

**THE 2007 HURRICANE SEASON:
ARE WE PREPARED?**

FULL HEARING
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MAY 15, 2007

Serial No. 110-35

Printed for the use of the Committee on Homeland Security



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

48-910 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2009

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
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THE 2007 HURRICANE SEASON: ARE WE PREPARED?

Tuesday, May 15, 2007

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
WASHINGTON, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 1:09 p.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Bennie Thompson [chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Thompson, Sanchez, Lowey, Norton, Jackson Lee, Christensen, Etheridge, Langevin, Cuellar, Carney, Green, Perlmutter, King, Shays, Rogers, Brown-Waite, Bilirakis, and Davis of Tennessee.

Chairman THOMPSON. [Presiding.] The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order.

The committee is meeting today to receive testimony from FEMA and other key stakeholders on what has been done to prepare for the 2007 hurricane season.

Good afternoon. On behalf of the members of the committee, let me welcome our panel. We are glad that all of you are here to discuss preparations for this year's hurricane season.

First of all, I am enormously concerned, Mr. Paulison, that FEMA is still not compliant with the committee's requirement that testimony be submitted within 48 hours of the hearing. We have shared this to the secretary. I know you have significant jurisdictional issues, a lot of committees. We have said we would work through it. And I understand what other challenges you have before you, but we have some committee rules that we have adopted, and, to the extent practicable, we would like to see them followed.

The purpose of this hearing is to examine whether FEMA is adequately coordinating activities with its partners and the state and local level as well as key stakeholders in the private sector.

The 2007 Atlantic hurricane season officially begins on June 1 and will last until November 30. The fact that FEMA still not has issued the strategy that establishes practices and procedures for coordination among federal, state and local governments is very disturbing.

I called this hearing to examine just how FEMA is doing and whether all key stakeholders are ready to respond and coordinate effectively. As a member of the Gulf Coast, I have particular interest in seeing FEMA apply the lessons learned from Katrina into practices for the future. In the event that a hurricane makes land-fall and puts our communities at risk, we need to know that FEMA

will respond quickly and administer assistance in an evenhanded way.

Another key player that has some hard lessons learned from Katrina was the American Red Cross. I am interested in hearing how the organization plans to coordinate with FEMA. As we all know, FEMA's response to Hurricane Katrina was abysmal. Last year, Congress passed major FEMA reforms with an expectation that we would see some real progress at this beleaguered agency.

I expect that Mr. Paulison will have an explanation for its agency's failure to produce a national response plan by the start of hurricane season, and FEMA will have a lot of explaining to do if it is not all ready when a hurricane makes landfall this season.

I want to thank the witnesses again for being here and look forward to their testimony.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from New York, Mr. King, for an opening statement.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BENNIE G. THOMPSON, CHAIRMAN,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

The Purpose of this hearing is to examine whether FEMA is adequately coordinating activities with its partners on the State and local level as well as key stakeholders in the private sector. The 2007 Atlantic hurricane season officially begins on June 1st and will last until November 30th.

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In the event that a hurricane makes landfall and puts our communities at risk, we need to know that FEMA will respond quickly and administer assistance in an evenhanded way.

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As we all know, FEMA's response to Hurricane Katrina was abysmal. Last year, Congress passed major FEMA reforms with an expectation that we would see some real progress at this beleaguered agency.

I expect that Mr. Paulison will have an explanation for his agency's failure to produce the National Response Plan within the required period. Mr. Paulison, explanations don't excuse and excuses don't explain. And FEMA will have a lot of explaining to do if it is not ready when a hurricane makes landfall this season.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me thank you for holding this hearing and for the bipartisan effort that we are making, as far as ensuring that FEMA is given the jurisdiction and the tools to get the job done.

Last year, our committee, working in a bipartisan way, was very instrumental in the enactment of the FEMA reform bill, which kept FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security but certainly set up a chain of command and gave the director, I believe, the authority and the power that he needs to get the job done in times of terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

That legislation clarified the command structure and required establishment of a surge capacity force. It also consolidated emergency communications, grant-making, and other responsibilities.

Let me just say also, speaking as someone from New York, I want to commend FEMA for the job they did during the heavy

snowstorms this year. They delivered generators less than 24 hours after the snowfall ended, and even though it was not in my district, in talking to people around the State, they were very appreciative of the job you did, the professionalism and the timeliness.

I also, like the chairman, would appreciate testimony being provided to the committee on time. At the same time, however, though, I think it is important and upon us in the Congress to work in a bipartisan way to reduce the number of committees that Director Paulison, Secretary Chertoff and all the undersecretaries and assistant secretaries have to report to.

So while I am not excusing the late testimony, I also realize that it is in everyone's interest, including the country's, primarily the country's, that we consolidate this so you are not going from committee to committee and getting caught up in jurisdictional entanglements.

I look forward to your testimony. I want to commend you for the job that you have done. You took over under very trying circumstances. Certainly, from talking to first responders across the country, particularly those in the fire service, they speak very highly of the efforts that you are making. Unfortunately, you are in a job where, I guess, you are judged by mistakes.

But all I can say is that I certainly want to commend you for the enthusiasm, the professionalism and the energy that you bring to the job, and I look forward to your testimony today.

I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Other members of the committee are reminded that, under the committee rules, opening statements may be submitted for the record.

I now welcome our first panel. We are pleased to have the administrator of FEMA, Mr. David Paulison, here to testify. Mr. Paulison has an extensive background in the emergency preparedness arena, having served as the U.S. fire administrator and as the fire chief of Miami-Dade County in Florida.

Without objection, the witness's full statement will be inserted into the record. I now ask Mr. Paulison to summarize his statement for the committee for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF HON. R. DAVID PAULISON, DIRECTOR,
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY,
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. PAULISON. Chair Thompson, I appreciate the invitation. Ranking Member King.

And, just for the record, I take very seriously your issues with getting our testimony in on time, and we will make a very honest, concerted effort to make sure we do that.

I also take very seriously your comments about the national response plan. We are working very diligently to get that out and operating. I will talk about that a little bit in my testimony. I am sure it will come up during the questioning.

We have made steady progress to approve our preparedness posture for the 2007 hurricane season. The new FEMA is leaning further forward to deliver more effective disaster assistance, not only to individuals but to communities impacted by the disaster.

You can see our results in our response this year in Florida, Georgia, the Alabama tornadoes, the nor'easter that affected the states in the Mid-Atlantic and up in New England and just last week in Greensburg, Kansas. In each of these cases, FEMA was engaged as a partner with the state immediately, we deployed operational and technical experts, we rolled logistics and communication capabilities even before the disaster declaration was declared, and we coordinated with the governor to facilitate a presidential disaster delegation.

It was also FEMA that supported and helped facilitate the effective unified command among many federal, state and tribal and local partners involved in these responses. We called this an engaged partnership. Our response in these diverse and numerous events across the breadth of this great country are evidence of the new FEMA's readiness for the 17 currently predicted storms during the 2007 hurricane season.

With the first named storm of the season, Andrea, already behind us, let's look at our advanced preparation, our plans for operations during the storm and our proved ability to help with the long-term recovery.

Local governments will always, always be the first to respond, but FEMA has an important role to play. The old paradigm of waiting for the state and local governments to become overwhelmed before providing federal assistance simply does not work in today's environment.

Under our engaged partnership, FEMA has strengthened our relationship with key state and local partners. A one-size-fits-all approach to emergency management will not work. FEMA is helping each state analyze their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, our planning is more informed, and we can better anticipate specific needs and quickly move to support each state.

A visible demonstration of improved federal capabilities is our playbook of pre-scripted mission assignments. It contains plans for a range of federal support that may be requested in a disaster and lays out interagency coordination needed to ensure that it gets there. The support ranges from heavy helicopters from the Department of Defense, generators from the Army Corps of Engineers, to disaster medical assistance teams from HHS and emergency road-clearing teams from the U.S. Forest Service.

Prior to Katrina, we had just a handful of these pre-scripted mission assignments. Last year, we had about 40, and this year, we have over 180 pre-scripted mission assignments with over 21 federal agencies.

So don't believe the stories that say FEMA and the federal government is not ready and do not have plans in place. We do and they are getting better.

With these preparations under way, FEMA will be ready to act. We have prearranged contracts, an improving logistics system and other elements that are already in place to expedite our response. FEMA can surge its own teams and assess them to an area in anticipation of an approaching storm.

This forward-leaning new FEMA is evident of our response in the tornado that devastated Greensburg. In the first 72 hours, FEMA coordinated the efforts of numerous federal agencies, supplies

rolled in before they were requested, mobile support vehicles moved in early, and when the state asked us to supplement their urban search and rescue efforts, the FEMA task force was on the ground within hours.

I also need to point out that the Kansas City National Guard, led by General Todd Bunting with the local mayor and the city administrator, simply did an outstanding job of responding to this disaster, despite the fact that their homes were destroyed also.

I am proud of the response by our team of federal, state and local partners in responding to this tragedy.

Now, once a storm has passed, FEMA is also better prepared to help with the recovery. FEMA's disaster assistance directorate has expanded its capabilities to provide mass care, sheltering, debris removal, victim registration, including enhanced protections against waste, fraud and abuse, and coordination among government and private-sector entities, all moving to provide assistance.

I am pleased to report that on May 3, 2007, an offer was made and accepted for the national disability coordinator. This individual is in clearance in our security office, and the official start date has not been declared, but we should have her on board by the end of this month.

One recent example is FEMA's response to the storms and flooding that hit the Northeast earlier this spring. FEMA had staff on the ground before the rain stopped, evaluated damage and registering victims. Mobile assistance centers were available in the immediate wake of the storm. The first individual financial aid was actually delivered less than 24 hours after the president signed the first disaster declaration. This fast, efficient, multi-state response shows the type of action you can expect from FEMA during this year's hurricane season.

In conclusion, we have made real progress at FEMA and are much better prepared for the 2007 hurricane season. By leaning further forward to coordinate the federal response, which is more informed through assessments and communication with our partners, we can better serve all Americans.

Today, FEMA has created an engaged partnership with state and local governments, we have facilitated and supported effective unified command across all levels of government, we have engaged with hurricane-prone states to gain a better understanding of the vulnerabilities, and we have improved logistics and communication capabilities to improve our response, and we have a much improved disaster assistance capability for recovery efforts.

Now, we are not done yet. We have a lot of work to do, but if our progress over the past year is any indication, I believe we are on the right track for fulfilling our vision of becoming the nation's preeminent emergency management agency.

I am especially proud of the men and women who work at FEMA. They really have put their heart and souls into rebuilding this agency.

So I want to thank this committee and you, Chairman Thompson, particularly, for your continued support, and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with you about the 2007 hurricane season.

[The statement of Mr. Paulison follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF R. DAVID PAULISON

Good morning, Chairman Thompson, and Members of the Committee.

I welcome the opportunity to appear before this Committee to discuss how the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season.

The guiding principle of the new FEMA is that we are leaning further forward to deliver more effective disaster assistance to individuals and communities impacted by a disaster. We call it “engaged partnership”. That is the FEMA you saw in the Florida, Georgia, and Alabama tornadoes—the Nor’easter that affected the New England States and most recently in Kansas where the community of Greensburg was devastated by a tornado.

In those disasters you saw a FEMA that became an engaged partner with the State within minutes of the disaster, immediately deployed operational and technical experts to the disaster site, started moving logistics and communications capabilities even before a disaster declaration and coordinated with the Governor to facilitate a Presidential disaster declaration. And, FEMA has supported and helped to facilitate an effective Unified Command with other Federal agencies, and State and local officials.

All of these actions were taken by a well led, motivated, and professional FEMA workforce that has embraced and enhanced the vision and reality of a new FEMA.

Colorado State University has predicted 17 named storms, including 9 hurricanes, of which 5 are expected to be major hurricanes. Predictions from the National Hurricane Center (NHC) are scheduled to be released on May 22, 2007, during National Hurricane Preparedness Week.

FEMA is preparing for an active 2007 hurricane season by taking the following actions:

1. Establishing a heightened posture of hurricane preparedness;
2. Engaging our State and Federal partners in more thorough and informed hurricane planning; and
3. Building FEMA’s operational capabilities to provide effective response and recovery.

Establishing a Heightened Posture of Hurricane Preparedness

FEMA is placing primary emphasis on strengthening the Federal-State partnership to better ensure we are able to achieve shared objectives for a safe, coordinated and effective response and recovery effort. First, we are emphasizing the States’ primary responsibility to provide for the safety and security of their citizens. The States must take the lead to ensure they and their local jurisdictions are prepared for hurricane season.

The Stafford Act acknowledges the Constitutional authority of a State to respond to incidents within that State through the State’s Emergency Management Agency or similar agency, which incorporates the States’ mutual aid system and principles of the Incident Command System, and provides the structure through which State and local government agencies respond. The State Emergency Management Agency coordinates the overall management of an emergency to include requests for support and resources from other State agencies, from other States under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), and for supplemental assistance from the Federal government. The EMAC process offers state-to-state assistance during Governor-declared states of emergency: EMAC offers a responsive and straight-forward system for states to send personnel and equipment to help disaster relief efforts in other states. When one State’s resources are overwhelmed, other states can help to fill the shortfalls through EMAC.

The strength of EMAC and the quality that distinguishes it from other plans and compacts lies in its governance structure, its relationship with federal organizations, states, counties, territories, and regions, and the ability to move just about any resource one state has to assist another state.

Second, FEMA, by advancing the concept of engaged partnership, then stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the State—there to support, fill gaps, and help to achieve a successful response and recovery. In the past, our system was cued to sequential failure: where the State held back until the local jurisdiction was overwhelmed, and the Federal system held back until the State was overwhelmed. This approach, evident in the response to Katrina, ensured caused delays in delivering support. Under “engaged partnership,” FEMA has strengthened the relationship between FEMA Regional Administrators and State Emergency Managers to focus on more deliberate disaster planning. In preparation for this hurricane season, we have engaged each of the 18 hurricane impact States (Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas),

the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Territories in a focused effort to identify strengths and weaknesses. We are engaging now in discussions to fill gaps and develop mitigation strategies to ensure successful response and recovery. FEMA is prepared to allocate commodities and enlist the assistance of other departments and agencies as needed to ensure a strong response to a State's call for assistance. And, as a result of our joint planning, we can anticipate a State's needs and be more able to quickly provide support.

Third, FEMA has extended our reach across the span of Federal agencies to ensure the smooth and responsive coordination of Federal support when it is needed. The most visible demonstration of that coordination is the array of Federal capabilities contained in our "playbook" of pre-scripted mission assignments. This playbook represents an examination of the range of Federal support that may be requested in response to a disaster. It also includes advance inter-agency coordination to ensure delivery of that capability when it might be called upon in time of need. At present, we have gained approval for 103 separate forms of assistance and are reviewing 85 potential pre-scripted mission assignments over a span of 21 Federal agencies. This support ranges from heavy-lift helicopters from DOD, to generators from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams from HHS and Emergency Road Clearing Teams from the U.S. Forest Service. These pre-scripted mission assignments will result in more rapid and responsive delivery of Federal support to States.

Disaster response support is coordinated through one or more of the National Response Plan's (NRP) 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). The ESFs serve as the primary operational-level mechanism supporting FEMA in providing State and local disaster assistance in functional areas such as transportation, communications, public works and engineering, firefighting, mass care, housing, human services, public health and medical services, search and rescue, agriculture, and energy. The signatories to the NRP provide substantial disaster response assistance in their areas of expertise and provide operational support for FEMA when assigned missions to support the disaster response. In addition, FEMA can surge its own teams and assets into an area in anticipation of an approaching storm or event that is expected to cause a significant impact and result in a declared emergency or major disaster and can turn to other DHS components such as the U.S. Coast Guard for assistance. The surge capability allows FEMA to position assets prior to the event to enable a quick response, but actual assistance cannot be provided until the Governor requests and the President approves a disaster declaration.

Within the first 72 hours after the tornado devastated Greensburg, Kansas, FEMA coordinated the efforts of numerous Federal agencies in their ESF roles under the NRP. For example, the DHS/National Communication System (ESF 2) worked with the State and local officials to reestablish communications infrastructure, advising local government as necessary, and providing needed technical assistance. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ESF 3) management team for critical facility restoration planning was on-site providing technical assistance to state and local government. Additionally, Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) in the form of 13 small Mobile Emergency Operations Vehicles (MEOVs) and one large MEOV were deployed to Greensburg for communications and command and control support. The larger MEOV was provided to serve as the Unified Command Post.

To further strengthen our partnerships, FEMA is actively engaging with State governments and other Federal partners in joint exercises as we prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season. During the first week in May, FEMA tested the national incident management system and its response operations during an exercise called Ardent Sentry—Northern Edge, which depicted a Category 3 hurricane that struck Newport, Rhode Island.

Engaging with State and Federal Partners in More Thorough and Informed Preparedness Planning

As we approach the 2007 Hurricane Season, FEMA is taking a three-tier approach to planning. First, we are engaging each of the 18 hurricane impact States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Territories in focused hurricane planning. This includes employing a Gap Analysis Tool that will inform the planning process. Second, we are providing specific attention to the Gulf Coast States pursuing for the first time regional development of a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan. Third, we are pursuing specific planning efforts with our partners in the State of Louisiana, in recognition of their fragile condition following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Last, we are also focusing Catastrophic Disaster Response Planning on Southeast Louisiana and the State of Florida.

Hurricane Gap Analysis Tool

FEMA is employing a Gap Analysis Tool that is serving as the basis for better understanding vulnerabilities in a more consistent manner. The Gap Analysis Tool was developed in coordination with the State of New York Emergency Management Office/New York City Office of Emergency Management and has been implemented to provide FEMA and its partners at both the State and local levels in the hurricane prone regions of the country with a snapshot of asset gaps at the National, State and local levels.

The initiative is a joint effort between State Emergency Management representatives and FEMA Regional representatives to conduct a series of structured discussions with local jurisdictions to better understand potential disaster response asset gaps in the critical areas of debris removal, evacuation, sheltering, interim housing, healthcare facilities, commodity distribution, communications, and fuel. The discussions are providing an opportunity for local jurisdictions to ask specific questions of Federal and State officials and identify issues of critical concern to help long-term preparedness programs. We are confident that through these structured discussions, we will all be better prepared.

Specific gaps are determined by identifying a series of requirements in each critical area within each location and then subtracting the corresponding capabilities for meeting those requirements for each location. By June 1, 2007, the data will be compiled for the jurisdictions within the hurricane prone States, reviewed, and then incorporated into FEMA's planning efforts. Although our initial use of this method is being applied for the upcoming hurricane season, this process is applicable to all hazards and the goal is to build upon lessons learned and apply the tool to all locations for all hazards on an ongoing basis.

The new FEMA has made a conscious effort to focus broadly on all 18 hurricane-prone States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and Territories to prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season. Today, FEMA is working closely with each of the 18 state emergency management communities in hurricane prone states using a consistent set of measures and tools to evaluate strengths and vulnerabilities.

We are actively conducting these analyses with state emergency managers. So, not only have we improved our ability to respond, we also will have a better understanding of what type of response and supplies may be needed for a particular area following a disaster.

Modeling is also an essential element of FEMA's planning efforts for different circumstances. FEMA is coordinating with the DHS Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate to adapt modeling tools to large metropolitan areas. For example, many tools utilize a standard figure for population per square mile, often resulting in skewed data for areas with high-rise apartment buildings. The work with S&T is focusing on adapting these modeling tools to urban environments.

As the use of the Hurricane Gap Analysis Tool becomes more mature, FEMA plans to incorporate additional modeling capabilities to validate the data received and to forecast needs based on different variables. FEMA's current hurricane planning efforts rely heavily on existing modeling tools such as:

- HurrEvac (Hurricane Evacuation) to enable tracking hurricanes and assist in evacuation decision making;
- SLOSH (Sea, Lake and Overland Surges from Hurricanes) to enable estimates of storm surge heights and winds resulting from historical, hypothetical, or predicted hurricanes by taking into account pressure, size, forward speed, track, and winds;
- HAZUS (Hazards U.S.) established by FEMA to assess risk and forecast losses based on population characteristics and buildings;
- The US Army Corps of Engineers modeling tools which rely on geospatial capabilities to provide estimates of debris volumes; water, ice, and commodity needs; and the number of people within the households likely within hurricane force winds; and
- NISAC (National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center) advanced modeling and simulation capabilities to analyze critical infrastructure interdependencies and vulnerabilities.

Gulf Coast State Evacuation Plan

FEMA is helping Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama develop a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan that extends to adjacent States who may host Gulf Coast evacuees. The purpose of this effort is to synchronize separate State evacuation plans to create a more jointly organized effort. Teams are engaging with each State, identifying requirements and capabilities, and then will work to develop a plan that integrates shelter planning with transportation planning. The result will be a timelier, better

organized and coordinated evacuation by those with their own transportation and those who need assistance to evacuate by bus or air.

Coordinating with Louisiana

Recognizing Louisiana's continuing fragile situation, we are collaboratively assessing requirements, State capabilities and the potential need for Federal assistance. Louisiana is better prepared than last year—by applying lessons learned and investing some of their resources, but still needs assistance in finding shelter space in adjacent States, ensuring sufficient transportation resources to conduct a timely and effective evacuation, pre-positioning commodities, and caring for those with critical medical needs.

Catastrophic Disaster Planning Initiatives

We are also working with 13 southeastern Louisiana parishes (including the City of New Orleans), which were selected as the initial geographic focus area for FEMA's "Catastrophic Planning" initiative, because of their vulnerability to hurricane disasters. Substantial planning activity continues with the State of Louisiana and its parishes in planning and preparing for the 2007 Hurricane Season.

In addition, FEMA is using scenario-driven workshops to enhance the State of Florida's capability to respond to a Category 5 Hurricane making landfall in Southern Florida. This is a two-phased project. Phase 1 focuses on developing regional response and recovery annexes, including evacuation planning, for the counties and communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee (in the event of failure of the Herbert Hoover Dike) and will be completed by the beginning of the 2007 Hurricane Season. Phase two will address the effects of a Category 5 hurricane striking south Florida. The end product for phase two will be standardized and comprehensive catastrophic Category 5 hurricane disaster functional response and recovery plans for the State of Florida and responding Federal agencies. Phase two will be completed by September 30, 2008. These plans will be used as planning templates for other large urban areas also.

Next, it is important to understand what FEMA is doing to build its operational capabilities to improve its response and recovery capabilities in support of State and local efforts.

Building FEMA's Operational Capabilities to Provide Effective Response and Recovery

In addition to the many action items already described to better prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season, FEMA's comprehensive strategy for improving its disaster response efforts includes a 2007 Hurricane Contingency Plan, a new operational planning unit, an Interagency Agreement with Defense Logistics Agency, Total Asset Visibility, a new generation of response assistance teams, principal federal officials role, and mass evacuation planning.

2007 Hurricane Contingency Plan (CONPLAN)

The 2007 Hurricane CONPLAN provides the operational incident management framework to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of hurricanes impacting the United States. The CONPLAN provides guidance on actions that will be executed by Federal Departments and Agencies.

