to better focus response and recovery efforts. PKEMRA also provided us the authority to establish a Private Sector Office to better foster cooperation with businesses and nonprofit organizations. And notably, PKEMRA allowed FEMA to add a disability coordinator position to expand capacity to address the needs of individuals with access and functional needs.

In addition, in 2008, FEMA led the development of the National Response Framework (NRF), which replaced the National Response Plan of 2004 and the Federal Response Plan of 1992. And as this subcommittee is aware, the NRF was revised in 2013, incorporating, among other things, a focus on the whole community and core capabilities.

PKEMRA also called for the establishment of “a Surge Capacity Force for deployment of individuals to respond to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters, including catastrophic incidents.” The Surge Capacity Force (SCF) provides the ability to rapidly expand and supplement FEMA’s incident workforce with employees from other federal agencies in a catastrophic event.

The SCF activated for the first time in November 2012, deploying 1,210 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) personnel, including 78 FEMA support staff, to provide assistance to Hurricane Sandy survivors in New York.

The most important measure of the success of the SCF during Sandy response and recovery efforts is the quantity and quality of assistance provided to survivors in the aftermath of Sandy. SCF volunteers were crucial to the success of federal response and recovery activities. At the height of the deployment, SCF personnel accounted for approximately 35 percent of the community relations teams in New York. These SCF volunteers were often the first source of help and information to reach survivors.

Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013 (SRIA)

In January 2013, Congress passed, and President Obama signed, the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act, or “SRIA”, into law, authorizing several significant changes to the way FEMA delivers disaster assistance. SRIA is one of the most significant pieces of legislation impacting disaster response and recovery since PKEMRA and builds upon the Robert T. Stafford Emergency Relief and Disaster Assistance Act.

SRIA, and the additional authorities it provides, is aiding recovery efforts associated with recent disasters such as Hurricane Sandy and the floods that impacted the states of Colorado and South Carolina. SRIA’s various provisions are intended to improve the efficacy and availability of FEMA disaster assistance, making the most cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars. Most notably, SRIA directs FEMA to provide more objective criteria for evaluating the need for assistance to individuals, to clarify the threshold for eligibility, and to speed a declaration of a major disaster or emergency under the Stafford Act.

One clear example of SRIA’s effective use of taxpayer dollars is the *Public Assistance*

Permanent Work Alternative Procedure provision that provides substantially greater flexibility in use of federal funds for Public Assistance applicants and far less administrative burden and costs for all parties – if applicants accept grants based on fixed, capped estimates. To date, FEMA is funding billions in *Public Assistance Permanent Work Alternative Procedure* projects in states such as New York and Louisiana.

Preparing Our Nation for Future Risks

The Administration remains steadfastly committed to strengthening the security and resilience of the United States by systematically preparing for the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the security of our nation. In the future, when we respond to events like Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy and the floods we've seen this month in South Carolina, it will not just be FEMA on the ground supporting survivors. Our partners from across government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations are right there with us; every day citizens are right there with us helping their neighbors.

After the changes ushered in following PKEMRA, FEMA—in coordination with its partners across the whole community—developed the National Preparedness System. As we continue to develop and strengthen the National Preparedness System, we recognize this collective effort – that everyone from the individual to the first responder to me – has a role to play in preparing the Nation. With so many people involved and so much at stake, it is important to establish a common goal.

This all-of-Nation approach to preparedness, ushered in by PKEMRA, is re-enforced in Presidential Policy Directive (PPD)-8: National Preparedness. In PPD-8, the President called for greater integration and a shared understanding for addressing threats and hazards across all mission areas – prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery – in order to make the most effective use of the Nation's limited resources and to achieve unity of effort. PPD-8 has several parts, some FEMA already completed with its partners and others which are on-going. PPD-8 has five key parts: the National Preparedness Goal, the National Preparedness System, the National Planning Frameworks and Federal Interagency Operational Plans, the National Preparedness Report, and a Campaign to Build and Sustain Preparedness. All five parts are interrelated. The National Preparedness Goal defines the end we wish to achieve in preparedness; the National Preparedness System describes the tools and programs to achieve the Goal; the five

National Planning Frameworks and Federal Interagency Operational Plans describe how we deliver and use the capabilities developed through the System; the National Preparedness Report provides the annual progress of how we are doing in achieving the Goal; and lastly the Campaign to Build and Sustain Preparedness focuses on public outreach, community-based and private-sector programs to enhance national resilience, as well as organize national research and development efforts on preparedness.

