Speaker 1 ([00:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2.43)):

I'm Mark Peterson and this is the FEMA podcast.

Speaker 1 ([00:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=13.23)):

We’re excited to debut our redesigned FEMA.gov this week. While this is the first step in what will be an ongoing effort to make our website a valuable tool for our customers and stakeholders, this is a major undertaking for any organization. But for FEMA, the website is a critical conduit of information for disaster survivors and our emergency management partners. So today we're going to take a closer look at those changes and why they help us improve our ability to fulfill our mission for years to come.

Speaker 1 ([00:49](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=49.26)):

All right. So coming up at the end of the month, FEMA’s website (fema.gov) is undergoing a major redesign. For the way that we interact with the public, this is a pretty critical step towards making our programs more accessible. And so we're fortunate to have two people that were a big part of that effort. James Joseph, the acting director of External Affairs. James, thanks for being here.

Speaker 2 ([01:08](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=68.57)):

Thanks for having me Mark.

Speaker 1 ([01:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=70.43)):

And Gloria Huang from FEMA’s Digital Team. Gloria, thank you for joining as well.

Speaker 3 ([01:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=75.23)):

Thanks Mark. Glad to be here.

Speaker 1 ([01:17](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=77.15)):

Okay. So I would venture to guess that for most Americans, a website is the primary way that they interact with really any organization, let alone a federal agency. So fema.gov is obviously FEMA’s website. And so this redesign. James, what is new about fema.gov? And why is the change so important for the agency?

Speaker 2 ([01:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=99.14)):

Mark, you're absolutely right. In this day and age where almost everyone, almost all of our population and the large majority are operating on mobile platforms. You know, it is so important that our website is accessible, it's relevant and that it's functional, whether you're on a desktop or whether on a mobile device. And, you know, I think the main tenants that we wanted to carry out here is either Administrator Gaynor’s vision on simplifying the website, rebuilding it, and, you know, having a strong online presence that not only shows what FEMA does before, during and after disasters, but who it is that does things before, during and after disasters. And that's the great men and women of FEMA across the United States.

Speaker 1 ([02:27](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=147.83)):

So Gloria, one of the big things that's going to change is really the layout. Can you give us a sense of, I mean - obviously this is audio here - but you know, give us a feel for what's going to change in the layout.

Speaker 3 ([02:39](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=159.95)):

Sure, definitely. So the website has basically been completely redesigned as James was saying. We're really trying to simplify everything the agency has to offer to the public, make it easy for people to find that information. And we're basically rebuilding the site completely brand new to do this. Since our last redesign, which I think was in 2014 or ‘15, there have been so many advances and updates in modern web design, you know, mobile accessibility. And we've seen this being implemented across the federal government. So this is our big step towards doing that for FEMA as well. So to do that, we're really bringing down the number of pages we had. We were at the point where we were hosting 74,000 web pages. Most of them weren't really useful to the public, weren't really getting visited. So we've really gone through a process where we've obsessed, what pages are really necessary and we've completely organized it in a way in a brand new navigation so that people can find that as soon as they go to the site, they see the big categories of the most relevant topics to the public and our stakeholders. And they can go through click and see a logical organization to that content.

Speaker 2 ([03:49](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=229.62)):

You know Mark, I just want to add to what Gloria is saying is, you know, what's really clear, critical. What Gloria said is the number of clicks it takes before you get to the information. And we reduced that significantly. So whether you are an emergency manager that's looking for the latest PA guidance or policies and procedures that have been put out. For example, right now the number of documents, guidance documents put out for COVID-19 or whether you are a part of the American public that needs to apply for disaster assistance within a few clicks, you’ll be able to find what you need. And also you'll be able to find geotagged information based on your zip code or based on your location if you're using a mobile device, if you choose to share your location. On information that you could use in the face of a disaster or in the recovery phase of a major disaster declaration.

Speaker 1 ([04:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=288.54)):

So internally as we kind of work through these web redesigns, that we've done them in the past. And part of that sort of redesigned processes are these beta versions where you get to test out what the site kind of looks like and see if things are working. What are some of the things that have jumped out at you about the new layout, you know, as maybe you both have worked through that beta site?

Speaker 3 ([05:10](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=310.95)):

I think the key thing from my perspective and from, you know, our entire web team's perspective is that as we took a look at the the old site and we looked at how the information was presented, we had this realization that everything was organized by how our offices are organized. So it's very internal. It's very, you kinda need to know, you know, how FEMA conducts its business to be able to find the information, to know which small office nested within other offices is responsible for the information you're looking for. And while trying to pull together what this new navigation and organization for the beta site would look like, we really did away with that concept. And we thought, we thought through, okay, for our major categories of our visitors. So for the emergency managers, for the partners or stakeholders who are maybe nonprofit or voluntary organizations, if they come to our site, what the thought process they would go through to try to find the information they're looking for.