This document was developed in collaboration with all of FEMA's National Response Plan partners for the Emergency Support Functions—or "ESFs"—and addresses the coordinated national-level Federal preparedness, response and initial recovery operations that will be used to support State, local, Territorial and Tribal government entities impacted by a hurricane or tropical storm.

New Operational Planning Unit Capabilities

FEMA is hiring staff for its new Operational Planning Unit (Planning Unit). Located in FEMA's Headquarters, the Planning Unit will provide sophisticated operational analyses. With the new staff, FEMA is building its core planning competency that will possess greater depth of experience and more capability to perform critical disaster response operational analyses, prepare operational plans, and conduct crisis action planning to ensure that the Agency can lead, coordinate and support a national all-hazard emergency management response.

Specifically, the Operational Planning Unit—

- Provides National and Regional operational planning guidance and coordination;
- Coordinates at the operational level the execution of all hazard contingency plans;
- Provides forecasting and analysis of potential events;
- Assists FEMA Regions in operational planning at the regional level; and
- Leads the development of DHS and FEMA hazard-specific contingency plans.

Eventually, planners will also be hired for the Regions to provide this capability to those specific areas.

FEMA/DLA Interagency Agreement

FEMA and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) have entered into a collaborative partnership, via an Interagency Agreement, to optimize the planning, ordering, storing and replenishing of certain commodities such as emergency meals and fuel, and develop a road map for larger scaled supply chain initiatives.

The FEMA/DLA partnership has improved FEMA's immediate response and logistics capabilities by reducing the acquisition and distribution time, as well as the replenishment lead-time. The partnership has also improved FEMA's day-to-day supply chain operations by creating repeatable, sustainable processes for planning and execution at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Through this agreement DLA will procure, maintain, transport, and stage commodities. DLA currently provides visibility of all commodities shipped to disaster locations, logistic centers or other locations as directed, from the initial receipt of the order until ownership passes to FEMA.

TAV Program

FEMA Logistics has identified areas for improving its end-to-end supply chain to deliver critical supplies at the right time, in the right quantity and to the right location. FEMA is implementing industry best practices for supply chain management and an automated system that is improving information flow by providing real-time visibility into orders and shipment of critical supplies during emergency response efforts. The Total Asset Visibility (TAV) Program oversees, directs and manages the design and implementation of an initial capability pilot system to monitor and view the orders and movement of select commodities which was launched during the 2006 hurricane season.

Currently, the TAV Program provides FEMA with the ability to (1) manage and view orders and inventory of select commodities and (2) track the location of trailers carrying the commodities distributed from the FEMA Logistics Centers (LCs) and select vendors to field sites. The long-term vision for the TAV Program is to engage external emergency management stakeholders—from state, local and tribal governments and other federal agencies to non-government agencies and vendors—in the entire FEMA supply chain. These activities cover requests for critical supplies to tracking shipments and delivery to people in need during times of emergency. Stakeholders would have real-time visibility into the status of requests and locations of shipments in transit.

FEMA recognizes that certain types of resources may be required immediately after a disaster by State and local governments in order for them to adequately respond.

If State or local governments, and State partners, are unable to supply these resources, then FEMA will coordinate the provision of Federal commodities to ensure that resources are in place in order to supplement State and local response efforts during the immediate phase of response activities. FEMA has initiated the Pre-Positioned Disaster Supply (PPDS) program to position life-saving and life sustaining disaster equipment and supplies in modular containers as close to a potential disaster sites as prudent, in order to substantially reduce the initial response time to incidents.

Enhanced Response Teams

FEMA is developing the next generation of rapidly deployable interagency emergency response teams, tentatively identified as Incident Management Assistance Teams ("IMATs"). These teams will support the emergent needs of State and local jurisdictions; possess the capability to provide initial situational awareness for Federal decision-makers; and support the initial establishment of a unified command. These teams will ultimately provide the three national-level response teams and regional-level emergency response "strike" teams required by the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006.

The teams are still being designed and decisions on team assets, equipment, and expected capabilities have not yet been finalized. FEMA's goal is to establish interim Regional and National teams using existing personnel within FEMA. The teams will subsume the existing mission and capabilities of the Federal Incident Response Support Teams (or "FIRSTs") and Emergency Response Teams (or "ERTs"). The mission and capabilities will incorporate similar leadership, emergency management doctrine, and operational communications concepts. The national-level and regional-level teams will eventually be staffed with a core of full-time employees, unlike the ERTs, which are staffed on a collateral duty basis; will be fully compliant with NIMS and ICS; and will train and exercise as a unit.

Principal Federal Officials

Also, the Secretary of Homeland Security is represented by the Principal Federal Official (PFO). The PFO ensures that incident management efforts are well coordinated and effective. The PFO does not direct or replace the incident command structure, nor does the PFO have directive authority over other Federal and State officials. For example, during a terrorist incident, the local FBI Special Agent-in-Charge coordinates with other members of the law enforcement community and works in conjunction with the PFO.

The PFO is one member of the JFO Coordination Group. This group also includes either an FCO, who manages and coordinates Federal resource support activities related to Stafford Act disasters and emergencies, or a Federal Resource Coordinator, who performs similar functions for incidents that do not involve Stafford Act declarations. Depending on the incident, other agency officials are added to the Coordination Group, such as the Senior Federal Law Enforcement Official.

Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the National Response Plan

As part of incorporating lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the NRP is under development. The Mass Evacuation Incident Annex will provide an overview of evacuation functions and agency roles and responsibilities. It also will provide overall guidelines to enable evacuation of large numbers of people in incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response through the NRP ESFs. This annex will describe how Federal support resources are integrated into State, local, and tribal efforts. Communication linkage to sheltering facilities, special needs of evacuees, and addressing the need for evacuation of both companion and service animals are just a few of the issues reflected in this annex.

Improved Delivery of Disaster Assistance

FEMA is making significant progress in improving its disaster assistance as well. FEMA's Disaster Assistance Directorate's planning and capability building initiatives include enhancing mass care capability by improving the National Shelter System and developing better tools for coordinating and tracking donations and volunteers; greatly increasing disaster victim registration capabilities while enhancing protections against waste, fraud and abuse; developing a national disaster housing strategy and improving operational planning for providing temporary housing in a catastrophic disaster; establishing a case management program; updating ESF 6 Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services standard operating procedures; developing debris estimation technology and monitoring methodology and enhancing state and local debris operations capabilities; and, improving our capability to conduct operations planning for long term disaster operations.

Emergency Evacuation, Shelter, and Housing

FEMA's most pressing priority for planning for Recovery from a catastrophic disaster event has been *emergency evacuation, shelter and housing*. In 2004, FEMA completed an initial Catastrophic Disaster Housing Strategy, which proposed several initiatives to increase FEMA's capability to provide assistance to individuals and households following an extraordinary or catastrophic disaster. The strategy provided the principles and recommended strategies that establish the framework for the catastrophic disaster housing recovery planning being done today. Key needs identified at that time included: an expandable disaster registration intake and applicant assistance process; the ability to provide immediate benefits payments; a plan for assisting applicants to temporarily relocate to outside the disaster area; and a strategy and prepared public messages to provide victims with information about assistance.

- **Mass Evacuee Support Planning:** The 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes caused several hundred thousand residents to evacuate to over forty States, many for prolonged time periods. Cities such as Houston, Oklahoma City, Atlanta, and Baton Rouge received hundreds of thousands of evacuees requiring immediate shelter, food, other basic assistance, as well as longer term services. In June 2006, FEMA published Recovery Strategy RS-001, Mass Sheltering and Housing Assistance. This strategy addresses many contingencies for providing sheltering and housing assistance for declared emergencies and major disasters. In addition, FEMA is undertaking more detailed mass evacuee support planning. This will assist State and local governments to plan and prepare for hosting large displaced populations. The project includes FEMA developing an evacuee registration and tracking capability, implementation plans for federal evacuation support to states, emergency sheltering guidance and providing direct planning assistance to potential host States and communities.
- **The National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and National Emergency Child Locator Center:** As defined in the Post Katrina

Act, these capabilities will address the reunification of displaced persons and activity to locate missing children during disasters. For disasters declared by the President, this tracking capability will assist FEMA, Department of Justice and the American Red Cross in further developing and implementing methods for quickly identifying and reunifying missing and separated children and family members during a disaster.

- **Improving Shelter Management and Accountability:** FEMA and the American Red Cross, the nation's largest operator of major congregate shelters during disasters. The first phase of the National Shelter System (NSS) was developed through a FEMA/American Red Cross partnership to provide a web-based data system to support shelter management, reporting, and facility identification activities. The system is intended for use by all agencies that provide shelter services during disasters to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the shelter populations and available shelter capacity. In addition, this system will provide visibility on large shelter populations and position FEMA to provide targeted registration assistance to disaster victims. Outreach and training for Federal, State, and local authorities in use of the system is being conducted.
- **Housing Options:** The FEMA Housing Portal was developed to consolidate available rental resources for evacuees from Federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals. The Joint Housing Solutions Group is a dedicated unit to research and document alternatives to traditional temporary housing. They are currently conducting initial baseline field tests of a housing option assessment tool.
- **Expanding Home Inspections Capacity:** FEMA has increased the daily home inspection capacity of FEMA contracted firms from 7,000 per day to 40,000 per day through a new contractual agreement. This added capacity—combined with a newly established third party evaluation of inspections performed on victims' damaged homes—will increase the speed and accuracy of home inspections that determine the FEMA repair and replacement grants for which a victim may be eligible.

Applicant Registration and Management

In 2006 and 2007 FEMA has focused its Recovery planning and capability building efforts on improving applicant management systems, expanding registration intake and processing capacity, increasing fraud controls, supporting displaced populations, identifying alternative forms of temporary housing, and debris management planning. FEMA has made significant progress in increasing its capability to provide assistance to individuals particularly in the areas of registration, applicant processing, and providing assistance.

- **Doubling Registration Capacity to 200,000 Per Day:** During the days and weeks following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA surpassed 100,000 registrations a day, shattering all previous records of intake. While call center capacity was increased to its highest levels ever, FEMA is pursuing even more robust contract and contingency surge capabilities that will quickly allow for rapid expansion to a registration intake capacity of up to 200,000 per day. FEMA's Internet-based registration capability has been increased by improving accessibility, allowing FEMA to handle more registrations than ever before. This will help reduce registration wait times and FEMA Helpline information delays following a major disaster.
- **Deployable Mobile Registration Intake Centers (MRICs) Pilot:** Recognizing many disaster victims may be stranded or in congregate shelters with no communications, and unable to register for assistance, FEMA has established a new registration pilot program that pushes registration capabilities directly into the field. In the 2007 hurricane season FEMA will have the ability to deploy Mobile Registrations Intake Centers immediately to congregate shelters and provide an on-site capability to quickly register for FEMA assistance.

Debris Management Planning

Management of contaminated debris is of particular concern for terrorist events, but is also an issue in most large natural disasters. An Interagency Work Group to coordinate Federal agency management of contaminated debris began work in 2005 just prior to Hurricane Katrina. The Work Group is further developing Federal contaminated debris operational procedure guidance. This project is analyzing the implications of a catastrophic incident on contaminated debris management programs and policies and will assist FEMA, USACE, EPA, USCG, and other federal stakeholders to better define their operational role and inter-relationships. FEMA's Public Assistance Program is also undertaking two catastrophic planning initiatives focusing on increasing State and local debris management capabilities through plan-

ning and enhancing Federal capabilities to estimate debris volumes following a disaster to assist in operational planning and cost estimation.

Increasing Fraud Controls

FEMA has also taken steps to implement new and stronger controls pertaining to identity and occupancy verification of applicants for disaster assistance. Examples of controls implemented include: deployment of a new Internet registration application that disallows any duplicate registrations; added identity proofing to the call center registration application so that all Individual and Households Program (IHP) registrations are subjected to the same stringent criteria, including verification of social security numbers and occupancy requirements; data-marking any applications in FEMA's database that fail identity proofing so they are flagged for manual review and denied automated payment; real-time interaction between the FEMA Service Representative and the applicant during registration to ensure the data entered that resulted in a failed identity check is correct before accepting the application; working with FEMA's data contractor to flag any addresses that are not residential addresses in order to prevent automated payments without an on-site inspection verification of address and residency; and flagging at-risk social security numbers to identify potential fraud.

Conclusion

I believe we have made real progress at FEMA and are prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season. Our efforts will bear fruit across our disaster operations and assistance programs. Today, I have focused on

- **1. Establishing a heightened posture of hurricane preparedness;**
- **2. Engaging our State and Federal partners in more thorough and informed hurricane planning; and,**
- **3. Building FEMA's operational capabilities to provide effective response and recovery.**

But, there is a lot more going on inside FEMA that will contribute to enhanced performance and organizational success. For example, I hope to announce soon the selection of our Disabilities Coordinator.

Although all disasters are local, FEMA must play a more proactive role in understanding vulnerabilities so we can assist the localities in being better prepared to respond. And, as I hope you can see by today's testimony—we are. By leaning further forward to coordinate the federal response, we can better serve all Americans.

Today, FEMA:

- **Has created engaged partnerships in support of State and local governments,**
- **Has supported and helped to facilitate an effective unified command with other Federal agencies, and State and local officials,**
- **Has engaged with hurricane-prone states to gain a better understanding of their vulnerabilities,**
- **Has improved logistics and communications capabilities to improve response, and**
- **Enhanced Disaster Assistance capabilities for recovery efforts.**

Of course, we are not done yet. There is still much work to do.

But if our progress over the past year is any indication, I believe we are on the right track to fulfilling our vision to become the nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness agency.

I am especially proud of the men and women who work at FEMA. They have put their hearts and souls into rebuilding this agency. The men and women of FEMA are dedicated to the mission of disaster and victim recovery, and staunchly committed to improving the speed, efficiency, and accountability with which we perform that mission. That commitment is not only to the victims and communities of those disasters that we expect to face in the future, but to those victims and communities still struggling with the personal, professional, and social consequences and challenges of past disasters.

Thank you for your continued support and the opportunity to discuss how FEMA is preparing for the 2007 Hurricane Season. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Paulison. I thank you for your testimony.

I will remind each member that he or she will have 5 minutes to question the witness.

I will now recognize myself for questions.

Before I do, I would like to make reference that, under the House rules and this committee, visitors and guests are not permitted to make undue noise or to applaud or in any way show their pleasure or displeasure as to the actions of the members of the House.

Mr. Paulison, as you know, with the hurricane season coming on June 1, when do you think we will have the plan ready?

Mr. PAULISON. Well, the national response plan is actually in place now, the one we have been using. The concept of how we are going to operate under that plan is still in place. What we are doing is trying to rewrite that plan, to build it from the bottom up, to make it much easier for the local communities to understand and use and also incorporate some of those things that came out of the Post-Katrina Reform Act.

We are going to try to get this thing ready before our first hurricane comes. I will not be ready by June 1, I want to tell you that right now, but it should be done shortly after that. I have had my staff working on it with the Department of Homeland Security and also a lot of our users out there are involved in rewriting this plan.

So we do have a plan in place. We have a CONOPS for hurricane season, we are doing right now multi-state evacuation planning and working with all the states and their planning efforts to make sure that we can fill those gaps that they have.

So we have a plan in place. The national response plan you are speaking of, as far as rewriting it, is not done yet, but we are working very hard to make sure we get done in a timely manner.

Chairman THOMPSON. Can you give us an approximation of when you think it will be ready?

Mr. PAULISON. I would hate to give you that and have something happen. Invariably, if I give a date on something, something happens with that. I can tell you that we are working hard to get it done in the June timeframe and not into July.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, I think you do understand the need to present that document.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir, absolutely.

Chairman THOMPSON. Is your testimony to this committee of such that even though we don't have the plan before us, that it does not impede FEMA's ability to respond to any particular disaster, especially hurricanes?

Mr. PAULISON. That is correct, sir. That is my testimony. We are ready to respond. We are working with the states, making sure we are doing those gap analyses, particularly with the hurricane states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and working with them very closely. And we are ready to respond should a hurricane come prior to getting that revised national response plan out; yes, sir.

Chairman THOMPSON. Another issue that came before us in previous testimony is that we authorize FEMA a certain number of slots from a personnel standpoint. Can you provide the committee where we are in completing the slots, as authorized by Congress?

Mr. PAULISON. At this point in time, we are just a little bit over 90 percent of our authorized strength, and I think that is remarkable. We will be at 95 percent before hurricane season, that is our goal. And don't forget we only had 1,700 people when I took over FEMA, and we lost 500 after Katrina. So we made a remarkable

recovery of hiring people, getting them aboard, and we are at 90 percent.

If you are talking about the 254 positions converting to full-time, we are in the process of doing that. Of course, that will drop the percentage down once we get those in there, but we are doing a remarkable job of hiring, being able to cut through some of the red tape and being able to get people on board.

Chairman THOMPSON. Can you provide the committee with what you identify as some of the red tape that perhaps prevented you from bringing people on as fast as you would like to have?

Mr. PAULISON. I think a lot of it was getting stuck in the mud, so to speak, with the old way of doing things. I will give you an example: We have a job fair right there at the Holiday Inn where FEMA is located, and we had almost 600 people show up for 42 jobs.

So we are going to be doing more things like that, going out and looking at hiring veterans that have been disabled from the war in Iraq, going out to colleges and community colleges. I spoke at a commencement exercise last week and challenged people to come to work for FEMA. It is a good place to work. Targeting minority groups and women groups to get them to apply to come to work for FEMA.

We are looking outside the box, trying to cut through some of the red tape. One of the things I learned coming from local government, the hiring of the federal government is much more difficult than at the local level.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, as you know, one of the workplace issues for DHS in general is the morale of its employees. Can you provide us those things that you think that might help Congress help the department improve morale of its employees?

Mr. PAULISON. I will speak to FEMA directly. The morale of FEMA when I took over was obviously, by anyone's perception, not good. They had been beat up, they were overworked, shorthanded, not enough people to do the job. So we are building the morale by doing a couple of things.

One, the employees see that I am very serious about rebuilding this organization and they bought into that. Two, we have been hiring people. Like I said, we are at 90 percent of our authorized strength now. Three, and maybe as important as the other two, is bringing people on board who have experience to do the job, bringing in good leadership. We only had two of our 10 regional director slots filled. Now, they are all 10 filled, and they are people with 25 and 30 years experience dealing with emergency management. So the employees see that we are serious about it.

I think that what I would ask Congress to do is to continue what you have been doing, Mr. Chair. You have been supporting me, you have been supporting this agency, and the employees recognize that.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you.

Last question, Mr. Paulison: Are you aware of an issue with formaldehyde in certain trailers that FEMA bought and placed in the Gulf Coast region? And if you are, to what extent have you had it investigated, and what have you come up with your investigation?

Mr. PAULISON. The formaldehyde issue was brought to our attention, and we actually went out and investigated. We used EPA and some other agencies to do testing. We have been told that the formaldehyde does not present a health hazard; however, we do encourage our occupants of those trailers to air those out, keep them open as much as possible to let the fumes die out. And pretty much any mobile home you buy has that same issue. Actually, a lot of single family homes have that.

But we have been very cognizant and are on top of that and are making sure that we are not doing anything that is going to harm those people that are living in those travel trailers and mobile homes.

Chairman THOMPSON. So there is not anything out of the normal?

Mr. PAULISON. That is correct, sir.

Chairman THOMPSON. Okay. Thank you very much.

I now recognize the ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from New York, for questions.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Paulison, I understand that probably in the next several weeks the U.S. International Trade Commission may issue a decision in a patent dispute case that would prohibit the importation of broadband-capable cell phones that allow users to share video and exchange other data via the Internet. I assume you are aware of it. I know several first responder groups have come to me, and they are concerned about the impact that would have.

What impact do you think it would have, and how would FEMA adapt itself to that decision, if it comes down that way?

Mr. PAULISON. We had a discussion with this yesterday, so your question is timely.

I won't have a major impact on FEMA itself, because we have the capability of doing those things already. What it does have an impact on is the first responders. They need that technology out there to be able to do the video, the data over one instrument instead of having several.

So without getting into a dispute on who is right, the fact is that the first responder community can use that technology and can use it to actually protect themselves and better protect the American public.

Mr. KING. On to another point, and I realize that no two disasters are alike and no incidents are alike, but based on the leadership you are bringing to FEMA and based on the legislation that was passed last year, what would be done differently if a Katrina-like event occurred this summer? How do you see FEMA reacting differently than it did 2 years ago?

Mr. PAULISON. Well, FEMA itself, the difference is some of the things we have already talked about, about having a better communication system, having the right type of leadership on the ground who know how to handle disasters, know how to manage these big disasters, but also having visibility of what is actually happening in real time as opposed to guessing what is happening and getting it off some of the television stations.

Also, we have been working with each state, looking at evacuation plans. Are they in place, how are they going to transport peo-

ple, where are they going to go, who is going to staff the shelters? We have been working very closely with the Red Cross on the shelter issue, putting a shelter registry in place. We have identified 44,000 shelters across this country that we didn't know that were there before.

So we are doing a lot of things that you are not going to see the same type of response. You are going to see a federal government that is extremely proactive, moving very quickly and making sure that when the state asks for something it is there on the ground waiting for them.

Mr. KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now yield to the gentlelady from California for 5 minutes, Ms. Sanchez.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Mr. Paulison, for being before us today.

In the next couple of weeks, I am planning to introduce legislation to authorize the national urban search and rescue system. And my question for you is, do you think that the national urban search and rescue system and its task forces are a successful part in helping FEMA respond to these disasters?

Mr. PAULISON. There is no question about it. They are an outstanding asset for FEMA to use. We have 28 teams out there right now. In 2007, they received \$25 million from FEMA, and the president's proposed budget for 2008 is another \$25 million.

Ms. SANCHEZ. In particular, the legislation I have drafted right now would allow the urban search and rescue system and task forces to activate for pre-staging and training activities, and do you think that this will improve the system's preparedness and ability to respond when they are needed?

Mr. PAULISON. Well, without seeing the legislation, I will just speak generally, that any time that the teams exercise and deploy in practice, it makes them sharper and more able to respond in a better manner, if that is answering your question. And that is why we have increased the amount of money they get to \$25 million and again next year to give them the dollars to do some of those things.

Ms. SANCHEZ. In the testimony that we received from the second panel, Mr. Fugate, the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, urges us to increase the funding for the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program. The National Emergency Management Association estimates that the current national need for that funding is at about \$487 million, and yet the president only put in \$200 million for this 2008 budget.

Given that this the only grant that we have of federal funding for the states and locals to use for planning and preparedness activities for all hazard disasters, do you think that that is enough money, the fact that the president only put in \$200 million in his budget?

Mr. PAULISON. Well, since Mr. Fugate is sitting behind me, I will be careful how I answer that.

Actually, the president and the administration does feel that that is sufficient. There is no amount of money that is ever enough for anybody to operate under. We know that our state emergency management systems are stretched. Florida has a very robust one, and

Mr. Fugate is one of our better emergency managers around the country.

But the president is putting into the budget what he thinks is sufficient to keep those systems going. It is a state activity, and the federal government is simply assisting in that area.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Do you think that the Department of Homeland Security has a sufficient all-hazards approach to emergency preparedness and response?