National Preparedness Goal

The National Preparedness Goal (the Goal), is the cornerstone of the National Preparedness System. FEMA released the first edition of the Goal in October 2011; and, just this month, FEMA and its partners released the second edition of the Goal. The Goal describes a vision for preparedness nationwide and identifies the core capabilities necessary to achieve that vision across the five mission areas.

Our goal itself is succinct and remains unchanged: *“A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk.”*

The second edition of the Goal represents a refresh from the 2011 version and incorporates critical edits identified through real world events, lessons learned, and continuing implementation of the National Preparedness System. Some noteworthy examples of these edits include the expanded inclusion of cybersecurity considerations, the addition of a new core capability for response (Fire Management and Suppression), and the emphasis to include innovations from science and technology advances. The updated Goal identifies 32 distinct activities, called core capabilities, which are needed to address our greatest risks. The core capabilities serve as preparedness tools and provide a common language for preparedness activities. The National Preparedness Goal defines where we want to be as a Nation. To achieve the goal of a secure and resilient Nation, FEMA and its partners are building the guidance, programs, processes, and systems that support each component of the National Preparedness System.

The National Preparedness System begins with identifying and assessing risk and estimating capability requirements. One of the key programs developed under the System is the Threat and

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA). The THIRA process helps communities identify threats and hazards and determine capability targets and resource requirements necessary to address anticipated and unanticipated risks. Our state partners then assess their currently capability levels against their THIRA targets in the State Preparedness Report (SPR). Once each jurisdiction has determined capability targets through the THIRA process, the jurisdiction estimates its current capability levels against those targets in its SPR. The SPR is an annual self-assessment of state preparedness based on the targets set in the THIRAs. PKEMRA requires an SPR from any state or territory receiving Federal preparedness assistance administered by DHS.

Taken together, the THIRA and SPR support the National Preparedness System by helping to identify state and territorial preparedness capability levels and gaps. States, territories, and the Federal Government use this information to help make programmatic decisions to build and sustain capabilities, plan to deliver capabilities, and validate capabilities. States and territories submit their THIRA and SPR annually to FEMA. The summary results are published in the annual National Preparedness Report. Additionally, FEMA shares THIRA and SPR data across the Federal Government and uses the results to guide strategic direction for programs that help states close preparedness capability gaps.

The next component of the National Preparedness System is to build and sustain critical capabilities at all levels. FEMA's preparedness grant programs have contributed significantly to the overall security and preparedness of the Nation. We are more secure and better prepared to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the full range of threats and hazards the Nation faces than we have been at any time in our history. As a Nation, we plan better, organize better, equip better, train better, and exercise better, resulting in improved national preparedness and resilience.

Much of this progress has come from leadership at the State and local levels, fueled by FEMA's grant programs. Over the past twelve years, Congress, through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has provided State, territorial, local and tribal governments with more than \$36 billion. We have enabled States and local communities to build and enhance capabilities by acquiring needed equipment, funding, training opportunities, developing preparedness and response plans, exercising and building relationships across city, county, and State lines.

Although Federal funds represent just a fraction of what has been spent on homeland security across the Nation overall, these funds have helped to shift towards a culture of preparedness in the United States. Response and recovery efforts from Hurricane Sandy and countless other recent events bear witness to the improved capabilities that preparedness grants have supported.

Because grantees must link grant investments to capability gaps or requirements they have identified for the core capabilities as part of the THIRA and SPR, we can measure grantees' implementation of the System and annual progress in meeting the goals they have established for each of the core capabilities in the Goal.

To build leadership and capacity in States and communities, FEMA has continued America's Preparathon!, the successful grassroots campaign for action to increase community preparedness and resilience with the second annual national day of action aligned with the culmination of National Preparedness Month in September. Thanks to the National Preparedness Month Congressional Co-Chairs, including Chairman McSally, Ranking Member Payne, and other Members of this distinguished Subcommittee for the continued commitment and leadership of this important educational campaign.