Speaker 3 ([06:12](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=372.35)):

We couldn't go through that process without really just kind of putting everything on the table. We actually did some like card sorting activities and everything like that to think through what that thought process would be. And building the site, it went through so many iterations just based off of us working amongst our team and also with a lot of our program offices who know their customers best. We went through it all and we went through several iterations to arrive at the new navigation as it is now. So this whole process is really, I would say ongoing. We've done a lot of leg work now to try to rethink how the information is presented, but then going forward we'll continue using this as a way to test how users are experiencing the site, see where they're clicking and make sure that the information is actually easy to find.

Speaker 1 ([07:06](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=426.13)):

How do you go through the process during these redesigns of really understanding who our audience is or who the users really are and how to make things better for them? Is there a process for that?

Speaker 3 ([07:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=439.54)):

Sure. Well we start with looking at the raw numbers. So we go to our Google Analytics. We go to look at who's referring people to the site. Which pages on the site are people actually visiting. Which pages are people not visiting. And then we start to look there, you start to get a picture of where the hotspots are on the website. We also look at what kind of search terms people are using. What are they searching for on our site to see if maybe they aren't finding what they need, but they're really expressing that they need that information by entering in a keyword search. And we start there because we have that data and then we go through and talk to the people who manage the program, responsible for the information on the site. And we say, what else do you hear from your customers? When they're going to you for information, whether it's through the phone or whether it's through face-to-face interactions. So that we can cross reference what we know on the digital metrics side of things, with what we know from the program side of things and try to combine those into more of a prioritized list and a better understanding of how most people group the information that they can get from our agency.

Speaker 1 ([08:34](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=514.45)):

James, one of the agency's strategic goals is to reduce the complexities of the agency, really. And I would think that reducing the complexities of the way that the public interacts with us via the website would be one of the major milestones of that goal. So can you talk about what this means in terms of the effort to reduce those complexities?

Speaker 2 ([08:57](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=537.32)):

Mark, that's a great question because even if you just look at the organization, our agency's strategic goals and what we've been striving towards, and what we've been delivering towards is number one - readying the nation, number two - building a culture of preparedness and number three - reducing the complexity of FEMA. And by having this website, this new website up and running, it reduces complexities because now literally at someone's fingertips, even from a mobile device, you can find information. If you are a state, local or tribal government, you can find information on grant programs that are available and how to apply for those grants. You can find critical information on policies and procedures and if you're a disaster survivor you have at your fingertips, how to apply for disaster assistance and it reduces, you know, significantly the amount of frustration that all of our stakeholders will have. And that's why when you look at this new website, it dovetails perfectly into reducing the complexity of FEMA and that's exactly what Administrator Gaynor wanted to achieve with this new website launch.

Speaker 3 ([10:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=605.15)):

I want to also jump in there to add that outside of reducing the complexity through navigation, organization of the content, our team went through every single page and basically rewrote everything into plain language as best as we could. So it's not just about how we're organizing the information, it's about how we present the information and we're doing so in a way where we're not using jargon. We're really trying to make sure we worked with the programs to say really what is the key information people need to know. And how would you explain it to them if you were just sitting across the table from them? So it's, I think this is really a culture shift for us too, in how we talk about our programs, our services, and we're trying to bring it to a place where we're able to really communicate effectively and talk about everything that FEMA does in a way that's understandable to the broadest segment of the population.

Speaker 1 ([11:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=662.18)):

So probably one of the ways that the American public knows us best is through our disaster assistance programs. And so, you know, how has this web redesign worked to benefit disaster survivors specifically?

Speaker 2 ([11:15](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=675.47)):

You know, Mark, I think that's probably one of the most important things. One of the top things that Gloria and her team were looking at. You know, when you're an emergency manager - and I speak being a federal employee now, of course - but prior to this, I was a state emergency manager. And prior to that, a County emergency manager. As a local and a state customer, I knew I needed information. I knew where to go, and you know what, if I didn't know where to find something, or if I couldn't find something, I can easily pick up the phone and call my RA, call their office and be pointed in the right direction. You know, the general public typically doesn't have that contact, that connection and that ability. So that's why it was so important for Gloria and her team.

Speaker 2 ([12:02](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=722.74)):

And I'm really proud of what they did and how they work with the different program offices here within FEMA to ensure that people can find information quickly. They may be facing the most difficult day of their lives. And they're now coming upon a website that they're not used to being on. They don't know how to navigate it. And especially like Gloria mentioned, some 74,000 unique pages on the old FEMA website where things have really been condensed, things have been reduced and things have been streamlined in a fashion where the public can find information quickly. They can apply for assistance quickly. And that we as FEMA on the web team, they're doing their part to help catapult that individual's recovery process. And that's what's so important. And that's what makes me really proud of what Gloria and her team have done and the focus they had on not just our people within FEMA, but the American public in general.