Mr. PAULISON. I do. I am a firm believe in all-hazards response and all-hazards preparedness. Any type of disaster that we prepare for we have to prepare for all of them. We have to prepare for natural disasters, manmade disasters, terrorist disasters, any type of thing. You can see it in your home state what you have to deal with, from forest fire to floods, mudslides, earthquakes, all those types of things.

So we have to have a general perspective of this, and I do feel like that I get a lot of support as the secretary for an all-hazards approach to how we respond and how we prepare.

Ms. SANCHEZ. And, lastly, let me ask, my biggest concern right now, being a Californian and just going out in the community, is that the first line of response or successfulness with respect to either a terrorist attack or a hazard situation is how the people respond. And what I have seen is really a deterioration in people even being prepared on an individual, family or unit basis.

What do you think that we can do to increase that knowledge and really get people to understand that it may be 9 days, like in Katrina, before the federal government or anybody else gets to them?

Mr. PAULISON. And I have seen the same thing, and I will talk about my home state of Florida after Hurricane Andrew came through. We saw several years where people were prepared and would get ready for every hurricane season. And as we got further and further away from that hurricane, it got worse and worse where people simply did not prepare.

With Hurricane Wilma coming through last year, we ended up working with the state and simply could not keep up with the amount of supplies we had to deliver to people because they were not ready. They didn't have their 3 days supply of food and water and medicine, flashlights and batteries and all those things that we know you have to have.

This country has to get back to a culture of preparedness. We can preach it from here, but it takes people like Mr. Fugate, who will testify in the next committee, and the local emergency managers and our congressional members and our local elected officials continuing to preach that we have to be ready for any type of disaster. Because regardless of what state you live in, in this free country of ours, there is some type of natural disaster that can be there. Plus we have the threat of terrorism.

So I think we are on the same page. We have got to get that out there and convince our public out there, our residents, that they have to prepare and take care of themselves and their families.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much. I apologize to the gentlelady. I looked at one red light and it was second.

We now recognize the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Rogers, for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Those of us who were on this committee last Congress are all aware of the real difficulty DHS has had in trying to recruit and retain top management personnel, and we all are also aware how difficult it was for us when your position came open to recruit top-flight personnel to be interested in this job. And as I recall, you were the only top-flight candidate who didn't run for the hills, and our nation owes you a debt of gratitude for taking on this job when nobody else wanted it of your caliber. So I appreciate that.

Also, I appreciate the fact that when we had a tornado in Alabama earlier, a few months ago, FEMA performed exceptionally well, which was a stark turnaround from what we saw on the Gulf Coast after Katrina. So I know that didn't happen by accident either, so I appreciate your service in Alabama.

There are several things I want to ask about. First is, on the coast, in the coastal states, we have, and I know in Mississippi and in Alabama, primarily rural water systems that provide water to these small towns. It is my understanding that in Georgia and in Mississippi there are adequate numbers of mobile generators for pumping the water when the power goes out, but in Alabama there are a very small number of those generators.

Is there anything being done by FEMA to address that inadequacy, at least on the southern part of Alabama, toward the Gulf Coast, in water generation?

Mr. PAULISON. We have quite a few generators that we call 50-pack. We have 50 generators on a tractor trailer that we move in very quickly after a storm. Greensburg, Kansas, had their own water system and their own power system owned by the city, so we moved in very quickly with generators, along with the National Guard, to help them get those things back up and running again. And we would do the same thing in Alabama.

Mr. ROGERS. Can these local rural water systems apply for grant assistance to get mobile units that they can move among their own members and their associations?

Mr. PAULISON. They can after a storm. If there is a storm and their infrastructure is damaged—

Mr. ROGERS. I am thinking ahead of time, pre-positioning these things, knowing that on the Gulf Coast we are going to have seasonal weather problems that will take the water distribution down. Because Georgia has an adequate number and because Mississippi, because of Katrina relief, has them, I want to know if we can do anything in advance of a disaster to make sure these water systems have these mobile units they can share among each other?

Mr. PAULISON. I am not aware of any off the top of my head, Congressman, but I will tell you what I will do: I will research and see if we can find something.

Mr. ROGERS. If you would, I would appreciate it, sir.

The next thing you talked about in response to Congressman King's question about what we would do differently. You talked about anticipating and working better with local governments. One of the things that our local officials in south Alabama talked about after Katrina was the debris removal, and they would like the lati-

tude to go ahead and negotiate ahead of time with companies who are not in the immediate coastal area, to come in after a hurricane or tornado and remove debris, pre-negotiated prices along pre-negotiated routes so that we don't get extorted when we have these disasters.

Have you all done anything to allow these local governments themselves to pre-negotiate these debris removal contracts?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. In fact, we encourage them to do that. One thing that we have done is there used to be a disparity between at what percentage rate we reimburse the Corps, if the Corps did it, or if a local community contracted themselves, and we have taken that disparity away. That was not the right thing to do, so we have taken that disparity away.

We encourage local communities and states to have those debris contracts in place. It makes it much easier. First of all, it puts the work back at the local community where it needs to be so you can put local people working. And then, secondly, it takes the burden off of the Corps also.

Mr. ROGERS. Excellent. My last question is to follow up on Congresswoman Sanchez's issue of search and rescue. Do you all have within your resources canine detection teams for post-disaster search and rescue?

Mr. PAULISON. The 20 urban search and rescue teams, most of those do have canine dogs to search for live victims and also body recovery. FEMA itself does not own them, but we pay for them through the local communities that have urban search and rescue teams, or the states that have them.

Mr. ROGERS. You pay for them?

Mr. PAULISON. We support the urban search and rescue teams, again, \$25 million this year, and part of that the teams will support a dog canine corps at the urban search and rescue level.

Mr. ROGERS. Okay. Thank you very much.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentlelady from the District of Columbia for 5 minutes, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The gentleman from Alabama has raised an issue of the kind that about a dozen members came to testify before our subcommittee last week. And just for the information of members, we are preparing a package of legislative fixes really drawn from the Katrina experience. Sometimes they may apply to states like Alabama, which is also affected, but these would be one time only fixes, and we had the entire delegation from both states come. And we would appreciate your continuing input into that discussion.

I am going to limit my question to a single one, particularly since my subcommittee is having a hearing that comes close to this one. It is going to be called, "Assuring the National Guard is as Ready at Home as Abroad," and I appreciate that you are appearing at both of these hearings.

Although I am going to suggest to both chairmen, full chairmen, that we perhaps have some joint hearings so as to keep FEMA from running between two committees, which very honestly do have overlapping jurisdictions. And so we have just got to figure

that out, and the committees are trying very hard. They each have a deep interest in your work.

My question really goes to preparing for the coming season and avoiding what I will call, for lack of a better word, false positives. We may have scared FEMA into overpreparedness. You will remember, Mr. Paulison, our hearing on the millions of dollars above what was needed for food, and I know you are fixing that now, but several million dollars was wasted, some was given away.

We also have asked for an audit of your new management employees. I think much of that came out of both committees.

Mr. Chairman, you will recall that in our committee on the Federal Management Service we discussed, as we had in the other committee, how the person who became head of this federal police service that covers the entire federal work force, almost 2 million people, had never run a police department. I understand some of these people come out of the military, but that raises that some questions that I think only an audit will tell us about.

But you have now new people predicting hurricanes, and there was an internal debate in FEMA last year about this 7-day directive, that there will be 7 days advance warning and so forth, and a lot of that comes out of the science, but the debate had to do with keeping mobilizations and deployments from occurring that may not be necessary. And it appears that a fair number of deployments were made that were not necessary based on this 7-day warning when in fact most of those hurricanes peter out and go out to sea, thank heavens.

I want to know if you feel that you are more actively able to discern which hurricanes are likely to hit land, and you know that in about 3 days out. In that case, wouldn't that be enough, given advance orders for food and so forth, if needed, to do the necessary deployments without trying to figure out 7 days out and then deploying people around the country, spending taxpayers' money where it may not be necessary?

Mr. PAULISON. That is a very difficult issue and a very intriguing question you are asking.

We work very closely with the National Hurricane Center. In fact, I have a FEMA employee that is stationed down there. We have a hurricane liaison team actually based in the National Hurricane Center down in Miami. And we know they are working very hard to give us better predictions. Three-day predictions are pretty accurate, the 5-day predictions are not quite as accurate, and if you get out any further than that, it makes it much harder.

We want to be proactive. The states have to move quickly. If we look at an area like Louisiana or anywhere in the Gulf Coast where a significant number of people are going to have to be evacuated and going to have to be evacuated by buses, if we wait too long before we start moving people, then they will be in harm's way. Now, 7 days is too early to move people, obviously, but, still, 72 hours out takes almost that long sometimes to move people.

I know Craig Fugate is here, and he has a lot of experience with that. I am sure you can ask that same question from a state perspective just to tell you what they think.

We don't want to move assets needlessly, we don't want to waste taxpayers' dollars, but at the same time, the downside would not be there if they needed us.

So it is a tough call. We are trying to make the best judgment we can. I am on the phone constantly. I was with Max Mayfield and the new Hurricane Director Proenza. We are developing a good relationship, and I am on the phone with him constantly, "Tell me what you really think. Where do you think it is going to go?" We are just making the best call we can at the time.

Ms. NORTON. Yes. It would be too bad if an audit then is done on FEMA going more places than was necessary. There ought to be some way to somehow do this scientifically. I do understand what you are up against.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

I would like to remind the audience that cell phones should be in the "off" or "vibrate" mode during hearings. We continue to hear phones going off while questions and witnesses are responding.

I now recognize the gentleman from Florida for 5 minutes, Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

As I am sure you are aware, Director, many experts have predicted that this hurricane season will be a very active one. Obviously, those of us who represent coastal states are very concerned about the potential of these dangerous forecasts.

I believe it is incumbent upon our states and local governments to best prepare for major disasters. So with that, I will ask my questions.

What are the most important steps that states, localities and even individuals can take to ensure that they are best prepared for the upcoming hurricane season?

Mr. PAULISON. That is a pretty broad question.

I am from south Florida also. My family is still down there. Individually, I can tell you what we do. We make sure that our home is prepared, make sure we have hurricane shutters. Every beginning of hurricane season we go out and purchase food and water, make sure we have batteries for our flashlights. I happen to have a portable generator. I make sure I have fuel for that and we are ready to go.

At the local level, the local community definitely has to be prepared, because that is where the response is going to come from. They have to make sure they have plans in place, they exercise those plans, make sure they know what their shelters are going to be, how they are going to evacuate people, when they are going to call it, how are they going to get there.

And at the state level, the same type of thing. The state needs to make sure that they are following up on each of those counties and each of those communities, that they are evaluating those plans to make sure those are in place and make sure the state is ready to respond with the assets it has.

It is a team effort. It takes the federal government, the state, the local community and the individuals all to take it very seriously to prepare themselves for these types of storms, particularly in the coastal areas.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. I have a question. I introduced a piece of legislation which was to provide tax incentives for Americans in their property to better withstand hurricane and tornado-free winds.

Do you believe that the administration would be interested in working with me on this proposal to help continue our country's commitment to disaster preparedness?

Because I think mitigation is where it is at.

Mr. PAULISON. I can speak for FEMA, particularly. We would be glad to work with you on any type of legislation that would help people better prepare themselves and to sit down and talk with you and talk about what our issues are and how we think we can get this country all prepared for any type of disaster, quite frankly.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. Can you specifically discuss again—I know it was touched upon—the adjustments that your agency made post-Katrina?

Mr. PAULISON. I will, and I will cover them quickly, because I know you have another panel behind me. We took very seriously those things that came out of committees like this, came out of the White House, came out of the IG report, the GAO reports, and they boiled down to just a few things that were overall themes.

One, the biggest failure was communications, no communication between the local community and the state, between the state and the federal government and inside the federal government itself. That is why we put this unified command system in place. It has a better visibility of what is happening on the ground real time. We have put systems in place to be able to get live videos back where we can actually see that and have satellite communications.

Having a better logistics system, better handle on how much stuff do we need on the ground, how do we move it, how do we track it, and how do we get it to the people. Having better leadership on the ground, people who know what they are doing—we learned that very clearly—and then also being able to take better care of our victims, the people who have had to evacuate. Have a better registration system in place, being able to track people, making sure they get what they need but yet at the same time putting waste, abuse and fraud systems in place so we don't waste money like we did during Katrina.

And that is a very quick, short answer, but I would be glad to sit down with your office and go over it in detail if you would like.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Director.

I yield back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Carney, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Paulison, once again, I want to commend you for your efforts in jumping on. It is not easy, and I realize the task you have at hand.

On February 15 of 2006, February 15, 2006, Secretary Chertoff testified, and I want to quote this so I get it right, that, "It seems to me the minimum of what we need to do by June 1 is require that you put on the trucks the kind of communications that allow you to track where a truck is at any particular point in time."

Now, the secretary is talking about June 1, 2006. Does FEMA, in fact, have this capability in place by January 1, 2006?

Mr. PAULISON. We do. We do for the Gulf Coast, and up the Atlantic Coast, anything that flows out of our office in Denton, Texas, or our offices out of Atlanta, which is our biggest supply depots. We purchased 20,000 GPS units and we can track our trucks real time, but it is a bigger system than that.

So nationwide what we can do is our ordering system, where does the order come from, when is it filled, where is it going, and when does it get on the road. We have put a system in place like that.

Mr. CARNEY. And that is nationwide?

Mr. PAULISON. The tracking of the individual trucks is not nationwide. The tracking of the individual trucks is anything that comes out of Texas or anything that comes out of Atlanta.

But we are looking now at going to more of what we call a 3PL, third-party logistics where leveraging the private sector out there, like the UPSs and the FedExes and tying into their system instead of spending the millions and millions of dollars to purchase our own. So that is going to be the next phase of this.

Mr. CARNEY. In case of a true catastrophe, are you going to then be pulling resources from all over the country; is that what you are telling us?

Mr. PAULISON. Well, the bulk of our supplies are in Texas and Alabama, although we do have them scattered around the country. But what we are really doing is develop a partnership with the Defense Logistics Agency where they will be our main supplier and a backup supplier. So we will be able to rotate stocks, so we don't have the wasted supplies like we had before, but at the same time being able to track those through that system also. We really are developing partnerships.

We have learned a lot of lessons over the last 3 years on how the logistics systems should work and also to the point of hiring one of the top officials. I had a DLA to come work for us and run our logistics, so we are excited about that.

Mr. CARNEY. Thanks. In your prepared testimony, you said that the guiding principle of the new FEMA is that we are leaning further forward to deliver more effective disaster assistance to individuals and communities impacted by a disaster, and you called it, "engaged partnership." I really commend that approach. I am very happy to hear that.

Yet last week, when White House Spokesman Tony Snow was asked about Kansas Governor Sebelius concern over response efforts, he said, "If you don't request it, you are not going to get it."

Is this statement consistent with FEMA's principles, or do you have some education to do at the White House?

[Audience interruption.]

Chairman THOMPSON. Excuse me a minute. We will save your time, Mr. Carney.

Mr. PAULISON. What was the question again? Sorry?

Mr. CARNEY. Your leaning forward approach, you have engaged partnership I think is great, but Tony Snow said, "If you don't request it, you are not going to get it."

Mr. PAULISON. I think that was in context to some of the Guard issues, I am not sure. But I can tell you that the philosophy of this agency is we are going to try to anticipate what the needs are. We see thousands of disasters all the time, so we kind of know what is going to be needed. So we are going to be moving supplies, communications but not without talking to the state and telling them what we are doing. We are not going to come in and take over. This is a local response and it is a state response.

But what we did in Greensburg, Kansas, just seeing the magnitude of the disaster of that, we knew that they were going to have a difficult time asking for things, so we started moving the stuff that we thought they would need right away, and it worked extremely well.

Mr. CARNEY. Is Mr. Snow aware of this?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, he is. He was with us when we went down there and saw what we were doing. I think that may have been taken—again, I don't know what the context of what that statement was said, but I know he was very supportive of what we were doing.

Mr. CARNEY. Good. All right. That is good to hear.

Thank you very much. No further questions.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize Mr. Davis of Tennessee for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS OF TENNESSEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Director Paulison, for being here. I appreciate your testimony today.

It is my understanding that FEMA and the national response plan make it quite clear that FEMA's role is to coordinate federal resources and to assist in disasters and not actually take over for local and state governments. Do you agree with that?

Mr. PAULISON. Absolutely. All response is local; that is, we are not going to take over. We want to be there as a partner from day one, not wait for people to become overwhelmed before we step in.

But I was a local first responder also. I ran the Miami-Dade Fire Department, and I would not want somebody to come in and take over my disaster, but I would want somebody by my side, and that is the tact we are going to take. We are not going to take over, that disaster belongs to that state, belongs to that local community. We just want to make sure they have the tools and the supplies to do the job.

Mr. DAVIS OF TENNESSEE. You used the word, "overwhelmed," and it appears to me that we are really in a partnership, the federal government and state and local governments, coming together, working alongside, closer to the people. Local government, state government really take the lead and then FEMA comes in and follows up.

With that in mind, though, there are people around the country that watch national TV and they just feel like the federal government should take control and be there quicker. I am not sure that I agree with that, but what would you say to the people around the country that have that sense that we should react quicker at a federal level?

Mr. PAULISON. I think we should act quicker than we have in the past but not to take over. If the state or local community does need

something, like communications equipment, food, water, blue tarps, all those types of things that FEMA supplies, they should be there when they need them, not have to wait 3 or 4 days for us to ship them across the country.

So we are going to move faster with things that we think they do need, but we are not going to step on their toes, we are not going to take over these disaster scenes.

Mr. DAVIS OF TENNESSEE. I know that I have been a state legislator myself, and I understand that at the local level we are closer to the people, typically, than we are in the Washington level. Do you believe you even have the constitutional authority to take control or do you still believe that is down there at the local and state level?

Mr. PAULISON. In a catastrophic event, the president would have legal authority to take over, invoking Insurrection Act or something like that. However, in a normal disaster, we are not going to do that. That is not what we have the authority to do. That is the local response or a state's rights out there.

Again, we want to be a partner. This is not an adversarial at all. We want to be there with them as soon as we can, standing by their side, "What do you need, how can we help, what can we give you," and that is the way we want to operate. That is the philosophy this organization is going to operate under as long as I am in charge.

Mr. DAVIS OF TENNESSEE. Thank you for your partnership, and I can tell you, being from the mountains of east Tennessee, there are times that we have floods coming out of the mountains with rivers and streams and FEMA has always been very responsive. This is my first term but I hear very good things that you have been able to do in the past, and thank you for working with us on the local and state level.

And with that, I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentlelady from New York, Ms. Lowey, for 5 minutes.

Mrs. LOWEY. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and what a delight it is for me to welcome Administrator Paulison.

I must tell you that we had a severe nor'easter and the subsequent flooding devastated many communities, particularly in Westchester County, which is my community, and Administrator Paulison joined Senator Clinton and me on a tour of the flooded areas and FEMA quickly had preliminary damage assessment teams on the ground, which led to the president issuing a disaster declaration in a timely manner. I cannot be more effusive. You were extraordinary, you responded immediately, and I visited every disaster preparedness center, recovery center, I guess we call it now in the district, and the response has really been fantastic.

You set up seven disaster recovery centers, nearly 6,000 households and businesses have registered for assistance, \$7.25 million in housing assistance grants have been approved for over 3,000 households. The Small Business Administration has approved 41 loans for a total of \$2.24 million, and the majority of those I have spoken with have really been pleased.

So congratulations, and we thank you for your very efficient, effective and compassionate response.

On another issue, I wanted to ask you about the Stafford Act, which limits grants for housing repair to primary residences, and I certainly understand the intent to not provide assistance for an individual to repair a second home or vacation house.

This limitation, we have found, can have a negative impact on landlords who are trying to make repairs so their renters can return home, and affordable housing is very scarce in my district, and after the recent flooding you and I saw many cases in which landlords are denied assistance to repair their rental units, because these are not the owners' primary residences.

The landlords must secure a Small Business Administration or private loan in order to repair their property, and in some cases, landlords have simply said that it isn't financially viable to take a loan to fix property that is rented by low or moderate income individuals.

So this exacerbates the affordable housing problems and really has had a major effect on renters who must find a new place to live.

So in order to solve this problem, which also remains in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, I am working on legislation to allow FEMA to provide direct assistance to landlords of low to moderate income housing. It would also give FEMA the flexibility to set appropriate conditions to ensure that funding is directed to areas where it will be most beneficial.

I would appreciate it if you could share with me your thoughts and whether you could support a change to the Stafford Act to assist landlords who rent to low or moderate income tenants.

Mr. PAULISON. The issue that you saw is why we really encourage people to have flood insurance and insurance on their dwellings, because no matter where you are the potential for flood is always there across this country.

We would sit down and work with you on the issues. Obviously, I can't commit the administration position on the legislation, but I would like to look at it and have an opportunity to comment on it.

Mrs. LOWEY. I thank you very much.

And it is also my understanding that when seeking federal assistance for personal property losses, an applicant must first file for a Small Business Association loan and if denied, FEMA may offer the applicant a grant.

Why does an individual—oh, I see my red light, I will talk quickly—why must an individual first apply to the SBA for a loan when attempting to secure a FEMA grant for personal property damage?

Mr. PAULISON. I am not sure that is totally accurate. When they apply for individual assistance, if they get turned down by FEMA, then they can apply for SBA loan, but I think it is the other way around. Let me have my staff sit down with you and go over that individual—that is one of the things we are actually going to look at this next year.

Okay. There is one called, "other needs assistance," and that part is correct, but we are going to look very carefully at the individual assistance piece this next year, because it doesn't move as quickly

as want it to, it doesn't move as smoothly as we want it to, and see how we can streamline that and make it much more user friendly. And then next year we will do public assistance.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you very much.

And thank you for indulging.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentlelady from Florida, Ms. Brown-Waite, for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN-WAITE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to also thank Mr. Shays for relinquishing his time to me, because I have to be in the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

I just wanted to thank you, Mr. Paulison, for proving that you are taking emergency management seriously. When we had the tornadoes touch down in central Florida, we got absolute great response from FEMA. We were able to have your people and SBA on the ground helping people, and that is what I think that they expect from government. So let me just commend you very much for rapid response.

Probably coming from Florida, you have just had a lot of experience in the Miami-Dade area, and, certainly, in Florida, we have a great state system that I am proud to say I helped put together after Hurricane Andrew. When I was got elected it was right after Hurricane Andrew, and we knew that we needed some changes in Florida and made those necessary changes.

One thing that has concerned local elected officials in my area is that FEMA will not reimburse in a gated community for—they will not reimburse the locality for out front of the house pickup of debris, and why some may think that gated community are just for the wealthy, I can assure you that I have low and moderate income mobile home gate communities also.

I would like to ask you if the agency is considering any changes in that prohibition?

Mr. PAULISON. I need to check with my staff, but I think we have corrected that where we do do some of those things and the reimburse the communities for that type of pickup. I live in a gated community too, but let me follow up and make sure. I think we have put stuff in place to deal with some of these issues. But let me find out for sure. I don't want to give you a bad answer here.