This year, more than 23 million participants throughout the United States and Territories have been registered to take action to prepare for disasters through America's Prepareathon! and its partners. As part of America's Prepareathon!, states, tribes, cities and counties across the country planned community-wide events bringing together schools, the business community, city government, faith leaders, hospitals, individuals and families, and others to participate in community-wide preparedness drills and activities for hazards that are relevant to their area. America's Prepareathon! works to build a more resilient Nation by increasing the number of individuals who understand which disasters could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

In addition, FEMA continues to improve adoption, performance and accessibility of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). IPAWS is a collection of standards and technologies for emergency alert systems. In 2014, FEMA worked with Federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal alerting authorities to extend the Integrated Public Alert and Warning

System to 49 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Over 400 distinct emergency response entities have become alerting authorities. Since June 2012, the National Weather Service has used the system to distribute more than 11,000 imminent weather threat warnings, notifying citizens of tornados, flash floods, dust storms, and other extreme weather events

In addition to building and sustaining capabilities, we are working hard to plan for delivering capabilities. FEMA continues to coordinate with partners across the Nation through a unified approach and common terminology to plan for all-threats and hazards and across all mission areas of Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response and Recovery.

National Planning Frameworks

In 2013, FEMA published the National Planning Frameworks, setting the strategy and doctrine for building, sustaining, and delivering the core capabilities identified in the Goal. By describing the coordinating structures and alignment of key roles and responsibilities for the whole community across all mission areas, the Frameworks foster a shared understanding of our roles and responsibilities from the fire house to the White House. They help us understand how we, as a nation, coordinate, share information and work together—which ultimately results in a more secure and resilient nation.

Building on the National Planning Frameworks, FEMA coordinated with its Department and Agency partners, the development of the Federal Interagency Operational Plans (FIOPs) for Prevention, Mitigation, Response and Recovery mission areas. The FIOPs define how the Federal government delivers core capabilities for the each mission area. Specifically, each FIOP describes the concept of operations for integrating and synchronizing existing Federal capabilities to support state, local, tribal, territorial, insular area, and Federal plans, and is supported by Federal department-level operational plans, where appropriate.

Currently, FEMA is coordinating efforts to refresh the National Planning Frameworks and the FIOPs. The updates account for changes in policy and legislation since they were last published, consistent formatting across all mission areas, critical edits from real world events, and lessons

learned. FEMA is also working with DHS' National Protection and Programs Directorate to finalize the FIOP for the Protection mission area.

National Preparedness Report (NPR)

The 2015 NPR is the fourth iteration of this annual report. This year's report places particular emphasis on highlighting preparedness progress in implementing the *National Planning* across the five mission areas and 6 overarching findings focused on national-level trends.

The 2015 NPR found that the Nation continues to make progress building preparedness in key core capabilities including: Environmental Response/Health and Safety, Intelligence and Information Sharing, and Operational Coordination. Along with the five core capabilities identified from last year including Interdiction and Disruption, On-scene Security and Protection, Operational Communications, Public and Private Services and Resources, and Public Health and Medical Services, these eight core capabilities represent areas in which the Nation has developed acceptable levels of performance for critical tasks, but which face potential performance declines if not maintained and updated to address new challenges.

Yet challenges remain. The 2015 NPR also identified six core capabilities as areas for improvement. Cybersecurity, Housing, Infrastructure Systems, and Long-term Vulnerability Reduction have remained national areas for improvement for four consecutive years, and Economic Recovery reemerged as an area for improvement from the 2012 and 2013 National Preparedness Reports. Access Control and Identity Verification is a newly identified national area for improvement.

Additionally, the NPR confirmed that recent events, including the epidemic of the Ebola virus, highlighted challenges that remain in addressing non-Stafford Act events – despite the NRF always being in effect. These complex events have taken place over extended periods of time and often across large geographic areas, with uncertainty surrounding the role of existing coordination structures and authorities for multi-agency activity for non-Stafford Act events.