Speaker 1 ([13:03](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=783.3)):

I think there's also some exciting features now for disaster survivors. You know, Gloria, are there some resources now that will sort of localize an event for survivors to make sure that they're getting the specific information?

Speaker 3 ([13:16](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=796.38)):

Yeah. So one of our biggest additions to the website is a local search that's right in the middle of the page. It says ‘get local, search your state’. People can enter in their address - their states - and when they press the search button, they'll be taken to a geo-located page where they see everything relevant to their state, collected in one place from across the site. This is made possible by the fact that we're migrating from Drupal 7 to Drupal 8. This is our web content management system. This upgraded management system allows us to actually categorize and sort content a lot more easily. So we're able to say, “okay, if someone's looking for things relevant to Virginia - which is my state - that's what I would put in”. I'd be able to see all the latest news releases, updates. I'll be able to see all of the active declared disasters in my state right up front.

Speaker 3 ([14:13](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=853.32)):

And then if I were a disaster survivor and I was looking for a way to get assistance, if there is an active disaster in my state, I would see that apply for assistance button right at the top of that page once I searched for my location. We know that people are really used to being able to see customized content, whether it's on a mobile phone app or on a website nowadays. So this is us being able to modernize a little bit. Meet those expectations and hopefully in the future continue to develop in that direction so that we provide even more localized, even more relevant information.

Speaker 1 ([14:48](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=888.12)):

Is the web redesign sort of a phased approach? Or is it something that we will do every couple of years? Or, you know, what is sort of the future for the website and what are your expectations sort of going forward?

Speaker 2 ([15:01](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=901.9)):

Well, I think that's part of the ongoing innovation that exists here within External Affairs. Number one, it's not that we just put up some content here in a few weeks when the website goes live and then we never touch it again. It's a living, breathing entity. It's a part of FEMA that’s no different than us as individuals. We're adjusting on a day-to-day basis. We're learning new things on a day-to-day basis. We're delivering recovery in new ways on a day-to-day basis. That's also what the website will be. It'll be an ongoing update. It'll be ongoing innovation and you know what? We don't want to wait years next time between, you know, updating platforms if we need to. We need to ensure that we stay relevant, that we remain relevant. And that the technology that we utilize is keeping up with the demands of the American public and ultimately reducing complexities of FEMA by providing information to all of our consumers. Whether you are the public coming here for disaster assistance, or one of our emergency management partners from a state, local or tribal government that needs information, we want to make sure that it continues to stay relevant and I think that's what our focus is going to be moving forward as we look at the future of fema.gov.

Speaker 3 ([16:19](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=979.36)):

And if I could just add on to that as well. I think what James said is absolutely spot on and I want to stress that we see this as one big step towards modernization, but it's really the beginning. And we absolutely plan - in the next several years to come and going forward - on continuing to iterate on this continuing to develop new phases of the website, new features as we go, not just doing a complete overhaul every few years or anything like that. But we see this as a work in progress for sure.

Speaker 1 ([16:52](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1012.24)):

You know, we've talked a little bit about the complexity of the old site. 74,000 pages. Can you tell me a little bit about what goes into the redesign and the magnitude of the team's work here?

Speaker 2 ([17:05](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1025.56)):

God, Mark, if I had to try to quantify the number of hours, I don't think I'd even be able to, because there's been so much time and so much effort that Gloria and her entire team have put into this. Not just looking at the content, not just streamlining things and making it easier to navigate, easier to manage, and most importantly, easier to find information. There is so much internal work that needed to be done. You know, the communications with the other FEMA programs, the offices here within FEMA recovery, response, FIMA, you know, national preparedness. There's so many aspects of FEMA that touch the website. Right? And it's not that, you know, External Affairs owned the website and we decide what content goes on there. We're simply the facilitators of that and it's the program offices that own that content and drive what goes on the website.

Speaker 2 ([18:00](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1080.84)):

So working very closely with them the last several months and the next several weeks ahead. The amount of hours that the team has put in has been amazing. It has been intense. It has been significant and that's what the American public and our customers will never see. They'll see a new website and they'll say, “wow, this is great”. But the amount of hours that the men and women of the digital content team and the communications division have put into this need to be acknowledged. And I take pride in acknowledging that right now, right here, for all of our listeners to hear.

Speaker 1 ([18:41](https://www.temi.com/editor/t/C-jcMkDbPVv3XuJaoSSXtYi16za1AOU8NGzTZt6c20zbfdVhAkzXUgpqk9LZ9dqJg3JuG470Qod7RoO7WdnP05d33nU?loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1121.72)):

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