Ms. BROWN-WAITE. I do believe that what you do is, they have to haul it out to the front of the gated community, and it will be taken away from there. But for many elderly homeowners, that is a problem. And if people are in a gated community, I just don't see why we should be discriminating against them, either because they are at the wealthy end of the spectrum, living in a gated community, or at the very poor end of the spectrum, living in a secure senior mobile home park. And I would just ask you to take a look at that policy.

Mr. PAULISON. I know we dealt with this during Katrina in New Orleans and some other areas, and we worked around it by getting a right of entry to do some of those things. But let me give you the right answer, and I will get back with your staff and brief them on what those issues are. And if it is still not where you need it to be, we will work on it some more.

Ms. BROWN-WAITE. I appreciate that.

Certainly, at a time of an emergency, such as we regularly have in Florida and other coastal states, tell me how you coordinate with the National Guard. I know that the issue of the National Guard has been brought up recently. I wrote to the state National Guard general asking where Florida is, because that is of course my concern and Mr. Bilirakis's concern.

Tell me how you coordinate with the National Guard.

[Audience interruption.]

Ms. BROWN-WAITE. Excuse me, ma'am, I didn't ask you. I asked Mr. Paulison.

Chairman THOMPSON. Excuse me. According to our House rules, you are out of order, and you are not allowed to speak. I have admonished the audience a couple of times about that. And we are trying to be tolerant, but understand we do have rules of the committee, and unless you follow those rules, we will have you removed.

Continue, Ms. Brown-Waite.

Mr. PAULISON. The National Guards are a state asset, and we work very closely with them when we get on the scene. In Greensburg, the adjunct general of the National Guard was the incident commander and we immediately made contact with him to make sure that we were coordinating the response.

I know the issue is, as we heard just behind me, about the National Guard's asset being overseas, but we do have a system in this country called, EMAC, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, where we move assets from one state to another to assist a particular state that is going through a disaster, and we do that with the National Guard asset also.

But we work very closely with the Guard. They are a key player in our response system, and we have a very good partnership with them.

Ms. BROWN-WAITE. One other question: When localities contract with various clean-up companies, they very often will contract with two or three in case one is not available, which I think is a very wise thing to do. But during the tornado that struck down, it really was a feeding frenzy of, "Well, I have got the contract, no I have got the contract," and I am not certain I want the federal government to enter in there but perhaps to advise the localities of one has to be the primary, one has to be the secondary. Because in this instance, both of these companies thought that they were the primary. And I am sure you have found this in other locations.

After you respond to that, I will yield back the balance of my time, but please do respond.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, I actually have seen that on occasion when there are several contractors, but that really is a local issue, and I think you are right, you don't want the federal government stepping into that. We do encourage the communities to have those debris contracts in place. We have the Army Corps of Engineers that can sometimes come in and referee those types of things, but that is up to the local community to say, "Okay, you are the prime, you are the backup." We can advise them to do that, but it is really their contract, not ours.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentlelady from the Virgin Islands for 5 minutes, Ms. Christensen.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Mr. Paulison, thank you for your testimony. I am encouraged by the progress you are reporting.

I have a question about mass care, because, as I understand it, the ESF-6, the housing, feeding and providing first aid now comes under FEMA, but I would like you to explain to me what the role of the Red Cross is then in mass care and how that is being coordinated.

Mr. PAULISON. The Red Cross is one of our major players in that ESF-6 system. We ended up taking it over, because they don't have the authority to mission assign other federal governments and we do. But they are partners in that, along with several other groups, like HHS and others, that fit into that ESF-6 position of mass care. And we take the lead in it, but they are right there with us as partners.

And, by the way, I just met with your adjunct general and your state emergency manager recently, a few days ago, exactly and talked about some of these same issues. And they are doing a great job for you down there; they really are.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes, they are. We are very proud of them and looking forward to have the change of command very soon.

I am also concerned about mitigation, because in my experience with FEMA, mitigation played a big role for us in the Virgin Islands in being able to prevent the damage with recurrent hurricanes. And if I remember correctly, we could request about 20 percent additional funding for mitigation. And I am hearing that that is no longer the case.

Could you tell me if there is still a provision for mitigation as you repair and recover or is that done?

Mr. PAULISON. No. If a disaster is declared, there is a certain portion of the disaster dollars that can be used by the state or the local community for mitigation efforts. There is also Hazard Mitigation Grant Program out there that can be used for public assistance, and I think it is 15 percent of whatever the disaster cost is. And that can be used to raise homes or do other things to mitigate future damage. But the money is still there. It is 15 percent.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Okay. I still have a little more time.

The PFO and FCOs—

Mr. PAULISON. Yes?

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. —do they both report to the secretary?

Mr. PAULISON. No. The FCO reports to me. That is our employee. What we are doing with the PFO, the PFO is the secretary's representative out there to do the high-level coordination with federal agencies. The FCO is the primary federal person to manage disasters.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. But the FCO is the person that I, as the health person in the Virgin Islands, would go to to ask for whatever assets I needed from the federal government.

Mr. PAULISON. That is correct. You should.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I am surprised the question didn't come up before, but it just seems to me that we have too many there, and when that happens, things fall between the cracks. Has that been

exercised to see how it works and whether we really need those two officials?

Mr. PAULISON. It has. We just had a major exercise just this last week, actually, 2 weeks ago, not only to a hurricane but tied into a terrorist event where the PFO and the FCO worked together. The FCO, which you normally deal with, is the person that handles anything to do with the Stafford Act in that disaster. That will continue on.

The PFO is the secretary's representative out there. Doesn't have operational control; the FCO has that. The PFO is going to help mitigate issues between different federal agencies, may feed the information back to the secretary. Again, it is his eyes and ears out there on the ground.

But the FCO is going to be the primary person managing the federal assets on the ground, not running the disaster. That is either, in your case, the territorial or a state responsibility to manage that disaster.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Connecticut, Mr. Shays.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you, Mr. Paulison, for being here. I think you have got a very difficult job, and I know you are working very hard at it.

I don't have the same reaction Ms. Lowey has about the gratitude from FEMA. You left Connecticut out of the businesses and personal assistance, and we could give you literally hundreds of examples of damage, 2,400 residential units and so on.

What I am puzzled by is, wouldn't you group the area together and—I mean, what does it matter if Greenwich in New York are divided if it is the same storm in the region? Isn't the whole point of natural disaster to look at the impact on the region? Why would you do it next door to the same storm and not Connecticut?

Mr. PAULISON. I have my staff looking at Connecticut right now, actually. The president did sign off on two counties for public assistance. I have not turned down individual assistance yet. I have asked the state for more information about individual damage.

We are bringing on a small state and rural advocate into FEMA to report directly to me also. The public assistance and individual assistance piece for some of the smaller states like yours, it doesn't work as smoothly as I want it to. I am just trying to be very candid here. Fifty homes in Connecticut is much different than 100 or 200 homes in New York or Texas or California. And what it does is, the whole idea of the Stafford Act is to cover when the state is overwhelmed and can't deal with a disaster.

So it has been very difficult with Connecticut. Your county system is not like the other states.

Mr. SHAYS. No, we don't have a county system.

Mr. PAULISON. And you don't have a county system.

Mr. SHAYS. We have counties only in name, and that is the only thing that they represent.

Mr. PAULISON. That is what is making it difficult for us, so I sat my staff down just before I came to this area, actually not even knowing you would be here, but I want them to look at this very

carefully as we look at the individual assistance piece and the amount of damage. We have an area in there that was very low income that has—

Mr. SHAYS. Right. I was going to read you some of the folks, renters, who didn't have flood insurance—these were rivers that hadn't flooded as long as anyone can remember.

But the same storm that impacted Ms. Lowey's district impacted ours, and there is this artificial boundary in New York and Connecticut. I would think we would look at the region and treat the region, and if that is not possible, and it seems to me it is a defect in the law, we should look at us as a region. And I appreciate you checking that out, and I look forward to having more dialogue with you about that.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. I will be glad to do that.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I know you received correspondence from all five congressmen, two senators and the governor as well.

I would like to ask, in regards to Katrina, we all weep for different reasons. Everything about it, it was a huge storm, 10 miles inland, 20 feet of water, and Mississippi. It was a biblical storm.

But there were things that were very troubling to me. One—I want no comment about this, I will just say it—that the head of Homeland Security chose to only go there by Wednesday with the president. I would have thought he would have been there Monday, Tuesday, whatever. I think his reasoning was he wanted to let FEMA be FEMA and stay out of the way.

But when I helped write the Department of Homeland Security legislation with others, we wanted the Department of Homeland Security to be added value to FEMA, not to just like say, "Here you go, you are the experts, do it." We wanted everything to be added value.

Can you tell me what added value you have by having the Department of Homeland Security and how the department may respond more effectively than it did, not FEMA, per se?

Mr. PAULISON. There is a significant amount of added value by us being inside Homeland Security, from my perspective. I have assets at my fingertips that we would not have had before. I meet every week with the seven operational components of Homeland Security, from the Coast Guard, the Border Patrol, ICE, all of those, TSA. And those are people that can give me assistance when we have a disaster or even in the meantime.

I don't have to do a mission assignment. All I have to do is pick up the phone and call all these people that I know on a first name basis and say, "I need some help or I need this or I need that." Tremendous assistance.

Secretary Chertoff has been personally, I mean personally involved in helping me rebuild this organization. Tremendous amount of support, making sure that I get the assets that I need, making sure that I get the support that I need from all the other agencies inside the organization. So I feel like that there is a significant amount of value added.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

Do I have time to make a unanimous consent request now, or do you want me to do that later?

Chairman THOMPSON. We will take it right now.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you. I would ask unanimous consent to include, "The Mega-Catastrophe: A Call to Action," in the record. And this is a report produced by the financial services roundtable and provides 25 recommendations to the public and private sectors for reducing the economic and human impact, as well as reducing the cost of rebuilding after mega-catastrophes of not only hurricanes, the subject of today's hearings, but the earthquakes, floods, pandemics and terrorist attacks. And I could do that—*

Chairman THOMPSON. Without objection.

Mr. SHAYS. Thank you very much.

And thank you very much, Mr. Paulison.

Chairman THOMPSON. We now recognize the gentleman from North Carolina for 5 minutes, Mr. Etheridge.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator, thank you for being here today, and I appreciate your comments thus far.

Let me go back to a situation, you know, hurricane season is almost on us, and North Carolina pays a lot of attention to hurricanes, as you know. Florida does as well.

You partially answered this when you spoke to Ms. Lowey earlier. We are going to see some major changes to the national response plan, as you well know, but as you also know, the NPR is meant to provide standardization for incident managers so that the federal, state and locals can work effectively together. And, certainly, we know that in response to Katrina that did not happen. And even though this plan is not ready, it also impacts NGOs as well, because when you have a major catastrophe, that is an important part of this whole process.

My question to you, you partially answered but would you go into a little bit more detail, in the absence of that being completed, number one, when will it be completed, but, number two, in the absence of that, do you feel comfortable that we are going to be ready, having these pieces in this hurricane season, be it natural or man-made?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. I am comfortable that we have a good plan in place. In fact, we are doing gap analysis now in North Carolina and other states up and down the Atlantic Coast to find out what those issues are that we have to help the states fill. And they can recognize themselves sometimes that there is a gap that they can fill themselves.

We have good solid disaster plans in place. The national response plan is still there. The new that we are revising is not out yet, and I want to get that out in June. But before we really get deep into hurricane season?of course, we have had a storm already this year, so they are unpredictable when they are going to come usually—but I am comfortable that we are ready to respond. We are working with the NGOs, the Red Cross is going to testify at the next panel, and I am sure they will tell you some of the significant things that—

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Do you think we will have it by June of this year?

*See The Financial Services Roundtable, *Blue Ribbon commission on Mega-Catastrophes: A Call to Action*, Edward B. Rust, Jr. and Kerry Killenger in the Committee's file.

Mr. PAULISON. It won't be by June 1. I want it out before July 1, though, and we are going to work very hard on that. We have a good draft outline now, and we are populating that to get it filled in. I at least have that base plan done; yes, sir.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Thank you.

Let me ask one question on the National Guard, because we heard from the Guard in the last meeting this committee held, and, as you well know, when Floyd struck North Carolina in 1999, it was a massive storm. They classified it as a 500-year flood plain. I don't know how you do that when no one was here to measure it, but be that as it may, we used 6,500 guardsmen with equipment, Fort Bragg, Lejeune, our active military were there with helicopters and others. We lost a lot of lives, but we saved a lot.

Just recently, our governor, Mike Easley said that we only have enough equipment now to handle a category three. You alluded to this earlier. Our Guard only has 55 percent of the dual use.

In addition to drawing from other states, here is my question, because I think that is critical: How much does FEMA have the ability to reach out and get equipment if you really need it when it becomes catastrophic like the one we had? And, secondly, given the state of the equipment, can you pull that resource in in advance and have it ready and staged to work?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. We do have the ability to pull equipment in, not only from other states, but private contractors and also the Corps of Engineers who has a tremendous amount of equipment.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Have you pre-entered into those contracts?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. We have a lot of contracts in place, hundreds of contracts in place and literally hundreds of pre-scripted mission assignments with different agencies around the country. And we can move some of those things quickly.

Also, if there is a major storm coming in, and there are certain guidelines to follow, but we can do a pre-landfall declaration, the president can do that—

Mr. ETHERIDGE. And get it ready.

Mr. PAULISON. —that would allow us to move. So if we had a category four or five storm coming into North Carolina and we knew it was going to hit and you had to do evacuations, we can help you with all of that, with those dollars, asking the president to do a pre-landfall declaration.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Good.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Good. Thank you, sir.

In the time I have left—this may be above your pay grade. If it is, let me know. I am sure it happened prior to your arrival. And if not, I would like to have it in writing.

I have it from pretty good sources that within the last several—well, in the last bit, previously, when hurricanes hit Florida, we had to contract out for pre-setting, when people were injured, were moved, put in mobile homes, to do the pads of water, electrical at a certain price. That was rewritten so that less than a handful of contractors in America were eligible to bid, which meant that the cost of those pads more than doubled.

If that was not written by FEMA—I want to know if it was written by Homeland Security. I would like to have that in writing

when that was rewritten, who wrote it, and I would like to see the documentation on that, if I may. And if that is not in your jurisdiction, just let me know where it is and I will keep moving up the chain.

Mr. PAULISON. That does belong in FEMA, and the fact is we rebid all of those contracts. I don't know about the early ones, but a lot of those contracts were done in the aftermath of Katrina, and the contracts were not what we wanted them to be. We have rebid all of those contracts, and we have a lot more contractors because they have to use local contractors to do a lot of the work.

But I will tell you what, I will break that whole thing down.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Please do.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir.

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Because my understanding was it was rewritten to the point where you had to have so many engineers on staff, which meant that you only had one or two big contractors take it, then they sub'ed it out to everyone else, which drove the cost through the roof for the taxpayers of this country.

Thank you, sir.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

Following along that, can you provide the committee with whether or not any no-bid contracts have been awarded for this hurricane season in anticipation or have all of them gone through the procurement procedure?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. I will research and give you a definitive answer, but I can tell you that there were no no-bid contracts that I am aware of. There may be an occasion to do those in the middle of a disaster if there is something you hadn't thought of, but what we don't want to do is we don't want to do no-bid contracts and we don't want to do contracts after a disaster happens.

That is why we are putting these contracts now. In fact, we already have them on the shelf. You negotiate much better when you have the upper hand as opposed to after a disaster strikes.

Chairman THOMPSON. Absolutely. Thank you very much.

We now yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Langevin.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Director, welcome. Thank you for your testimony today. I appreciated having the opportunity to meet with you personally a few months back, and I appreciate what you have had to say today.

Let me just turn to my attention to a couple of issues. Last year, Congress passed the Katrina Emergency Reform Act, which I believe, as do others, will enhance FEMA's ability to effectively respond to disasters in a timely manner.

Now, as part of this comprehensive legislation, I fought to create a new and, I believe, much needed position at FEMA, which is a disability coordinator. We all know that people with disabilities face unique challenges in their everyday lives, and they range from ability impairment to communications barriers, and they can certainly become substantial obstacles in an emergency. We saw this as a result of the attacks on 9-11, we saw that in Katrina.

And so I believe it is, therefore, critical that the national disability coordinator position be filled immediately, and I am extremely concerned that our 2007 hurricane season starts less than

a month from now from today, and yet this crucial position remains vacant still.

So my question is here: How close are you to filling this position? Will the job be filled by June 1? And, finally, how will this individual be able to effectively implement a national plan for persons with disabilities when the position has remained vacant for so long?

My next question is, earlier this month, FEMA's region one held a mock hurricane preparedness exercise in my home state in Rhode Island—this may be the one that you were just referring to in a previous question and answer with other members. But in carrying out this event, FEMA effectively partnered with other federal, state and local entities, such as around emergency management agency and first responders to test preparedness and response to our hurricane.

The event was highly successful from everything that I could see, and I think it is critical that each state, city or town have a pre-approved plan that has been thoroughly examined before a catastrophic event occurs. Each plan, obviously, has to take into account a region's unique assets and vulnerabilities and must be properly tested to give the government, first responders and citizens an idea of existing weaknesses.

So my question in this area are: Are other FEMA regions embarking on similar tests, do you believe these simulations should become annual preparedness exercises, and, finally, what other initiatives are you undertaking to test preparedness and response for the upcoming hurricane season in regions throughout the country?

You can start with the issue of the disability coordinator first. Thank you.

Mr. PAULISON. We have interviewed for the disability coordinator. I have made a selection. She is ready to come on board. She is going through background checks. I suspect that we will have her on board within a couple of weeks. And I think we made an excellent, excellent selection. She will report directly to me, so she will have access to my office to make sure that we can get things get done. Actually, we are excited about having her on board.

We learned a lot of lessons during Katrina of things that we didn't do right that we should have done with some of our people who had had difficulty with access, and she will be a tremendous asset to us to help us do a better job.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, I look forward to that announcement and hopefully a meeting with this individual.

Mr. PAULISON. As soon as she gets through the process of the background checks, we should have her on board. She is ready to come, and we are ready to bring her here. We interviewed a lot of people and picked out who we think is an excellent person.

The second piece, yes, it was an excellent exercise, and, yes, we are doing them with all of our regions, and, yes, I do think it should be an annual type of thing to do those exercises, test our system and to find out where our gaps are, because they are going to be different every year. I am very supportive of those types, of having plans in place and exercising them.

Mr. LANGEVIN. What other initiatives do you have coming up?

Mr. PAULISON. We are doing catastrophic planning also. We are picking four areas right now. One is the southeast Louisiana for catastrophic planning, two in Florida, one around Lake Okeechobee, the Herbert Hoover Dike, working with the state to do evacuation planning around there, south Florida, category five coming into there. And then the new Madrid fault, doing catastrophic planning for that and then also for California. We are picking those because they represent pretty much everything we are going to have to deal with in putting our catastrophic plans in place.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, thank you, Director. I appreciate your answers to that and look forward to continuing to work together. Thank you for the job you do.

Mr. PAULISON. And I appreciate your support too, by the way. Thank you.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Director.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee, for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the chairman and the ranking member.

Mr. Paulison, thank you for your presence here today.

I think we can look back over the last couple of years, I think we can say a couple of years, and applaud the fact that a first responder, firsthand, is in the position that you happen to be in, which is the director of FEMA. It makes a difference. It is an important first step, I believe, as we have tried to rebuild the building blocks.

And as we have hindsight, we understand that the whole challenge of FEMA was vertical. It was a combination of many issues, and it really didn't fall to personalities as much as it fell a lot to process, particularly, obviously, the angst with the secretary of the Homeland Security Department, who recognized the enormous frustration but really loss of life.

And I think that is something that should always be in front of us, the fact that the debacle of Katrina really focused around the enormity of the loss of life and how we could have been better custodians, if you will, better protectors of the American people. We must always be protectors of the American people.

My questions will focus in that direction.

I know you were not here for 9/11, but I simply want, to your recollection, a yes or no answer. Your recollection is that after 9/11 was FEMA on the ground in New York?

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this extremely important hearing. As we near the two year anniversary of one of the most devastating hurricanes in our nation's history, I think it is a very appropriate time to examine how we have (or have not) adequately prepared for further disasters. I would also like to thank the committee's Ranking Member, and to welcome our witnesses, the Honorable R. David Paulison, Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency; William Jenkins, Director of the Homeland Security and Justice Issues Division of the U.S. Government Accountability Office; Craig Fugate, Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management; and Joe Becker, Senior Vice President of Preparedness and Response, from the American Red Cross.

Hurricane Katrina was among the worst storms in American history. Its magnitude was rivaled only by the catastrophic failure of the federal government to adequately respond to the resulting suffering in a manner befitting our great nation. This year's hurricane season officially begins on June 1st, and scientific predictions do not bode well. Forecasters anticipate a "very active" year for storms along the Atlantic coastline, with researchers at Colorado State University anticipating 17 named storms, including 9 hurricanes. According to these predictions, there is a 74% chance that at least one major hurricane will strike the U.S. coastline. Similarly, Accuweather forecasts 13—17 total storms in the Atlantic Basin. Of those, 3—5 are likely to be major hurricanes of Category 3 or greater.

Mr. Chairman, this time we have fair warning. We know how devastating a hurricane can be, and we know we are likely to see another storm of this magnitude. We know that our disaster prevention, preparedness, and relief mechanisms and agencies are woefully inadequate. Problems involved lack of staff, the inability to track assets en route to destinations, lack of sufficient supplies, inefficient delivery processes, poor communication amongst agencies, ineffective computer systems for processing requests, lack of credentialing and more.

We can no longer use ignorance as an excuse, and we cannot allow ourselves to be caught unprepared once again.

Hurricane Katrina struck some of America's most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, communities which are just now beginning to find their feet again after those two devastating storms. Here in Congress, we must candidly admit that as a nation, we were derelict in our duty to deliver the lifesaving and life-altering assistance to many of the Hurricane Katrina victims who literally begged for us to throw them a lifeline. We have a responsibility to work to ensure that they are not, once again, left to face nature's wrath alone.

Hurricane Katrina was responsible for \$81.2 billion in damage, as well as for the deaths of 1,836 people. Criticism of the federal, state, and local governments' reaction to the storm was widespread and resulted in an investigation by the United States Congress and the resignation of FEMA Director Michael Brown. We now have an opportunity to do our utmost to ensure that when this year's hurricane season arrives, and when the next big storm lands on America's coastline, we have done our utmost to ensure adequate protection and response.

Last month, FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security informed us that they required additional time to revise the National Response Plan, which is designed to integrate federal domestic prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery plans. Due to the complexity of the issues involved, they will not meet the June 1st deadline, and the plan will not be available for the start of hurricane season. We in Congress have not yet seen a revised timetable for when this plan will be ready, and I am concerned about FEMA's ability to respond to any disasters that may occur in the meantime.

Mr. Chairman, the Federal Government's response to Hurricane Katrina was a disaster. This absolutely must not be allowed to happen again. FEMA's logistical systems, charged with providing food, water, and other absolutely crucial supplies, were completely overwhelmed. Long term rebuilding efforts have been plagued with additional weaknesses, with residents still, nearly two years later, facing an acute shortage of affordable housing. FEMA has decided to implement a policy that transfers its housing program to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). I look forward to learning more about this new program in this hearing.