The strengths and areas for improvement in the NPR will be used to inform planning efforts, focus priorities for Federal grants, and enable informed collaboration among stakeholders working together to improve the nation's preparedness. Continually reviewing and updating the

implementation of the National Preparedness System ensures that we continue to improve our capabilities and together become a more resilient nation.

Transforming our Response Efforts Post Katrina

Improvements within FEMA's Incident Management Assistance Teams

After Hurricane Katrina, Congress required the establishment of “Emergency Support and Response Teams” that would address deficiencies revealed by the Katrina response. In accordance with these requirements and lessons learned from other major incidents, FEMA formally established the Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) program in 2009. By 2011, FEMA designated three National and 13 Regional IMATs. Following lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy, FEMA undertook a pilot project to restructure the IMATs. Here, FEMA's primary goal was to increase team capability by integrating more FEMA programs and interagency partners, and establishing a robust training and performance system. Today, FEMA's IMATs better reflect the core capabilities required by the National Response and Recovery Frameworks, and include personnel who are accountable for coordinating the Federal response regardless of type of incident.

Developed hurricane-specific plans in FEMA Regions IV and VI with our partners

In 2014, in coordination with our regional stakeholders, FEMA Region IV – Atlanta, Georgia – completed a hurricane annex to its all-hazards base plan. This plan includes a number of best practices, such as: the publication of a resource phasing plan; identification of staging areas; an introduction of modeling for each state; and linkages to preparedness activities like exercises. In 2013, FEMA Region VI – Denton, Texas – published an all-hazards base plan that focused on a hurricane scenario. Since then, the Region conducts an annual update prior to hurricane season and then exercises the plan in a multi-state tabletop exercise. Region VI also has a dedicated planner for each of its hurricane-prone states to better respond to, and rapidly conduct, crisis action planning for hurricanes or any other threats.

State, local, tribal, and interagency integration

Through the deliberate planning efforts described above, state, local, and tribal partners have been core team members responsible for providing input and authorship of the catastrophic

plans. This can be seen in how each state has an annex in the Region IV and VII (Kansas City, Missouri) plans. These state annexes are developed jointly between FEMA and the state and establish joint priorities between the state and federal government and identify all state and federal assets available to provide response core capabilities as well as many other resources for local and other whole community partners.

At both the national and regional levels, FEMA is working with tribes to develop more robust plans and annexes that recognize the tribal role in the whole community continuum of response and recovery. The annex will apply to all federal departments and agencies working under the NRF in response to incidents requiring federal coordination, including incidents involving federally recognized tribes whether the tribe requested and received a Presidential declaration on its own, or chose to be included under a state declaration.

There is now a greater level of understanding of local threat characteristics and how the integrated emergency management response would occur. With a common methodology, response plans identify courses of action that drill down to the county/parish level.

Creation of FEMA Corps

Created in 2012, FEMA Corps is a partnership between The Corporation for National and Community Service and FEMA that establishes a new track of up to 1,600 service Corps Members within AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) dedicated to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. This partnership builds on the historic collaboration between the two agencies and will enhance the federal government's disaster capabilities, increase the reliability and diversity of the disaster workforce, promote an ethic of service, expand education and economic opportunity for young people, and achieve significant cost savings for the American taxpayer. When the program is at full operational capability, and in an average disaster year, we expect to see a savings of approximately \$60 million in a year.

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, FEMA Corps played an important role in assisting the Agency with Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs), canvassing door-to-door, delivering supplies, and registering individuals and businesses for Individual Assistance and Public Assistance grants. Their involvement in response and recovery efforts across the country serve not only as a

national resource today, but ensure that we are cultivating the next generation of emergency managers capable of supporting our Nation in the future.

Conclusion

The destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina reminds us all that we cannot become complacent. In fact, we can't afford to as there are many communities throughout the Gulf Coast states still recovering from the impacts of Katrina.

There are many lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, and those lessons continue to help reshape, reform, and restructure our agency. With the support of Congress and our whole community partners, FEMA is leaning forward both in policy and in practice.

I am proud of how our agency has evolved, but I also recognize that we have much more work to do. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions that the Subcommittee may have.