Disaster response preparedness also means ensuring that the citizens of this country can rely on the emergency assistance of the National Guard. As we saw just recently in the aftermath of the Kansas tornado, the citizens of this country were deprived of much needed emergency assistance because much of the Guard's pertinent personnel and emergency equipment was not readily available, but was in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan have left state governors with roughly half of the equipment needed to respond to disasters within the United States.

Mr. Chairman, as Members of Congress we have an obligation to inquire how the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may impact the nation's ability to respond to a major hurricane or terrorist attack. That is why I have proposed an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill that requires the Secretary of Defense to study and report back to Congress the impact that the deployment of more than 40% of a state's National Guard personnel for overseas duties has on that state's readiness and responsiveness to a natural disaster, or civil disturbance.

We also have an obligation to provide the American people with a disaster response system that works. I have been a strong advocate of creating a contracting system that awards contracts to local companies when possible and always to those who can get the job done. By involving members of the community in the rebuilding

process, we would substantially increase the prospects for long-term sustainability of any reconstruction effort.

Mr. Chairman, now is the time that we must act. With the onset of hurricane season only a few short weeks away, we must ensure that, should another storm of Katrina's magnitude make landfall on America's coastline, we will not have to witness the atrocious suffering that we saw in the summer of 2005. I look forward to hearing the insights offered by today's panel of witnesses, and to engaging in constructive debate with my colleagues about how best we can secure our nation against the 2007 hurricane season.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAULISON. Yes.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. And the reason why I wanted that as a backdrop is because it is important to note that FEMA is an agency that deals with natural disasters and, tragically, manmade disasters. You have to be holistically prepared.

And so I really want you to—Major General Blum mentioned the lack of equipment in states, and you had this line of questions. And we are looking at this threshold of 40 percent of the National Guard not being available or not being in-state.

Would that not have an impact—if 40 percent or more of the National Guard were away, would that not have an impact on response coordination with FEMA?

Mr. PAULISON. I don't think it would have an impact on the coordination with FEMA. I guess, depending on the size of the disaster, it may or may not have an impact on the response.

In Greensburg, Kansas, the lack of resources they said they had did not have an impact on that particular response. What the adjunct general said, if they had another disaster of that same size, they would have trouble responding. And what I committed to him was that if they did have another one, that I would make sure that we have resources from other states, bring the Corps of Engineers in with equipment they needed and also access our contracts out there to bring equipment in.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I think your answer is very accommodating. I am not suggesting that you are being forthright, but, frankly, I think that we would have problems. And one of the issues that I think is important is coordinating with FEMA and other emergency entities pre-deployment of National Guard out of different states. I don't know if we thought about that.

So that means that, one, you have an inventory of who has gone and what states are gone, because I think my colleagues have asked the question, how quickly can you get them there. So if the next-door neighbor state or the next-door neighbor to the right or the left are down to zero, you have a similar problem.

Let me move forward and comment. I think you made the point about lack of equipment and a lot of states have a lack of equipment. That has an impact, does it not, yes or no?

Mr. PAULISON. Again, I think that would depend on the size of the disaster. Something as catastrophic as Katrina I think you have to say it would have an impact if they are not at the full speed. We are at war, there is no question about it.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Clearly, but it has a negative impact if you don't have equipment to meet that disaster.

Let me move on to the question, a particular question that you always hear about Houston, Texas. One, this is a solution, I guess, that they attempted, but I do want to put on the record, out of the

\$400 million that came through CDBG monies, Houston got \$60 million in Houston and Harris County. And I want to put on the record that obviously that is an outrage.

I want to move to interoperability. There is \$1 billion. We understand that this money is going through the states on the interoperability.

My question to you is, how in the world can the average cities, major urban cities at risk—and I know this is a process—function with dollars going through the states, percentages taken off and the question as to whether or not cities who need this interoperability, the top 50 cities, can get the appropriate amount of dollars through this process?

Have you all consulted about using a different formula for getting dollars to the at-risk cities, like directly to the cities?

Mr. PAULISON. I am sorry, I didn't understand the question.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. There is \$1 billion in interoperability money, which falls under different aspects of the homeland security but, clearly, it responds to FEMA's needs. You need cities to be able to speak to each other or speak inside the city when there is a disaster.

The formula that is being used is a formula that sends the monies to the states. Is it better to send the money directly to the at-risk cities? And this is from your professional opinion, not from the idea of jurisdiction inside the department. Cities are crying out for the at-risk cities to get the monies directly.

Mr. PAULISON. And my staff is telling me that by law the funding has to go through the states. We want that money to flow down where it needs to go, but most of our interoperability issues in this country are not equipment per se, it is a governance issue of how you act interoperably with other units. It can be as simple as exchanging hand-held radios with another city alongside of you. We have equipment that we can bring in to help with interoperability.

But the money going through the states, the states understand the entirety of the whole state to help with the interoperable issue, and we feel that is the right way to go right now.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. If I may finish, Mr. Chairman, I just want to finish this sentence.

Director Paulison, the question was really from your professional perspective. I do know that the utilization of this equipment is how you use it within an area, but the point is if a state has the money and it doesn't get directly, fully to the impacted area, I can assure you that your job as a first responder is going to be that much tougher, and so the local jurisdiction should be the first in line. And I do know it is law. I am just trying to get your professional position on the record.

I yield back.

Ms. SANCHEZ. [Presiding.] The gentlelady's time has expired.

Mr. Perlmutter from Arizona—Colorado, I am sorry, Colorado, from the great West.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Director, and I appreciate your answers, do you know how many states deployed National Guard units to the Gulf Coast during Katrina?

Mr. PAULISON. No, sir, I do not. We could probably track that down, but I don't have any off the top of my head how many actually responded.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I was just looking at reports that was issued today, and there are a couple of things that concern me. Looking at page four, it says, "For us, it is difficult to assess the probable results of these initiatives in improving response to a major or catastrophic disaster, such as a category four or five hurricane."

And it goes on and says, "The National Guard has traditionally been an important component of response to major disasters. States and governors rely on their National Guard personnel and equipment for disaster response. However, as we reported in January 2007, the types and quantities of equipment the National Guard needs to respond to large-scale disasters have not been fully identified because the multiple federal and states agencies that would have roles in responding to such events have not completed and integrated their plans."

So along with what Representative Jackson Lee was saying and the woman who stood up in the audience and from comments that various adjutant generals have made, I mean, has your office, your division looked at the fact that we have a number of our National Guards deployed in Iraq and what effect it has on being able to respond to a category four or five hurricane in the Gulf Coast?

Mr. PAULISON. I don't know that we have looked at that particular issue. I would like to find out what report that is to know who it came from. But we depend heavily, the states depend heavily on our EMAC system, Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

No, I believe you, I just didn't know what the name of the report was. I wasn't questioning your word at all, sir.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. It is a GAO report.

Mr. PAULISON. Okay. Because I wanted to get it and read it myself too.

But we depend heavily on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact between states to share equipment back and forth. We have done that for years. The system has worked well. It is more robust now than it ever has been. And that is how we would respond to these disasters. And we know there is a lot of equipment gone, there is no question about it, nobody can argue that, but there are still resources in this country to deal with disasters.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. And I appreciate that. And, clearly, a national disaster is going to require a national response. And I appreciate the effort that all of you have gone to so that we respond to something like Katrina in a much more thoughtful, methodical manner, but there is only so many people and contractors and national guardsmen and women to go around.

And this is a debate for probably with the president and not you, but if in fact we have something like we had with Katrina or Rita or the one that Mr. Etheridge was talking about that hit North Carolina, I mean, the bottom line is you don't know what the real impact of our deploying National Guard troops and the numbers we have to Iraq will be on responding to a Katrina.

Yes or no, or answer it however you like.

Mr. PAULISON. Well, first of all, I am going to work with General Blum on the issue and talk about some of those issues you just raised and raised in this committee and raised behind me.

But to say what kind of impact any particular thing is going to have on a disaster, that would be impossible to answer. I can tell you that we do have the ability to move equipment around, we do have the ability to move National Guard around, and we are going to prepare for whatever storm comes our way or whatever it is with what we have, and we are going to make the best we can with it.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I guess, a couple just factual questions. I would like to know how many National Guard units from across the country were deployed to the Gulf Coast for Katrina and how long they stayed. And if in fact, as you are doing this process and you are preparing for a mega-storm or a mega-emergency, what kind of National Guard effort you see as part of your plan. Those would be my questions, and if you could help me with those later on, I would appreciate it.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

Mr. PAULISON. I would be happy to do that.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I return the balance of my time.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Submit that for the record. That would be great.

We have some votes on the floor, so what I would like to do is to try to get Mr. Green and Ms. Clarke in for their questions, and then we could dismiss the director. And then we will come back from votes and have the second panel.

So with your concurrence, Mr. Green and Ms. Clarke, instead of giving each of you 4 minutes, try to keep it closer to maybe 3.5, because by the time we finish we still need to get running across to take the vote.

So the next one in line would be Mr. Green of Texas.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Director, for appearing today.

The title of this hearing is "2007 Hurricane Season: Are We Prepared?" So why don't we visit for just a moment with reference to this topic, are we prepared.

With reference to the ability to determine who is in charge, are we prepared, and I ask this given the circumstance that developed with Katrina and some consternation as to whether the federal government was to make the first move or whether the state government was to. Are we prepared to deal with that?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir. We have a very clear system in place. The response is local. The local community and the state are in charge. We are not in charge of a natural disaster. Our role is to come into a system as best we can to give them the tools and supplies they need to do their job.

We are going to move early, I made that very clear. We may move even before the state asks for assistance, but I move with what I think they are going to use—

Mr. GREEN. Permit me to intercede quickly. Are we indicating that the same system that we utilized previously is the one that we would have in place now for making this determination as to which entity is going to make the call?

Mr. PAULISON. As far as what?

Mr. GREEN. The debate last time was whether the governor of Louisiana or the president of the United States should have done something immediately, if not sooner. Is that same system still in place?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir.

Mr. GREEN. Okay. If that same system is still in place, how will we avoid seeing what we saw on television, persons begging for help and nobody showing up? No disrespect to you but that is what the country saw, in fact that is what the world saw. How do we avoid that is the same system is in place?

Mr. PAULISON. And I meant by the same system is the fact that the state is in charge, the local government is in charge to respond to disasters. The federal government there is to assist them, and that is what we are going to do.

However, there are several things that we can do that we have in place now that we did not have before. One, we can do a pre-landfall declaration if there is a major storm coming into a vulnerable community where we move assets in before the storm comes in. And we are going to do that anyway.

Mr. GREEN. Is it your belief that we will not see what we saw previously?

Mr. PAULISON. There is no question in my mind whatsoever that you are not going to see another Katrina in this country.

Mr. GREEN. Next question, quickly, please, if I may. With reference to pre-hurricane or pre-disaster relief, do we have the vehicles, do we have the gas stations, can we move scores of thousands of people along the highways and byways, out of harm's way immediately?

Mr. PAULISON. That is why we are working with the states to make sure that there are good solid evacuation plans—

Mr. GREEN. Can I assume that your answer is, yes? Because the reason I say this, sir, is because sometimes when people finish I don't know whether they said yes or no. So I have to ask.

Mr. PAULISON. Well, I didn't want to say yes or no, because I wanted to tell you what we are doing.

Mr. GREEN. Well, unfortunately, I have to deal in a world of yes or noes right now. Will we move scores of thousands of people over the highways and byways to get them out of harm's way?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes.

Mr. GREEN. Next question: Housing post-disaster, can we house scores of thousands of people such that we will not find ourselves with people in the streets of life after the hurricane has hit? Can we do this?

Mr. PAULISON. Do you mean will there be homeless, will they not have a place to stay?

Mr. GREEN. Will we have the same circumstances we had in Houston, Texas where we had people who were brought in and we had to have NGOs trying to find places for people to stay. People were sheltered in various and sundry places, but we didn't seem to have a plan to accommodate people, and thank God Houston was accommodating to the extent that it was. So will we avoid that circumstance?

Mr. PAULISON. Yes, sir.

Mr. GREEN. And final question is this—this goes beyond probably your pay grade, but it does say, are we ready, and I consider myself a part of the “we”—how are we going to?and this is rhetorical—going to deal with displaced voters?

We still have a political question that has not been resolved with reference to people who were forced away from their homes who could not vote and participate in the political process.

Thank you, Madam Chair. You were gracious with the time.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Ms. Clarke?

Ms. CLARKE. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

And good afternoon to you, Director Paulison. You know me from Brooklyn, New York. I just wanted to ask three questions very quickly.

In 2005, some of the greatest in FEMA involved reaching the many individuals who lived in the inner city, in particular in the poorer areas. How will your national response plan address this issue, one?

And, two, were a catastrophic disaster to occur in New York, it could easily displace many hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people, potentially far more than New Orleans.

Do you feel FEMA is prepared to successfully reach everyone necessary in such a larger, more densely populated city? And I am not thinking just FEMA unto itself but, of course, an incident command structure and everything else that may have been put in place.

And then, finally, among my concerns is the ability of FEMA to effectively communicate with victims of a disaster. Not only do you need to urgently explain to them what they need to do during an emergency, but afterward FEMA must register everyone and ensure that they understand where to go and what to do in order to navigate a sometimes complicated bureaucracy and receive assistance. Nowhere else in the world are there more languages spoken than in New York City and in Brooklyn, and many residents are not highly proficient in English.

Have you done anything to ensure that FEMA officials would be able to communicate with people from such a broad range of dialects, particularly during an emergency when family and friends may be separated?

Mr. PAULISON. Okay. If I remember, the first question was about being able to reach some of the inner city with directions and how. We have contracted with some of the predominant black colleges to come up with how do we effectively communicate with lower income, sometimes minority populations better about personal preparedness, what to do when things happen.

So we are working on that issue, to how do we do that and how do we better reach people, how do we get to them and tell them what they are supposed to do, where they are supposed to go and those types of things.

Ms. CLARKE. Excuse me, Mr. Director. Is that part of your national response plan? Like in New York City, there isn't a historically black college.

Mr. PAULISON. But the philosophy is going to be the same regardless of who does it. I think Texas A&M is one of the colleges

that is working on some of those issues to come up with—and we had a grant actually from Congress to do that.

The second was that you talked about what happens if we are going to have a catastrophic event in New York. Joe Bruno, the state emergency manager for New York, has just probably one of the most comprehensive disaster plans that I have ever seen. It is about 300-and-some-odd pages. In fact, we are using that, and he is working with us, to use that for other states around, but right now we are doing the hurricane coast.

They have a great plan in place on how to deal with a disaster, and they have looked at a category four or five hurricane coming right into Brooklyn. So I am very comfortable with what they are going to do and how they are going to move people and how they are going to house them. It is, again, very comprehensive.

And the last piece is the communication really has to come through the state and local government on where people are supposed to go and what they are supposed to do. That should come before a disaster happens and also during a disaster. The people need to listen very carefully to what their local emergency manager is saying. If they are asked to evacuate, they should do so quickly. And the individual should have a personal plan in place too. If I am in an evacuation air zone, where am I going to go if I am told to evacuate, and how am I going to get there and where am I going to go.

Ms. SANCHEZ. I thank the director.

I thank you, Ms. Clarke. Your time is expired.

And if there are any other questions from the members for you, we will get it to you in writing. We hope you get us back an answer fairly quickly.

And we stand in recess with votes on the floor to come back after votes for the second panel.

Mr. PAULISON. Thank you, Madam Chair.

[Recess.]

Chairman THOMPSON. [Presiding.] If we could, we would like to get our panel of witnesses before us. My colleagues will be coming there shortly. I appreciate your indulgence for allowing us to interrupt so we could take those five votes.

We would like to reconvene the recessed panel. On our second panel, we have three witnesses.

First witness is Mr. William Jenkins, who is director within GAO's Security and Justice Issues Division. And Mr. Jenkins has served as a director for 4 years, and has worked on a wide variety of issues in his 28 years at GAO.

Second witness is Mr. Craig Fugate, who is director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. Mr. Fugate has been serving as the director for 7 years.

Our third panelist is Mr. Joe Becker. Mr. Becker is here to represent the American Red Cross, and serves as the senior vice president of the Preparedness and Response Division.

Without objection, the witnesses' full statement will be inserted in the record. I now ask each witness to summarize his statement for 5 minutes, beginning with Mr. Jenkins.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM JENKINS, DIRECTOR, HOMELAND SECURITY AND JUSTICE ISSUES DIVISION, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. JENKINS. Chairman Thompson and members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the important topic of our nation's emergency preparedness and response system as we approach the 2007 hurricane season.

Well-planned, well-coordinated, and effective disaster preparation and response can save lives and mitigate damage while helping set the stage for recovery. Preparing for and responding effectively to a major disaster, and particularly a catastrophic disaster, is a difficult task.

There is no magic bullet or easy solution for success. It takes hard work, attention to details, and effective pre-and post-disaster cooperation and coordinated actions among all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

Individuals can also contribute to success through knowing evacuation routes, complying with evacuation orders, and having a disaster preparedness plan and supplies.

FEMA provides assistance in major disasters principally by coordinating and deploying a range of resources from a variety of government and nongovernmental sources. This requires it to develop effective partnerships with a wide range of organizations.

The Post-Katrina Reform Act includes provisions designed to strengthen FEMA's organizational capacity to coordinate the preparedness for and response to major and catastrophic disasters, regardless of cause. Effectively implementing the Act's provisions should address many of the recommendations and concerns we have had as a result of our work on Katrina.

Although FEMA has formally completed its reorganization under the Act, it enters the 2007 hurricane season as an organization in transition, one that is working simultaneously to implement the Reform Act's provisions while addressing immediate preparedness needs and capabilities.

FEMA faces a formidable challenge as it works to implement the Reform Act's provisions, change its culture from one of mostly reactive to more proactive, and quickly build its capacity to effectively respond to a major disaster that could occur at any time.

It is important that FEMA's approach, preparedness, and response for major disasters is a national system with linked capabilities and responsibilities among all levels of government and nongovernmental organizations.

Developing these capabilities must be a cooperative effort that integrates and defines for all major participants what needs to be done, how it should be done, and how well it should be done.

On the basis of our post-Katrina work, we identified three basic areas of focus. One, having clear and clearly understood roles and responsibilities. Two, identifying, developing, and maintaining needed capabilities. And three, balancing the need for quick, flexible action with accountability for the use of resources.

We noted that improvements were particularly needed in the areas of situational awareness, emergency communications, evacuation, search and rescue, logistics, and mass care and shelter. In each of these areas, the lack of clear and clearly understood roles

and responsibilities contributed to the problems that were experienced in the Katrina response.

FEMA has initiated reviews and actions in these and other areas, but their effectiveness has not yet been tested in a major disaster. Some targeted improvements, such as a completely revamped logistics system, are multiyear efforts. Others, such as building mobile communications and registration assistance vehicles, have been used already in recent tornado and flood events.

As the principal federal agency now responsible for preparedness and response, FEMA has a unique opportunity to evaluate how it can most effectively target the grants it will now administer to enhance the nation's disaster preparedness and response system. This can best be done by viewing the grants collectively rather than individually.

As FEMA and the nation move forward, there are several areas that we believe deserve congressional oversight. Each of these areas is part of a considerable ongoing effort and resource investment by both federal and nonfederal agencies.

These areas include: One, the development and implementation of the National Preparedness System, including preparedness for all types of major disasters, natural or man-made. Two, needed state and local capabilities and the use of federal grants in building and sustaining those capabilities.

Three, regional and multistate planning and preparation. Four, the role of preparedness exercises in building and maintaining preparedness and response capabilities. And five, the transparency of DHS policies and the basis for those policies.

It is important that those affected by DHS and FEMA policies have sufficient information to enable them to understand the basis for those policies, and for Congress to assess how well DHS and FEMA are using the billions of dollars of resources that have been entrusted to it.

We look forward to working constructively with this committee, the Congress, FEMA, and DHS in the weeks and months to come as efforts continue to build the National Emergency Preparedness System that we all want and our nation deserves.

That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee may have.

[The statement of Mr. Jenkins follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM O. JENKINS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss issues associated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) efforts to address the shortcomings of the preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina and enhance its capabilities for responding to major disasters, including hurricanes. The 2007 hurricane season begins in just a few weeks. Hurricane Katrina severely tested disaster management at the federal, state, and local levels and revealed weaknesses in the basic elements of preparing for, responding, to and recovering from any catastrophic disaster. The goal of disaster preparedness and response is easy to state but difficult to achieve and can be stated as follows:

To prevent where possible, prepare for, mitigate, and respond to disasters of any size or cause with well-planned, well-coordinated, and effective actions that minimize the loss of life and property and set the stage for a quick recovery.

Achieving this goal for major disasters, and catastrophic disasters in particular, is difficult because success requires effective pre- and post-disaster coordination and

cooperation among different levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector. Individuals can also contribute to success through such things as knowing evacuation routes, complying with evacuation orders, and having a family and individual disaster preparation plan and supplies.

As the Comptroller General testified in February 2007 on DHS's high-risk status and specifically disaster preparedness and response, DHS must overcome continuing challenges, including those related to clearly defining leadership roles and responsibilities, developing necessary disaster response capabilities, and establishing accountability systems to provide effective services while protecting against waste, fraud, and abuse.¹ These issues are enormously complex and challenging for all levels of government. It is important to view preparedness for and response to major disasters as a national system with linked responsibilities and capabilities. This is because effective preparedness for and response to major disasters requires the coordinated planning and actions of multiple actors from multiple first responder disciplines, jurisdictions, and levels of government as well as nongovernmental entities. Parochialism must be put aside and cooperation must prevail before and after an emergency event. The experience of Hurricane Katrina illustrated why it is important to tackle these difficult issues.

My testimony today (1) summarizes our key findings on leadership, response capabilities, and accountability controls and the efforts made by DHS and FEMA in their implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act² and other recommendations made in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and (2) highlights several disaster management issues for continued congressional attention. My comments today are based on our body of work on disaster and emergency management including more than 30 reports on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, our review of recent emergency management reform legislative changes, and materials and statements provided by FEMA. We conducted our audit work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Summary

Our analysis of the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina showed the need for (1) clearly defined and understood leadership roles and responsibilities; (2) development of the necessary disaster capabilities; and (3) accountability systems that effectively balance the need for fast and flexible response against the need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

A key issue in the response to Hurricane Katrina was the lack of clearly understood roles and responsibilities. One aspect of this issue that continues to be a subject of discussion is the roles and responsibilities of the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), who has the authority to make mission assignments to federal agencies for response and recovery, and the Principal Federal Official (PFO), whose role was to provide situational awareness to the Secretary of Homeland Security. DHS has designated a FCO for each region that includes states at risks of hurricanes and a supporting FCO for each of these states. It has also designated a PFO for each of three regions—the Gulf Coast, the Northeast Region, and the Mid-Atlantic Region—plus a separate PFO for the state of Florida and Texas.

It is critically important that the authorities, roles, and responsibilities of these designated FCOs and PFOs be clear and clearly understood by all. There is still some question among state and local first responders about the need for both positions and how they will work together in disaster response. One potential benefit of naming the FCOs and PFOs in advance is that they have an opportunity meet and discuss expectations, roles and responsibilities with state, local, and nongovernmental officials before an actual disaster, possibly setting the groundwork for improved coordination and communication in an actual disaster.

As we have previously reported, developing the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major and catastrophic disasters requires an overall national preparedness effort that is designed to integrate and define what needs to be done, where, and by whom (roles and responsibilities); how it should be done; and how well it should be done—that is, according to what standards. The principal national documents designed to address each of these are, respectively, the *National Response Plan (NRP)*, the *National Incident Management System (NIMS)*, and the *National Preparedness Goal (NPG)*. The *NRP*, *NIMS* and the *NPG* are undergoing extensive review and revision by federal, state, and local government officials, tribal authorities, non-governmental and private sector officials. This effort is intended to

¹GAO, *Homeland Security: Management and Programmatic Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security*, GAO-07-452T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 7, 2007).

²The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 was enacted as Title VI of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355, 1394 (2006).

assess the effectiveness of the doctrine embodied in these documents, identify modifications and improvements, and reissue the documents. The results of the review for the *NRP*, for example, was initially scheduled for release in June 2007. However, in April 2007 DHS officials notified stakeholders that some important issues were more complex and require national-level policy decisions, and stated that additional time than was expected was needed to complete a comprehensive draft. DHS noted that the underlying operational principles of the *NRP* remain intact and that the current document, as revised in May 2006, still applies. FEMA officials have told us that the final version of the *NPG* and its corresponding documents are currently receiving final reviews by the White House and will be due out shortly. We are concerned, however, that if the revisions are not completed prior to the beginning of the 2007 hurricane season, it is unlikely that the changes resulting from these revisions could be effectively implemented for the 2007 hurricane season.

In addition to roles and responsibilities, the nation's experience with hurricanes Katrina and Rita reinforced some questions about the adequacy of the nation's disaster response capabilities in the context of a catastrophic disaster—particularly in the areas of (1) situational assessment and awareness, (2) emergency communications, (3) evacuations, (4) search and rescue, (5) logistics, and (6) mass care and sheltering. Overall, capabilities are built upon the appropriate combination of people, skills, processes, and assets. Ensuring that needed capabilities are available requires effective planning and coordination in conjunction with training and exercises in which the capabilities are realistically tested and problems identified and subsequently addressed in partnership with other federal, state, and local stakeholders. In various meetings with GAO, in congressional testimonies, and in some documents FEMA has described a number of initiatives to address identified deficiencies in each of these areas and progress is being made on these multiyear efforts. However, a number of FEMA programs are ongoing and it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, none of these initiatives appear to have been tested on a scale that reasonably simulates the conditions and demand they would face following a major or catastrophic disaster. Thus, it is difficult to assess the probable results of these initiatives in improving response to a major or catastrophic disaster, such as a category 4 or 5 hurricane.³ Additional information on FEMA's efforts can be found in Appendix I.

The National Guard has traditionally been an important component of response to major disasters. States and governors rely on their National Guard personnel and equipment for disaster response, and National Guard personnel are frequently deployed to disaster areas, including those outside their home states. However, as we reported in January 2007, the types and quantities of equipment the National Guard needs to respond to large-scale disasters have not been fully identified because the multiple federal and state agencies that would have roles in responding to such events have not completed and integrated their plans.

With regard to balancing speed and flexibility with accountability, FEMA has stated it can register up to 200,000 applicants per day for individual assistance while including safeguards for preventing fraudulent and duplicate applications. The inability to reliably and efficiently identify fraudulent and duplicate applications was a major problem following Katrina that resulted in millions of dollars in improper payments. FEMA has also taken actions to revise its debris removal and contracting policies and to increase the use of advanced contracting for goods and services. Again, we have no basis to determine the effectiveness of these systems as they have yet to be tested on a large scale basis.

As FEMA enters the 2007 hurricane season, it is an organization in transition that is working to implement the reorganization mandated by the Post-Katrina Reform Act as it moves forward on initiatives to implement a comprehensive, risk-based national emergency management system as required by the act. In November 2006, the Comptroller General wrote to the congressional leadership suggesting that one area needing fundamental reform and oversight was preparing for, responding to, and rebuilding after catastrophic disasters. Among the topics that Congress might consider for oversight are:

- the development and implementation of the National Preparedness System, including preparedness for natural disasters, terrorist incidents, and an influenza pandemic;
- the assessment of state and local capabilities and the use of federal grants in building and sustaining those capabilities;

³Section 602 of the Post-Katrina Reform Act defines "catastrophic incident" as any natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other man-made disaster that results in extraordinary levels of casualties or damage or disruption severely affecting the population (including mass evacuations), infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, or government functions in an area.

- regional and multistate planning and preparedness;
- the status and use of preparedness exercises; and
- DHS policies that affect the transparency of its efforts to improve the nation's preparedness for and response to major and catastrophic disasters.

Background

Several federal legislative and executive provisions support preparation for and response to emergency situations. The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (the Stafford Act)⁴ primarily establishes the programs and processes for the federal government to provide major disaster and emergency assistance to state, local, and tribal governments, individuals, and qualified private nonprofit organizations. FEMA, within DHS, has responsibility for administering the provisions of the Stafford Act.

Besides using these federal resources, states affected by a catastrophic disaster can also turn to other states for assistance in obtaining surge capacity—the ability to draw on additional resources, such as personnel and equipment, needed to respond to and recover from the incident. One way of sharing personnel and equipment across state lines is through the use of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, an interstate compact that provides a legal and administrative framework for managing such emergency requests. The compact includes 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.⁵ We have ongoing work examining how the Emergency Management Assistance Compact has been used in disasters and how its effectiveness could be enhanced and expect to report by this summer.

As the committee is aware, a number of specific recommendations have been made to improve the nation's ability to effectively prepare for and respond to catastrophic disasters following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Beginning in February 2006, reports by the House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina,⁶ the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee,⁷ the White House Homeland Security Council,⁸ the DHS Inspector General,⁹ and DHS and FEMA¹⁰ all identified a variety of failures and some strengths in the preparations for, response to, and initial recovery from Hurricane Katrina. In addition to these reviews, a report from the American National Standards Institute Homeland Security Standards Panel (ANSI-HSSP) contains recommendations aimed at bolstering national preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in the event of a natural disaster. A key resource identified in the document is the American National Standard for Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs (ANSI/NFPA 1600), which was developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The standard defines a common set of criteria for preparedness, disaster management, emergency management, and business continuity programs.

Hurricane Katrina severely tested disaster management at the federal, state, and local levels and revealed weaknesses in the basic elements of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any catastrophic disaster. Based on our work done during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, we previously reported that DHS needs to more effectively coordinate disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, particularly for catastrophic disasters in which the response capabilities of state and local governments are almost immediately overwhelmed.¹¹ Our analysis showed the need for (1) clearly defined and understood leadership roles and responsibilities; (2) the development of the necessary disaster capabilities; and (3) accountability sys-

⁴The Stafford Act is codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq.

⁵California is currently not a member of EMAC as the state's legislation approving its membership in the compact had expired.

⁶House of Representatives, House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina. *A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for And Response to Hurricane Katrina* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 15, 2006).

⁷U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. *Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared* (Washington, D.C.: May 2006).

⁸White House Homeland Security Council. *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 23, 2006).

⁹Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. *A Performance Review of FEMA's Disaster Management Activities in Response to Hurricane Katrina*, OIG-06-32 (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 31, 2006).

¹⁰Federal Emergency Management Agency. *DHS/FEMA Initial Response Hotwash: Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana*, DR-1603-LA (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Feb. 13, 2006).

¹¹GAO. *Catastrophic Disasters: Enhanced Leadership, Capabilities, and Accountability Controls Will Improve the Effectiveness of the Nation's Preparedness, Response, and Recovery System*, GAO-06-618 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 6, 2006).

tems that effectively balance the need for fast and flexible response against the need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. In line with a recommendation we made following Hurricane Andrew, the nation's most destructive hurricane until Katrina, we recommended that Congress give federal agencies explicit authority to take actions to prepare for all types of catastrophic disasters when there is warning. We also recommended that DHS

1. rigorously retest, train, and exercise its recent clarification of the roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority for all levels of leadership, implementing changes needed to remedy identified coordination problems;
2. direct that the *NRP* base plan and its supporting Catastrophic Incident Annex be supported by more robust and detailed operational implementation plans;
3. provide guidance and direction for federal, state, and local planning, training, and exercises to ensure such activities fully support preparedness, response, and recovery responsibilities at a jurisdictional and regional basis;
4. take a lead in monitoring federal agencies' efforts to prepare to meet their responsibilities under the *NRP* and the interim National Preparedness Goal; and
5. use a risk management approach in deciding whether and how to invest finite resources in specific capabilities for a catastrophic disaster.

The Post-Katrina Reform Act responded to the findings and recommendations in the various reports examining the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. While keeping FEMA within DHS, the act enhances FEMA's responsibilities and its autonomy within DHS. FEMA is to lead and support the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation. Under the Act, the FEMA Administrator reports directly to the Secretary of DHS; FEMA is now a distinct entity within DHS; and the Secretary of DHS can no longer substantially or significantly reduce the authorities, responsibilities, or functions of FEMA or the capability to perform them unless authorized by subsequent legislation. FEMA has absorbed many of the functions of DHS's Preparedness Directorate (with some exceptions). The statute establishes 10 regional offices with specified responsibilities. The statute also establishes a National Integration Center responsible for the ongoing management and maintenance of the *NIMS* and *NRP*.

The Post-Katrina Reform Act also included provisions for other areas, such as evacuation plans and exercises and addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. In addition, the act includes several provisions to strengthen the management and capability of FEMA's workforce. For example, the statute called for a strategic human capital plan to shape and improve FEMA's workforce, authorized recruitment and retention bonuses, and established a Surge Capacity Force. Most of the organizational changes became effective as of March 31, 2007. Others, such as the increase in organizational autonomy for FEMA and establishment of the National Integration Center, became effective upon enactment of the Post-Katrina Reform Act on October 4, 2006.

FEMA Reviewing Its Responsibilities, Capabilities as It Implements Recommendations and Post-Katrina Reform Act

After FEMA became part of DHS in March 2003, its responsibilities were over time dispersed and redefined. FEMA continues to evolve within DHS as it implements the changes required by the Post-Katrina Reform Act, whose details are discussed later. Hurricane Katrina severely tested disaster management at the federal, state, and local levels and revealed weaknesses in the basic elements of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any catastrophic disaster. According to DHS, the department completed a thorough assessment of FEMA's internal structure to incorporate lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and integrate systematically new and existing assets and responsibilities within FEMA.

As I stated in March 2007 testimony, the effective implementation of recent recommendations and the Post-Katrina Reform Act's organizational changes and related roles and responsibilities should address many of our emergency management observations and recommendations. In addition, we previously reported that DHS needs to more effectively coordinate disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, particularly for catastrophic disasters in which the response capabilities of state and local governments are almost immediately overwhelmed. Our analysis showed the need for (1) clearly defined and understood leadership roles and responsibilities; (2) the development of the necessary disaster capabilities; and (3) accountability systems that effectively balance the need for fast and flexible response against the need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

Leadership Is Critical to Prepare for, Respond to, and Recover from Catastrophic Disasters

In preparing for, responding to, and recovering from any catastrophic disaster, the legal authorities, roles and responsibilities, and lines of authority at all levels of government must be clearly defined, effectively communicated, and well understood to facilitate rapid and effective decision making. Hurricane Katrina showed the need to improve leadership at all levels of government to better respond to a catastrophic disaster. As we have previously reported, developing the capabilities needed for catastrophic disasters requires an overall national preparedness effort that is designed to integrate and define what needs to be done, where, and by whom (roles and responsibilities), how it should be done, and how well it should be done—that is, according to what standards. The principal national documents designed to address each of these are, respectively, the *NRP*, *NIMS*, and the *NPG*.

All three documents are undergoing extensive review and revision by federal, state, and local government officials, tribal authorities, non-governmental and private sector officials.¹² For example, the review of the *NRP* is intended to assess the effectiveness of the *NRP*, identify modifications and improvements and reissue the document. This review includes all major components of the *NRP* including the base plan, Emergency Support Functions (ESF), annexes such as the Catastrophic Incident Annex and Supplement; as well as the role of the PFO, FCO, and the Joint Field Office structure. Also during the current *NRP* review period, FEMA has revised the organizational structure of Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF-6), Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services, and places FEMA as the lead agency for this emergency support function. The Red Cross will remain as a supporting agency in the responsibilities and activities of ESF-6. According to a February 2007 letter by the Red Cross, this change will not take place until the *NRP* review process is complete and all changes are approved.

The revised *NRP* and *NIMS* were originally scheduled for release in June 2007. In April 2007, however, DHS officials notified stakeholders that some important issues were more complex and require national-level policy decisions, and additional time was needed to complete a comprehensive draft. DHS noted that the underlying operational principles of the *NRP* remain intact and the current document, as revised in May 2006, still applies. FEMA officials have told us that the final version of the National Preparedness Goal and its corresponding documents like the Target Capabilities List, are currently receiving final reviews by the White House and are expected to be out shortly.

A key issue in the response to Hurricane Katrina was the lack of clearly understood roles and responsibilities. One that continues to be a subject of discussion is the roles and responsibilities of the FCO, who has the authority to make mission assignments to federal agencies for response and recovery under the Stafford Act, and the PFO, whose role was to provide situational awareness to the Secretary of Homeland Security. The May 2006 revisions to the *NRP* made changes designed to address this issue. However, as we noted in March 2007, the changes may not have fully resolved the leadership issues regarding the roles of the PFO and the FCO. While the Secretary of Homeland Security may avoid conflicts by appointing a single individual to serve in both positions in non-terrorist incidents, confusion may persist if the Secretary of Homeland Security does not exercise this discretion to do so. Furthermore, this discretion does not exist for terrorist incidents, and the revised *NRP* does not specifically provide a rationale for this limitation.

FEMA has pre-designated five teams of FCOs and PFOs in the Gulf Coast and eastern seaboard states at risk of hurricanes. This includes FCOs and PFOs for the Gulf Coast Region,¹³ Northeast Region,¹⁴ and the Mid-Atlantic Region,¹⁵ and separate FCOs and PFOs for the states of Florida and Texas. It is critically important that the authorities, roles, and responsibilities of these pre-designated FCOs and PFOs be clear and clearly understood by all. There is still some question among

¹² On May 25, 2006, DHS released changes to the *NRP* regarding leadership issues, such as which situations require secretarial leadership; the process for declaring incidents of national significance; and the scope of the *NRP* and its Catastrophic Incident Annex. The revised *NRP* clearly states that the Secretary of Homeland Security, who reports directly to the President, is responsible for declaring and managing incidents of national significance, including catastrophic ones. At the time of Hurricane Katrina, the supplement to the catastrophic incident annex, which provides more detail on implementing the annex, was still in draft. Subsequent to Hurricane Katrina, DHS published the final supplement to the Catastrophic Incident Annex, dated August 2006.

¹³ Includes Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

¹⁴ Includes New York, New Jersey, New England, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

¹⁵ Includes Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, District of Columbia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island.

state and local first responders about the need for both positions and how they will work together in disaster response. One potential benefit of naming the FCOs and PFOs in advance is that they have an opportunity meet and discuss expectations, roles and responsibilities with state, local, and nongovernmental officials before an actual disaster, possibly setting the groundwork for improved coordination and communication in an actual disaster.

Enhanced Capabilities Are Needed to Adequately Prepare for and Respond to Major Disasters

Numerous reports, including those by the House, Senate, and the White House, and our own work suggest that the substantial resources and capabilities marshaled by state, local, and federal governments and nongovernmental organizations were insufficient to meet the immediate challenges posed by the unprecedented degree of damage and the number of victims caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Developing the ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major and catastrophic disasters requires an overall national preparedness effort that is designed to integrate and define what needs to be done and where, how it should be done, and how well it should be done—that is, according to what standards. As previously discussed, the principal national documents designed to address each of these are, respectively, the *NRP*, *NIMS*, and the *NPG*, and each document is undergoing revision.

Overall, capabilities are built upon the appropriate combination of people, skills, processes, and assets. Ensuring that needed capabilities are available requires effective planning and coordination in conjunction with training and exercises in which the capabilities are realistically tested and problems identified and subsequently addressed in partnership with other federal, state, and local stakeholders. In recent work on FEMA management of day-to-day operations, we found that although shifting resources caused by its transition to DHS created challenges for FEMA, the agency's management of existing resources compounded these problems.¹⁶ FEMA lacks some of the basic management tools that help an agency respond to changing circumstances. Most notably, our January 2007 report found that FEMA lacks a strategic workforce plan and related human capital strategies—such as succession planning or a coordinated training effort. Such tools are integral to managing resources, as they enable an agency to define staffing levels, identify the critical skills needed to achieve its mission, and eliminate or mitigate gaps between current and future skills and competencies. FEMA officials have said they are beginning to address these and other basic organizational management issues. To this end, FEMA has commissioned studies of 18 areas, whose final reports and recommendations are due later this spring.¹⁷

An important element of effective emergency response is the ability to identify and deploy where needed a variety of resources from a variety of sources—federal, state, local or tribal governments; military assets of the National Guard or active military; nongovernmental entities; and the private sector. One key method of tapping resources in areas not affected by the disaster is the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Through EMAC about 46,000 National Guard and 19,000 civilian responders were deployed to areas directly affected by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes. We have ongoing work examining how EMAC has been used in disasters and how its effectiveness could be enhanced and expect to report by this summer.

One of the resources accessed through EMAC is the National Guard. States and governors rely on their National Guard personnel and equipment for disaster response, and National Guard personnel are frequently deployed to disaster areas outside their home states. However, as we reported in January 2007, the types and quantities of equipment the National Guard needs to respond to large-scale disasters have not been fully identified because the multiple federal and state agencies that would have roles in responding to such events have not completed and integrated their plans.¹⁸ As a liaison between the Army, the Air Force, and the states, the National Guard Bureau is well positioned to facilitate state planning for National Guard forces. However, until the bureau's charter and its civil support regula-

¹⁶ GAO, *Budget Issues: FEMA Needs Adequate Data, Plans, and Systems to Effectively Manage Resources for Day-to-Day Operations*, GAO-07-139 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 19, 2007).

¹⁷ The areas are (1) individual assistance technical assistance contract, (2) contractor management program, (3) facilities; (4) payment process for contractors, (5) finance center operations, (6) capital planning and investment control, (7) security, (8) human resources, (9) logistics, (10) acquisition, (11) disaster emergency communications, (12) decision support systems (data resource management), (13) disaster workforce, (14) information technology, (15) federal coordinating officer cadre, (16) financial systems, (17) budget process, and (18) disaster relief fund.

¹⁸ GAO, *Reserve Forces: Actions Needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness*, GAO-07-60 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 26, 2007).

tion are revised to define its role in facilitating state planning for multistate events, such planning may remain incomplete, and the National Guard may not be prepared to respond as effectively and efficiently as possible. In addition, questions have arisen about the level of resources the National Guard has available for domestic emergency response. DOD does not routinely measure the equipment readiness of nondeployed National Guard forces for domestic civil support missions or report this information to Congress. Thus, although the deployment of National Guard units overseas has decreased the supply of equipment available to nondeployed National Guard units in the U.S., there has been no established, formal method of assessing the impact on the Guard's ability to perform its domestic missions. Although DOD has begun to collect data on units' preparedness, these efforts are not yet fully mature.

The nation's experience with hurricanes Katrina and Rita reinforces some of the questions surrounding the adequacy of capabilities in the context of a catastrophic disaster—particularly in the areas of (1) situational assessment and awareness, (2) emergency communications, (3) evacuations, (4) search and rescue, (5) logistics, and (6) mass care and sheltering. According to FEMA, the agency has described a number of actions it has taken or has underway to address identified deficiencies in each of these areas. Examples include designating national and regional situational awareness teams; acquiring and deploying mobile satellite communications trucks; developing an electronic system for receiving and tracking the status of requests for assistance and supplies; acquiring GPS equipment for tracking the location of supplies on route to areas of need; and working with the Red Cross and others to clarify roles and responsibilities for mass care, housing, and human services. However, a number of FEMA programs are ongoing and it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, none of these initiatives appear to have been tested on a scale that reasonably simulates the conditions and demand they would face following a major or catastrophic disaster. Thus, it is difficult to assess the probable results of these initiatives in improving response to a major or catastrophic disaster, such as a category 4 or 5 hurricane. The section below briefly discusses actions taken or underway to make improvements in each of these areas. Additional details can be found in appendix I.

Situational Awareness. FEMA is developing a concept for rapidly deployable inter-agency incident management teams, at this time called National Incident Management Team, to provide a forward federal presence on site within 12 hours of notification to facilitate managing the national response for catastrophic incidents. These teams will support efforts to meet the emergent needs during disasters such as the capability to provide initial situational awareness for decision-makers and support the initial establishment of a unified command.

Emergency Communications. Agencies' communications systems during a catastrophic disaster must first be operable, with sufficient communications to meet everyday internal and emergency communication requirements. Once operable, systems should have communications interoperability whereby public safety agencies (e.g., police, fire, emergency medical services, etc.) and service agencies (e.g., public works, transportation, and hospitals) can communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions in real time as needed. DHS officials have identified a number of programs and activities they have implemented to improve interoperable communications nationally, and FEMA has taken action to design, staff, and maintain a rapidly deployable, responsive, interoperable, and reliable emergency communications capability, which we discuss further in appendix I.

Logistics. FEMA's inability to effectively manage and track requests for and the distribution of water, ice, food, and other supplies came under harsh criticism in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Within days, FEMA became overwhelmed and essentially asked the military to take over much of the logistics mission.¹⁹ In the Post-Katrina Reform Act, Congress required FEMA to make its logistics system more flexible and responsive. FEMA's ongoing improvements to its logistics strategy and efforts are designed to initially lean forward and provide immediate support to a disaster site mainly through FEMA-owned goods and assets, and later on to establish sustained supply chains with the private vendors whose resources are needed for ongoing response and recovery activities, according to FEMA officials. In addition, we recently examined FEMA logistics issues, taking a broad approach, identifying five areas necessary for an effective logistics system, which are discussed in appendix I. In short, FEMA is taking action to transition its logistics program to be more proactive, flexible, and responsive. While these and other initiatives hold

¹⁹GAO, *Hurricane Katrina: Better Plans and Exercises Needed to Guide the Military's Response to Catastrophic Natural Disasters*. GAO-06-643 (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2006).

promise for improving FEMA's logistics capabilities, it will be several years before they are fully implemented and operational.

Mass Care and Shelter. In GAO's work examining the nation's ability to evacuate, care for, and shelter disaster victims, we found that FEMA needs to identify and assess the capabilities that exist across the federal government and outside the federal government. In an April testimony, FEMA's Deputy Administrator for Operations said that emergency evacuation, shelter and housing is FEMA's most pressing priority for planning for recovery from a catastrophic disaster. He said that FEMA is undertaking more detailed mass evacuee support planning; the Department of Justice and Red Cross are developing methods for more quickly identifying and uniting missing family members; and FEMA and the Red Cross have developed a web-based data system to support shelter management, reporting, and facility identification activities.

Balance Needed between Quick Provision of Assistance and Ensuring Accountability to Protect against Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

Controls and accountability mechanisms help to ensure that resources are used appropriately. Nevertheless, during a catastrophic disaster, decision makers struggle with the tension between implementing controls and accountability mechanisms and the demand for rapid response and recovery assistance. On one hand, our work uncovered many examples where quick action could not occur due to procedures that required extensive, time-consuming processes, delaying the delivery of vital supplies and other assistance. On the other hand, we also found examples where FEMA's processes assisting disaster victims left the federal government vulnerable to fraud and the abuse of expedited assistance payments.

We estimated that through February 2006, FEMA made about \$600 million to \$1.4 billion in improper and potentially fraudulent payments to applicants who used invalid information to apply for expedited cash assistance. DHS and FEMA have reported a number of actions that are to be in effect for the 2007 hurricane season so that federal recovery programs will have more capacity to rapidly handle a catastrophic incident but also provide accountability. Examples include significantly increasing the quantity of prepositioned supplies, such as food, ice, and water; placing global positioning systems on supply trucks to track their location and better manage the delivery of supplies; creating an enhanced phone system for victim assistance applications that can handle up to 200,000 calls per day; and improving computer systems and processes for verifying the eligibility of those applying for assistance. Effective implementation of these and other planned improvements will be critical to achieving their intended outcomes.²⁰

Finally, catastrophic disasters not only require a different magnitude of capabilities and resources for effective response, they may also require more flexible policies and operating procedures. In a catastrophe, streamlining, simplifying, and expediting decision making should quickly replace "business as usual" and unquestioned adherence to long-standing policies and operating procedures used in normal situations for providing relief to disaster victims. At the same time, controls and accountability mechanisms must be sufficient to provide the documentation needed for expense reimbursement and reasonable assurance that resources have been used legally and for the purposes intended.

We have recommended that DHS create accountability systems that effectively balance the need for fast and flexible response against the need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. Doing so would enable DHS to provide assistance quickly following a catastrophe and keep up with the magnitude of needs to confirm the eligibility of victims for disaster assistance, or assure that there were provisions in contracts for response and recovery services to ensure fair and reasonable prices in all cases. We also recommended that DHS provide guidance on advance procurement practices and procedures (precontracting) for those federal agencies with roles and responsibilities under the *NRP*. These federal agencies could then better manage disaster-related procurement and establish an assessment process to monitor agencies' continuous planning efforts for their disaster-related procurement needs and the maintenance of capabilities. For example, we identified a number of emergency response practices in the public and private sectors that provide insight into how the federal government can better manage its disaster-related procurements. These practices include developing knowledge of contractor capabilities and prices, and es-

²⁰GAO, *Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Disaster Relief: Prevention Is the Key to Minimizing Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Recovery Efforts*. GAO-07-418T. Washington, D.C.: January 29, 2007.

establishing vendor relationships prior to the disaster and establishing a scalable operations plan to adjust the level of capacity to match the response with the need.²¹

In my March 2007 testimony I noted that recent statutory changes have established more controls and accountability mechanisms. For example, The Secretary of DHS is required to promulgate regulations designed to limit the excessive use of subcontractors and subcontracting tiers. The Secretary of DHS is also required to promulgate regulations that limit certain noncompetitive contracts to 150 days, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Oversight funding is specified. FEMA may dedicate up to one percent of funding for agency mission assignments as oversight funds. The FEMA Administrator must develop and maintain internal management controls of FEMA disaster assistance programs and develop and implement a training program to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of federal funds in response to or recovery from a disaster. Verification measures must be developed to identify eligible recipients of disaster relief assistance.

Several Disaster Management Issues Should Have Continued Congressional Attention

In November 2006, the Comptroller General wrote to the congressional leadership suggesting areas for congressional oversight.²² He suggested that one area needing fundamental reform and oversight was preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and rebuilding after catastrophic events. Recent events—notably Hurricane Katrina and the threat of an influenza pandemic—have illustrated the importance of ensuring a strategic and integrated approach to catastrophic disaster management. Disaster preparation and response that is well planned and coordinated can save lives and mitigate damage, and an effectively functioning insurance market can substantially reduce the government's exposure to post-catastrophe payouts.

Lessons learned from past national emergencies provide an opportunity for Congress to look at actions that could mitigate the effects of potential catastrophic events. On January 18, 2007, DHS provided Congress a notice of implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act reorganization requirements and additional organizational changes made under the Homeland Security Act of 2002. All of the changes, according to DHS, were to become effective on March 31, 2007. As stated in our March 2007 testimony, the effective implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act's organizational changes and related roles and responsibilities—in addition to those changes already undertaken by DHS—should address many of our emergency management observations and recommendations.

The Comptroller General also suggested in November 2006 that Congress could also consider how the federal government can work with other nations, other levels of government, and nonprofit and private sector organizations, such as the Red Cross and private insurers, to help ensure the nation is well prepared and recovers effectively. Given the billions of dollars dedicated to preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and rebuilding after catastrophic disasters, congressional oversight is critical.

A comprehensive and in-depth oversight agenda would require long-term efforts. Congress might consider starting with several specific areas for immediate oversight, such as (1) evaluating development and implementation of the National Preparedness System, including preparedness for an influenza pandemic, (2) assessing state and local capabilities and the use of federal grants in building and sustaining those capabilities, (3) examining regional and multistate planning and preparation, (4) determining the status of preparedness exercises, and

(5) examining DHS policies regarding oversight assistance.

DHS Has Reorganized Pursuant to the Post-Katrina Reform Act

On January 18, 2007, DHS provided Congress a notice of implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act reorganization requirements and additional organizational changes made under the Homeland Security Act of 2002. All of the changes, according to DHS, were to become effective on March 31, 2007. According to DHS, the department completed a thorough assessment of FEMA's internal structure to incorporate lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and integrate systematically new and existing assets and responsibilities within FEMA. DHS transferred the following DHS offices and divisions to FEMA:

- United States Fire Administration,
- Office of Grants and Training,
- Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Division,

²¹ GAO, *Homeland Security: Management and Programmatic Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security*, GAO-07-452T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 7, 2007).

²² GAO, *Suggested Areas for Oversight for the 110th Congress*. GAO-07-235R (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 17, 2006).

- Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program,
- Office of National Capital Region Coordination, and,
- Office of State and Local Government Coordination.

DHS officials stated that they have established several organizational elements, such as a logistics management division, a disaster assistance division, and a disaster operations division. In addition, FEMA expanded its regional office structure with each region in part by establishing a Regional Advisory Council and at least one Regional Strike Team. With the recent appointment of the director for region III, FEMA officials noted that for the first time in recent memory there will be no acting regional directors and all 10 FEMA regional offices will be headed by experienced professionals.

Further, FEMA will include a new national preparedness directorate intended to consolidate FEMA's strategic preparedness assets from existing FEMA programs and certain legacy Preparedness Directorate programs. The National Preparedness Directorate will contain functions related to preparedness doctrine, policy, and contingency planning. It also will include the National Integration Center that will maintain the *NRP* and *NIMS* and ensure that training and exercise activities reflect these documents.

Effective Implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act's Provisions Should Respond to Many Concerns

As I have previously stated in my March 2007 testimony, the effective implementation of the Post-Katrina Reform Act's organizational changes and related roles and responsibilities—in addition to those changes already undertaken by DHS—should address many of our emergency management observations and recommendations.

As noted earlier, our analysis in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina showed the need for (1) clearly defined and understood leadership roles and responsibilities; (2) the development of the necessary disaster capabilities; and (3) accountability systems that effectively balance the need for fast and flexible response against the need to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. The statute appears to strengthen leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, the statute clarifies that the FEMA Administrator is to act as the principal emergency management adviser to the President, the Homeland Security Council, and the Secretary of DHS and to provide recommendations directly to Congress after informing the Secretary of DHS. The incident management responsibilities and roles of the National Integration Center are now clear. The Secretary of DHS must ensure that the *NRP* provides for a clear chain of command to lead and coordinate the federal response to any natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other man-made disaster. The law also establishes qualifications that appointees must meet. For example, the FEMA Administrator must have a demonstrated ability in and knowledge of emergency management and homeland security and 5 years of executive leadership and management experience.

Many provisions are designed to enhance preparedness and response. For example, the statute requires the President to establish a national preparedness goal and national preparedness system. The national preparedness system includes a broad range of preparedness activities, including utilizing target capabilities and preparedness priorities, training and exercises, comprehensive assessment systems, and reporting requirements. To illustrate, the FEMA Administrator is to carry out a national training program to implement, and a national exercise program to test and evaluate the *NPG*, *NIMS*, *NRP*, and other related plans and strategies.

In addition, FEMA is to partner with nonfederal entities to build a national emergency management system. States must develop plans that include catastrophic incident annexes modeled after the *NRP* annex in order to be eligible for FEMA emergency preparedness grants. The state annexes must be developed in consultation with local officials, including regional commissions. FEMA regional administrators are to foster the development of mutual aid agreements between states. FEMA must enter into a memorandum of understanding with certain non-federal entities to collaborate on developing standards for deployment capabilities, including credentialing of personnel and typing of resources. In addition, FEMA must implement several other capabilities, such as (1) developing a logistics system providing real-time visibility of items at each point throughout the logistics system, (2) establishing a prepositioned equipment program, and (3) establishing emergency support and response teams.

The National Preparedness System Is Key to Developing Disaster Capabilities

More immediate congressional attention might focus on evaluating the construction and effectiveness of the National Preparedness System, which is mandated under the Post-Katrina Reform Act. Under Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8, issued in December 2003, DHS was to coordinate the development of a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal “to establish measurable readiness

priorities and targets that appropriately balance the potential threat and magnitude of terrorist attacks and large scale natural or accidental disasters with the resources required to prevent, respond to, and recover from them.” The goal was also to include readiness metrics and standards for preparedness assessments and strategies and a system for assessing the nation’s overall preparedness to respond to major events.

To implement the directive, DHS developed the National Preparedness Goal using 15 emergency event scenarios, 12 of which were terrorist related, with the remaining 3 addressing a major hurricane, major earthquake, and an influenza pandemic. According to DHS’s National Preparedness Guidance, the planning scenarios are intended to illustrate the scope and magnitude of large-scale, catastrophic emergency events for which the nation needs to be prepared and to form the basis for identifying the capabilities needed to respond to a wide range of large scale emergency events. The scenarios focused on the consequences that first responders would have to address. Some state and local officials and experts have questioned whether the scenarios were appropriate inputs for preparedness planning, particularly in terms of their plausibility and the emphasis on terrorist scenarios.

Using the scenarios, and in consultation with federal, state, and local emergency response stakeholders, DHS developed a list of over 1,600 discrete tasks, of which 300 were identified as critical. DHS then identified 36 target capabilities to provide guidance to federal, state, and local first responders on the capabilities they need to develop and maintain. That list has since been refined, and DHS released a revised draft list of 37 capabilities in December 2005. Because no single jurisdiction or agency would be expected to perform every task, possession of a target capability could involve enhancing and maintaining local resources, ensuring access to regional and federal resources, or some combination of the two. However, DHS is still in the process of developing goals, requirements, and metrics for these capabilities and the National Preparedness Goal in light of the Hurricane Katrina experience.

Several key components of the National Preparedness System defined in the Post-Katrina Reform Act—the *NPG*, target capabilities and preparedness priorities, and comprehensive assessment systems—should be closely examined. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, DHS had established seven priorities for enhancing national first responder preparedness, including, for example, implementing the *NRP* and *NIMS*; strengthening capabilities in information sharing and collaboration; and strengthening capabilities in medical surge and mass prophylaxis. Those seven priorities were incorporated into DHS’s fiscal year 2006 homeland security grant program (HSGP) guidance, which added an eighth priority that emphasized emergency operations and catastrophic planning.

In the fiscal year 2007 HSGP program guidance, DHS set two overarching priorities. DHS has focused the bulk of its available grant dollars on risk-based investment. In addition, the department has prioritized regional coordination and investment strategies that institutionalize regional security strategy integration. In addition to the two overarching priorities, the guidance also identified several others. These include (1) measuring progress in achieving the *NPG*, (2) integrating and synchronizing preparedness programs and activities, (3) developing and sustaining a statewide critical infrastructure/key resource protection program, (4) enabling information/intelligence fusion, (5) enhancing statewide communications interoperability, (6) strengthening preventative radiological/nuclear detection capabilities, and (7) enhancing catastrophic planning to address nationwide plan review results. Under the guidance, all fiscal year 2007 HSGP applicants will be required to submit an investment justification that provides background information, strategic objectives and priorities addressed, their funding/implementation plan, and the impact that each proposed investment (project) is anticipated to have.

The Particular Challenge of Preparing for an Influenza Pandemic

The possibility of an influenza pandemic is a real and significant threat to the nation. There is widespread agreement that it is not a question of if but when such a pandemic will occur. The issues associated with the preparation for and response to a pandemic flu are similar to those for any other type of disaster: clear leadership roles and responsibilities, authority, and coordination; risk management; realistic planning, training, and exercises; assessing and building the capacity needed to effectively respond and recover; effective information sharing and communication; and accountability for the effective use of resources.

However, a pandemic poses some unique challenges. Hurricanes, earthquakes, explosions, or bioterrorist incidents occur within a short period of time, perhaps a period of minutes, although such events can have long-term effects, as we have seen in the Gulf region following Hurricane Katrina. The immediate effects of such disasters are likely to affect specific locations or areas within the nation; the immediate

damage is not nationwide. In contrast, an influenza pandemic is likely to continue in waves of 6 to 8 weeks for a number of weeks or months and affect wide areas of the nation, perhaps the entire nation. Depending upon the severity of the pandemic, the number of deaths could be from 200,000 to 2 million. Seasonal influenza in the United States results in about 36,000 deaths annually. Successfully addressing the pandemic is also likely to require international coordination of detection and response.

The Department of Health and Human Services estimates that during a severe pandemic, absenteeism may reach as much as 40 percent in an affected community because individuals are ill, caring for family members, or fear infection. Such absenteeism could affect our nation's economy, as businesses and governments face the challenge of continuing to provide essential services with reduced numbers of healthy workers. In addition, our nation's ability to respond effectively to hurricanes or other major disasters during a pandemic may also be diminished as first responders, health care workers, and others are infected or otherwise unable to perform their normal duties. Thus, the consequences of a pandemic are potentially widespread and effective planning and response for such a disaster will require particularly close cooperation among all levels of government, the private sector, individuals within the United States, as well as international cooperation.

We have engagements under way examining such issues as barriers to implementing the Department of Health and Human Services' National Pandemic Influenza Plan, the national strategy and framework for pandemic influenza, the Department of Defense and Department of Agriculture's preparedness efforts and plans, public health and hospital preparedness, and U.S. efforts to improve global disease surveillance. We expect most of these reports to be issued by late summer 2007.

Knowledge of the Effects of State and Local Efforts to Improve Their Capabilities Is Limited

Possible congressional oversight in the short term also might focus on state and local capabilities. As I testified in February on applying risk management principles to guide federal investments, over the past 4 years DHS has provided about \$14 billion in federal funding to states, localities, and territories through its HSGP grants. Remarkably, however, we know little about how states and localities finance their efforts in this area, have used their federal funds, and are assessing the effectiveness with which they spend those funds.

Essentially, all levels of government are still struggling to define and act on the answers to basic, but hardly simple, questions about emergency preparedness and response: What is important (that is, what are our priorities)? How do we know what is important (e.g., risk assessments, performance standards)? How do we measure, attain, and sustain success? On what basis do we make necessary trade-offs, given finite resources?

There are no simple, easy answers to these questions. The data available for answering them are incomplete and imperfect. We have better information and a better sense of what needs to be done for some types of major emergency events than for others. For some natural disasters, such as regional wildfires and flooding, there is more experience and therefore a better basis on which to assess preparation and response efforts and identify gaps that need to be addressed. California has experience with earthquakes; Florida, with hurricanes. However, no one in the nation has experience with such potential catastrophes as a dirty bomb detonated in a major city. Although both the AIDS epidemic and SARS provide some related experience, there have been no recent pandemics that rapidly spread to thousands of people across the nation.

A new feature in the fiscal year 2006 DHS homeland security grant guidance for the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants was that eligible recipients must provide an "investment justification" with their grant application. States were to use this justification to outline the implementation approaches for specific investments that will be used to achieve the initiatives outlined in their state Program and Capability Enhancement Plan. These plans were multiyear global program management plans for the entire state homeland security program that look beyond federal homeland security grant programs and funding. The justifications must justify all funding requested through the DHS homeland security grant program. In the guidance DHS noted that it would use a peer review process to evaluate grant applications on the basis of the effectiveness of a state's plan to address the priorities it has outlined and thereby reduce its overall risk.

For fiscal year 2006, DHS implemented a competitive process to evaluate the anticipated effectiveness of proposed homeland security investments. For fiscal year 2007, DHS will continue to use the risk and effectiveness assessments to inform final funding decisions, although changes have been made to make the grant allocation process more transparent and more easily understood. DHS officials have said

that they cannot yet assess how effective the actual investments from grant funds are in enhancing preparedness and mitigating risk because they do not yet have the metrics to do so.

Regional and Multistate Planning and Preparation Should Be Robust

Through its grant guidance, DHS has encouraged regional and multistate planning and preparation. Planning and assistance have largely been focused on single jurisdictions and their immediately adjacent neighbors. However, well-documented problems with the abilities of first responders from multiple jurisdictions to communicate at the site of an incident and the potential for large-scale natural and terrorist disasters have generated a debate on the extent to which first responders should be focusing their planning and preparation on a regional and multigovernmental basis.

As I mentioned earlier, an overarching national priority for the National Preparedness Goal is embracing regional approaches to building, sustaining, and sharing capabilities at all levels of government. All HSGP applications are to reflect regional coordination and show an investment strategy that institutionalizes regional security strategy integration. However, it is not known to what extent regional and multistate planning has progressed and is effective.

Our limited regional work indicated there are challenges in planning. Our early work addressing the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) and National Capital Region (NCR) strategic planning reported that the ONCRC and the NCR faced interrelated challenges in managing federal funds in a way that maximizes the increase in first responder capacities and preparedness while minimizing inefficiency and unnecessary duplication of expenditures.²³ One of these challenges included a coordinated regionwide plan for establishing first responder performance goals, needs, and priorities, and assessing the benefits of expenditures in enhancing first responder capabilities. In subsequent work on National Capital Region strategic planning, we highlighted areas that needed strengthening in the Region's planning, specifically improving the substance of the strategic plan to guide decision makers.²⁴ For example, additional information could have been provided regarding the type, nature, scope, or timing of planned goals, objectives, and initiatives; performance expectations and measures; designation of priority initiatives to meet regional risk and needed capabilities; lead organizations for initiative implementation; resources and investments; and operational commitment.

Exercises Must Be Carefully Planned and Deployed and Capture Lessons Learned

Our work examining the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina highlighted the importance of realistic exercises to test and refine assumptions, capabilities, and operational procedures; build on the strengths; and shore up the limitations revealed by objective assessments of the exercises. The Post-Katrina Reform Act mandates a national exercise program, and training and exercises are also included as a component of the National Preparedness System. With almost any skill and capability, experience and practice enhance proficiency. For first responders, exercises—especially of the type or magnitude of events for which there is little actual experience—are essential for developing skills and identifying what works well and what needs further improvement. Major emergency incidents, particularly catastrophic ones, by definition require the coordinated actions of personnel from many first responder disciplines and all levels of government, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of effective interdisciplinary, intergovernmental planning, training, and exercises in developing the coordination and skills needed for effective response.

For exercises to be effective in identifying both strengths and areas needing attention, it is important that they be realistic, designed to test and stress the system, involve all key persons who would be involved in responding to an actual event, and be followed by honest and realistic assessments that result in action plans that are implemented. In addition to relevant first responders, exercise participants should

²³ GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals*, GAO-04-433 (Washington, D.C.: May 28, 2004); *Homeland Security: Coordinated Planning and Standards Needed to Better Manage First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region*, GAO-04-904T (Washington, D.C.: June 24, 2004); *Homeland Security: Effective Regional Coordination Can Enhance Emergency Preparedness*, GAO-04-1009 (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 15, 2004); *Homeland Security: Managing First Responder Grants to Enhance Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region*, GAO-05-889T (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2005); and *Homeland Security: The Status of Strategic Planning in the National Capital Region*, GAO-06-559T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2006).

²⁴ GAO, *Homeland Security: Assessment of the National Capital Region Strategic Plan*, GAO-06-1096T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2006).

include, depending upon the scope and nature of the exercise, mayors, governors, and state and local emergency managers who would be responsible for such things as determining if and when to declare a mandatory evacuation or ask for federal assistance.

DHS Has Provided Limited Transparency for Its Management or Operational Decisions

Congressional oversight in the short term might include DHS's policies regarding oversight assistance. The Comptroller General has testified that DHS has not been transparent in its efforts to strengthen its management areas and mission functions. While much of its sensitive work needs to be guarded from improper disclosure, DHS has not been receptive toward oversight. Delays in providing Congress and us with access to various documents and officials have impeded our work.

We need to be able to independently assure ourselves and Congress that DHS has implemented many of our past recommendations or has taken other corrective actions to address the challenges we identified. However, DHS has not made its management or operational decisions transparent enough so that Congress can be sure it is effectively, efficiently, and economically using the billions of dollars in funding it receives annually, and is providing the levels of security called for in numerous legislative requirements and presidential directives.

Concluding Observations

Since September 11, 2001, the federal government has awarded billions of dollars in grants and assistance to state and local governments to assist in strengthening emergency management capabilities. DHS has developed several key national policy documents, including the *NRP*, *NIMS*, and the *NPG* to guide federal, state, and local efforts. The aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season resulted in a reassessment of the federal role in preparing for and responding to catastrophic events. The studies and reports of the past year—by Congress, the White House Homeland Security Council, the DHS IG, DHS and FEMA, GAO, and others—have provided a number of insights into the strengths and limitations of the nation's capacity to respond to catastrophic disasters and resulted in a number of recommendations for strengthening that capacity. Collectively, these studies and reports paint a complex mosaic of the challenges that the nation—federal, state, local, and tribal governments; nongovernmental entities; the private sector; and individual citizens—faces in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from catastrophic disasters. The Post-Katrina Reform Act directs many organizational, mission, and policy changes to respond to these findings and challenges.

Assessing, developing, attaining, and sustaining needed emergency preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities is a difficult task that requires sustained leadership, the coordinated efforts of many stakeholders from a variety of first responder disciplines, levels of government, and nongovernmental entities. There is a no "silver bullet," no easy formula. It is also a task that is never done, but requires continuing commitment and leadership and trade-offs because circumstances change and we will never have the funds to do everything we might like to do.

That concludes my statement, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions you and subcommittee members may have.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now recognize Mr. Fugate to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF CRAIG FUGATE, DIRECTOR, FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. FUGATE. Thank you, Chairman Thompson, ranking members, and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Craig Fugate, and I serve Governor Crist as his director of emergency management, a position I have served for two governors, Governor Bush and Governor Crist.

My experiences go back 25 years, and I have been involved in numerous disasters, both as a first responder, as a paramedic and firefighter, later as an emergency manager for Alachua County, which is home to the University of Florida in Gainesville, as well as serving the state as state coordinating officer and the governor's

authorized representative for the 2004 hurricane season, 2005, and currently serving Governor Crist as the state coordinating officer during the wildfire emergency that is occurring in Florida.

There are several key areas that we would like to present for consideration as we talk about getting ready for the 2007 hurricane season. And the first one is all-hazard. When we talk about hurricanes, or we talk about specific disasters, many people, in trying to describe all-hazards, look for the common elements within the disaster itself.

I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, there is nothing in common with a hurricane and the wildfires. They are entirely different creatures. What is all-hazards is the fact that the governor of the state of Florida will be the governor in all of those disasters.

It is the team that you build to deal with a variety of threats to community space, those known and both unknown, that is truly all-hazard. And when you try to define all-hazard by talking about disasters, you miss the point. So while we are oftentimes concerned about hurricane season, understand what we do in Florida isn't just about hurricanes.

As we are talking about right now, we still have major fires going in Florida. We have over five fire management grants issued by FEMA. We have emergency management assistance compact from other states, from Georgia and South Carolina. Blackhawks are flying in support of our Division of Forestry and our National Guard fighting these fires.

And this is not a hurricane, but this is how we do business in Florida. It is the all-hazard approach. And that is why we have been so insistent that it needs to be the basis as we look at the variety of disasters we face in the nation.

The second one, which is really a concern for my peers in other states and local government, is the Emergency Management Performance Grant. This is a 50-50 funding program that has been authorized by Congress for numerous years, starting back with the era of civil defense, that builds capability and capacity in our communities to share resources, respond effectively, and manage many of those local disasters without state or federal assistance, or, in many disasters, only require federal reimbursement assistance, because we built capacity.

Again, to look at that is a wise investment for our country, to continue building that capacity. Because when you look around the nation, I don't know how many fire trucks the federal government has, but I can tell you the state of Florida doesn't have that many.

They are at local government. And if we don't build the capability to share the unimpacted resources of the nation, we leave too many resources off the table when the victims are in their time of need, and we need to support that capability-building.

But you also have to be able to move those resources from state to state, and that brings us to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. It was something the late Governor Chiles realized after Hurricane Andrew, that we needed to have a better way of bringing assistance from other states, and through the Southern governors, developed the Southern Governors' Compact.

Congress thought that was a great idea, endorsed it, issued a public law to allow states to enter into that compact, and moved

it beyond just the Southern states. And now we have the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which all 50 states are a member of, as well as several of our territories and commonwealths.

This allowed us in the state of Florida to send over 7,000 responders to Mississippi in their time of need during Hurricane Katrina. Not only was it sending resources or sending people, we were actually sending resources—food, water, and ice—that we did through our own contracts. As we were prepared to serve our citizens in their time of need, we were able to provide that assistance to our neighbors in their time of need.

And finally, the last one I want to get to is one that hasn't been discussed very much, and that is the Temporary Disaster Housing Program.

Mr. Chairman, you know as well as I do that housing is an issue before a disaster strikes, and oftentimes it exasperates the program. The Stafford Act was never designed to heal the ills a community has in housing needs before a disaster, and yet we try to make that disaster program fit the needs.

There has been a lot of talk about moving the Temporary Housing Program to HUD. I would suggest it again. We need swift and effective means to house people in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, or we are going to depopulate regions of this country, as we saw in Katrina.

But I think we need to have a better understanding that FEMA's role is the emergency, and many of these issues are longer-term, far beyond ever anticipated under the Stafford Act. There should be a better system that we can use the FEMA program to do the immediate housing needs, then realize many of these folks will have long-term housing issues.

And perhaps the more appropriate will be a hybrid between FEMA and HUD, where at the end of the emergency, many of these people that still have long-term housing issues are then transitioned into HUD programs, versus creating a new program from scratch in the midst of another hurricane season.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The statement of Mr. Fugate follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF WILLIAM "CRAIG" FUGATE

Introduction

Thank you Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member King, and distinguished members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity testify before you on preparedness efforts for the 2007 Hurricane Season. I am Craig Fugate, the Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. I have over 25 years of experience in state and local emergency management, serving in various positions including ten years as the Emergency Management Director for Alachua County, Florida, Chief of the Bureau of Preparedness for the State of Florida, and the appointment to my current position in 2001. I continue to serve and have been reappointed to my position by Governor Charlie Crist. In my time with the State of Florida, I have served as the Governor's authorized representative for major disasters such as the 2004 Hurricane season including Hurricanes Charlie, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne and coordinated the State Emergency Response Team (SERT)'s response for all Florida disasters and for state-to-state mutual aid for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Emergency management is built upon three very basic concepts: 1) All-hazards preparedness is the foundation in which readiness is built for all disasters regardless of the cause or size; 2) The emergency management cycle includes preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation; and 3) All disasters are local. There are

several key areas that I wish to discuss with you today that need to be addressed in order to secure our preparedness for all disasters:

1. **We must maintain an all-hazards approach to emergency management;**
2. **Funding for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) program should be increased, at least restored to FY 2005 levels;**
3. **We need federal support of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC); and**
4. **The FEMA Temporary Disaster Housing Program can be more effective with a transition plan that includes HUD resources.**

MAINTAINING THE ALL-HAZARDS APPROACH TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

All-hazards emergency preparedness is the key building block and foundation for emergency management. Natural hazards continue to be the pervasive disaster that occurs regularly. In the past several years, major disaster declarations were for events including severe storms and tornadoes, typhoons, tropical storms, multiple hurricanes, flooding, ice storms, snowstorms, and wildfires. Natural disaster preparedness must not suffer as a result of homeland security efforts, but rather should be viewed as the most frequent opportunity to validate domestic preparedness efforts and to also build best practices. We need to start looking at the system in terms of hazards preparedness. Furthermore, our emergency response system must be built for all-hazards and terrorism should be a component of the system. We cannot afford to build duplicate systems by hazard or to eliminate programs to support the homeland security effort. An all-hazards approach should be viewed as building a single team to deal with a large variety of hazards.

Since I have been with the State of Florida, we have had had 22 major disaster declarations, five emergency declarations, and 45 fire management assistance declarations. While hurricanes are the most urgent and prevailing threat we have faced, we do not prepare for hurricanes alone. Florida was the first state with anthrax cases in 2001, the terrorists for 9/11 trained in Florida, we have three commercial nuclear power plant sites, host major sporting events including Superbowls, and boast three national championships in the past two years in college football (2006) and basketball (2006 and 2007). We have extensive threats for tornadoes, flooding, fires, and severe freezing. You will recall the February 2, 2007 tornado that left 21 people dead and destroyed hundreds of homes with more than \$17 million in federal assistance for victims. Additionally, we have done significant influenza pandemic planning for our large special needs populations and planning for mass migration incidents from the Caribbean.

While every state may not experience a disaster every single year, preparedness is essential. Florida took the lead in ensuring that localities were prepared for any disaster when our state legislature made changes after Hurricane Andrew that a surcharge is set aside for emergency preparedness from every insurance policy written in the state. This fund called the Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund, which exists only in Florida, helps us to ensure that localities have the necessary means to prepare for disasters and citizens do their part too. In addition, we utilize the only all-hazards funding source, the Emergency Management Performance Grants to supplement these funds to build our key preparedness programs.

Hazards need to be explored in the context of disasters too. A disaster is really caused by humans as a result of getting in Mother Nature's way. Humans build in harms way, we traditionally build at the cheapest costs, and we build power grids that are subject to wind damage. When we prepare for terrorism, we harden critical infrastructure and look for ways to prevent events. We develop strong public health systems and plans to address pandemics. However, addressing hazards before a natural disaster means stronger building codes, enforcing those codes, heeding warnings ahead of disasters and having business and family plans in place when disaster does occur. We have to begin looking at the complexities and scale of the consequences of hazards.

The federal government must continue its commitment to ensuring national security through all-hazard preparedness. Without adequate numbers of state and local personnel to operate the all-hazards emergency management system, the infrastructure used to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all disasters will collapse. Unfortunately, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita illustrated the need for adequate emergency management systems from the ground up. Instead of making unbalanced investments towards terrorism preparedness, we must maintain an all-hazards approach and shore up the foundation of our response system for all disasters regardless of cause.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

EMPG is the only program for All-Hazards Preparedness

Natural disasters are certain and often anticipated. Every state must be able to plan for disasters as well as build and sustain the capability to respond. EMPG is the only source of funding to assist state and local governments with planning and preparedness/readiness activities associated with natural disasters. At a time when our country is continuing long term recovery efforts from one of the largest natural disasters in history and making strides to improve the nation's emergency preparedness/readiness, we cannot afford to have this vital program be just maintained. EMPG is the backbone of the nation's all-hazards emergency management system and the only source of direct federal funding to state and local governments for emergency management capacity building. EMPG is used for personnel, planning, training, and exercises at both the state and local levels. EMPG is primarily used to support state and local emergency management personnel who are responsible for writing plans; conducting training, exercises and corrective action; educating the public on disaster readiness; and maintaining the nation's emergency response system. EMPG is being used to help states create and update plans for receiving and distribution plans for emergency supplies such as water, ice, and food after a disaster; debris removal plans; and plans for receiving or evacuating people—all of these critical issues identified in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the following investigations and reports.

State and Local Match

EMPG is the only all-hazards preparedness program within the Department of Homeland Security that requires a match at the state and local level. The match is evidence of the commitment by state and local governments to address the urgent need for all-hazards emergency planning to include terrorism. EMPG requires a match of 50 percent from state or local governments. According to the National Emergency Management Association's (NEMA) 2006 Biennial Report, states were continuing to over match the federal government's commitment to national security protection through EMPG by \$96 million in FY05, which is an 80 percent state and 20 percent federal contribution. To bring all state and local jurisdictions up to the fifty percent level, \$135 million is needed. This would allow as many as 3,030 additional local jurisdictions to become part of the program. To bring non-participating jurisdictions into the program at the 50 percent level requires an additional \$152 million.

EMPG Helps Ensure Personnel for Mutual Aid

During the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, the interdependencies of the nation's emergency management system were demonstrated and one of the success stories was the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC enabled 48 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico to provide assistance in the form of more than 2,100 missions of human, military and equipment assets and over 65,000 civilian and military personnel and equipment assets to support the impacted states. The estimated costs of these missions will exceed \$829 million. Of the personnel providing assistance through EMAC, 46,503 were National Guard personnel and 19,426 were civilians. Many of the civilians sent to provide assistance are supported by the EMPG program in their state. The nature of the nation's mutual aid system vividly shows the need for all states to have appropriate capabilities to respond to disasters of all types and sizes. In Florida we used EMPG to build self-sustained response teams that are able to respond to disasters in our state and in neighboring states when called upon to provide assistance. The increased reliance on mutual aid for catastrophic disasters means additional resources are needed to continue to build and enhance the nation's mutual aid system through EMAC.

Appropriate Support Needed to Strengthen Program

While EMPG received modest increases in 2003 and 2004 after ten years of straight-lined funding, the program needs to be adequately resourced based on building capacity. The increased flexibility of EMPG is offset by funding shortfalls estimated in the NEMA Biennial Report in 2006 to be over \$287 million for all 50 states. The current total need is \$487 million. The Post-Katrina FEMA Reform Act authorized EMPG at \$375 million for FY 2008.

Clearly, Congress wants to understand what is being built with these investments, especially in tight fiscal conditions. The 2006 Quick Response Survey found that if states were to each receive an additional \$1 million in EMPG funding for FY 2007, states would use the following percentages for each of the following activities: 88 percent of states responding would use the funding to support the update plans including evacuation, sheltering, emergency operations, catastrophic disasters

and others; 83 percent would provide more training opportunities for state and local emergency preparedness and response; 88 percent would provide additional preparedness grants to local jurisdictions; 69 percent would conduct more state and local exercises; and 61 percent would use funding for state and local NIMS compliance. (States were able to respond to multiple activities, as each state has multiple emergency preparedness priorities.)

Last year's Nationwide Plan Review Phase 2 Report completed by the Department of Homeland Security found that current catastrophic planning is unsystematic and not linked within a national planning system. The report cites that, "This is incompatible with 21st century homeland security challenges, and reflects a systematic problem: outmoded planning processes, products, and tools are primary contributors to the inadequacy of catastrophic planning. The results of the Review support the need for a fundamental modernization of our Nation's planning process. The report goes on to explain that all states do not adequately address special needs populations, continuity of operations, continuity of government, evacuation plans, and resource management. EMPG is the ONLY source of funding that can address these significant and immediate needs. The current EMPG shortfall does not take into account these findings.

BUILDING OUR NATION'S MUTUAL AID SYSTEM THROUGH EMAC

The response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita resulted in the largest deployment of interstate mutual aid in the nation's history through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). As mentioned previously, EMAC deployed personnel comprised of multiple disciplines from all member states to respond to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Texas. The process enabled National Guard, search and rescue teams, incident management teams, emergency operations center support, building inspectors, law enforcement personnel, and other disciplines to immediately assist the requesting states in need of support. The National Guard even chose to continue under EMAC when deployed under Title 32 because of the organization, liability protections, accountability, and tracking abilities EMAC provides.

EMAC was created after Hurricane Andrew by then-Florida Governor Lawton Chiles. The system was developed through the member states of the Southern Governors' Association to establish mechanisms to enable mutual aid among member states in emergency situations. The Southern Regional Emergency Management Assistance Compact (SREMAC) was signed by participating Governors in 1993. Following recognition of SREMACs nationwide applicability by the National Governors' Association and FEMA, Congress enacted EMAC in 1996 (P.L. 104-321). Currently all 50 states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia are members of EMAC. EMAC requires member states to have an implementation plan and to follow procedures outlined in the EMAC Operations Manual. EMAC takes care of issues such as reimbursement, liability protections, and workers' compensation issues.

The following is a synopsis of the historical support that the state of Florida provided to Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the largest support mission in the history of EMAC. The State of Florida, acting under provisions of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and a direct request from the Governor of Mississippi, deployed a self-contained response team on the day of landfall to the impacted coastal area of Mississippi (3 coastal counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson; 3 contiguous inland counties to the north consisting of Pearl River, Stone, and George). By the evening of landfall on August 29, 2005 assets of law enforcement, firefighting, search and rescue, medical, Incident Management Teams, and others were in the area of operations in coastal Mississippi performing life-saving, safety, and security missions. Major logistical assets were sent to the area, as well, to include ice, water, food, fuel, and other commodities to support initial response operations. Due to the dire situation caused by Hurricane Katrina on the Mississippi coast, the mission of the Florida Task Force grew significantly and commodities and personnel continued to flow from the State of Florida continuously until the end of October 2005 (note: some smaller level missions continued with Florida support up until November 2006). The Florida Task Force set-up a major command and logistical staging area at Stennis Space Base which became the hub of the operation. This command communicated with and supported Incident Management Teams from Florida which were located in the 6 assigned counties to support the local Mississippi Emergency Management Directors. In relation to this effort, it must be noted that the State of Florida had itself been impacted by Hurricane Katrina (a weaker storm at that time) prior to its passage into the Gulf of Mexico. It is a tribute to the entire Florida State Emergency Response Team (state and local government, private entities, faith based organizations, etc. . .) that they were able to effectively rise to the challenge of responding to the South Florida im-

part of Hurricane Katrina while providing significant and necessary assistance to our neighbors on the Gulf Coast.

Overview of EMAC Support to the State of Mississippi

- **COMMODITIES:** (*Purchased and provided by the State of Florida*)
 - Water—768 truckloads—3,648,000 gals.
 - Ice—457 truckloads—19,194,000 lbs.
 - Juice—16 trucks—16,000 cases
 - Shelf Stable Meals—138,000 meals
 - USDA commodities—6,000 cases
 - Baby food, formula, etc.—20,892 cases
 - Baby supplies (nipples, diapers, wipes)—4,962 cases
 - Adult diapers, wipes—376 cases
 - Children Liquid Supplement—10,200 cases
 - Adult Liquid Supplement—5,100 cases
 - 1,304 State Trucks of Commodities
 - 2,057 Trucks Total of Commodities
- **PERSONNEL and TEAMS:**
 - 6,404 Personnel Total
 - Three Area Command Teams with 115 personnel to manage entire area of responsibility of six counties
 - Six Incident Management Teams sent to County Emergency Operation Center's
 - Three Logistics Management Teams
 - Urban Search and Rescue Teams
 - Three Type I Teams
 - Four Type II Teams
 - Two Water Rescue Teams
 - One Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Coordination Team
 - 767 Law Enforcement Personnel with vehicles and equipment
 - 207 Fire Fighting Personnel
 - 70 ALS Ambulances and EMS personnel
 - 710 Medical Personnel in various disciplines
 - 30 Elder Care Specialists
 - 1 School Recovery Team
 - 1 FDOT Advance Recon Team (10 personnel)
 - 1 FDOT Bridge Recovery Team (7 personnel)
 - 14 Public Information Officers
 - 497 National Guard Personnel (also sent aircraft and equipment)
 - 3 zodiac boats w/trailers
 - 3 High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (HMMWV's)
 - 2 GSA vans
 - 2 UH-60 "Black Hawk" helicopters
 - 1CH-47 "Chinook"
 - 4 Hazmat Teams (8 personnel)
 - 14 Volunteer, Donations and Reception Center Personnel
 - 13 Animal Control Teams (60 personnel)
 - 1 State Animal Response Team (5 personnel)
 - 16 Water/Wastewater Facility Teams (101 personnel)
 - 4 Communications Personnel
 - 38 Recovery Personnel

Continued support of EMAC will allow Florida to focus on the implementation of lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, such as training and education for all mutual aid stakeholders, resource typing and credentialing, and information and resource management.

ADDRESSING TEMPORARY DISASTER HOUSING PROGRAM CHALLENGES

Housing is often seriously impacted following natural disasters, leaving many families in the impacted areas with no place to call home. Disaster housing consists of three phases:

1. The initial phase focuses on retaining citizens in the affected area and providing interim housing solutions for them.
2. The next phase focuses on rebuilding local housing resources.
3. The final phase deals directly with developing long-term redevelopment strategies.

Providing housing assistance following a disaster can not just be based on expiration dates and eviction dates; the focus must be on long term housing solutions for

the affected area. Disaster case management of survivors that deals with the entire scope of housing and human needs is necessary throughout all the phase to transition those affected from interim situations into longer term solutions. Typically in a community where the ability to transition disaster survivors into permanent housing is problematic, there is usually an existing housing problem before the disaster struck the community.

A disaster housing partnership between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) would provide a disaster housing solution that is more responsive, flexible and would provide a more cost effective long term disaster housing solutions. Bringing HUD's financial resources and their subject matter expertise regarding building loans, subsidies and land management into the fold early on in the disaster housing process, would greatly improve an impacted community's ability to recover and develop long-term housing solutions and strategies. Additionally, HUD is capable of providing case management experience for permanent solutions for affected citizens that will provide permanent solutions to local situations. Case management will result in accountability on all levels of disaster housing.

CONCLUSION

The first goal the State of Florida looks at when preparing for any sort of disaster is how we can best serve our citizens. This goes back to my previous statement regarding the fact that all disasters are local and that all groups involved in responding to disasters must use a team approach, regardless of the type of disaster, to prepare for and respond to these events. This team approach is imperative when addressing the federal role in responding to disasters, it is important that the response from the federal level is one of a supporting role for state and local emergency management, it cannot supplant these efforts.

Florida is successful and is looked to as a leader due to the fact that our leadership has invested in emergency management through the creation of the Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund and Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance Trust Fund. Additionally, the state has worked to develop strong partnerships that will ultimately insure the state's success in affecting positive outcomes for those impacted when a disaster occurs in our state. This type of investment was on display recently when the Florida Legislature, based on Governor Crist's budget recommendations, approved an appropriation of \$895,000 in the state's FY 07-08 budget to upgrade Florida's State Warning Point. The Florida State Warning Point is a function of the Division of Emergency Management and is housed in the Emergency Operations Center. The Florida State Warning Point is responsible, through Florida Statutes and federal regulations, to be the central clearing house for all emergencies occurring in the State that require response by or resources from multi-county incidents, multi-State agency incidents or any incident requiring County/State/Federal communications and/or coordination.

With the passage of the Post-Katrina FEMA Reform Act, Congress has affirmed their support for ensuring preparedness for our nation's continuous vulnerability against all-hazards. We must continue to build national preparedness efforts with a multi-hazard approach. We appreciate Congress' increased attention and focus on disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation efforts. We ask that Congress look at ways to immediately influx the system with resources, encourage and reward innovation in order to face the challenges of the day. We cannot afford to continue to repeat history as we did with Hurricane Andrew and Hurricane Katrina. We must, once and for all, learn the lessons of the past and resolve ourselves to ensure that Federal, State and local governments have adequate funding for baseline emergency preparedness so exercises and training can ensure that plans and systems are effective before a disaster.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before your committee today and want to affirm Governor Crist's dedication to continually working with our federal partners to improve the nation's capabilities to respond to all types of hazards that our communities may face on a daily basis. William "Craig" Fugate, Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We now will recognize Mr. Becker to summarize his statement for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JOE BECKER, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT,
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE, AMERICAN RED CROSS
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS**

Mr. BECKER. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Joe Becker, and I lead the American Red Cross's national disaster relief efforts. Thank you for your invitation to speak today.

I was asked to cover three topics: to review what the Red Cross does for victims of disasters and what we don't do, to share the steps that we have taken since Katrina, and to discuss our changed role in the National Response Plan.

What we do in times of disaster for people? We shelter, we feed, we distribute items that people need, the supplies that they would need to get through the immediate next few days. We have learned over the years that there are some supplies where it is difficult to give the actual item—gas for a car or shoes where sizes matter—and we give some financial assistance so people can obtain those when their economy recovers.

We provide mental-health counseling. We provide health services with our nurses and shelters. We provide information to connect families with lost loved ones, and we work in the longer-term recovery to help families plan and find resources—our resources and others—on their longer-term recovery.

What we don't do: We don't evacuate cities. That is a state and local, particularly local, operation. We don't rescue people. That belongs in the first-response community.

We don't give everybody money who had a loss. We are not a bank. We are not an insurance company. And we don't build houses. There are others that do that very well.

You hear of the Red Cross charter to provide a national system of disaster relief. That means we don't pick and choose which disasters we respond to. We don't think about if it is a big enough one, that we will come, or if our people are available, or if we have money in the bank. We respond regardless, to about 200 events a day, around the country.

If the event is larger than the very small event, such as a multi-family fire, we will be joined by our usual key partners, mainly faith-based groups. The Southern Baptists will be there to help feed, Catholic Charities will often serve, Salvation Army would be there to help feed.

If an event is much larger, or if there is an event that is very visible in the news, we will be joined by many from the community, and others who arrive to do good work, mostly faith-based groups, some businesses and civic groups.

The challenge is for the local quarterback, the local emergency manager, and whatever structure the community has, to incorporate their good works into a coordinated response. And how that is done varies community by community.

What did the Red Cross learn from Katrina? I will give you a list of key learnings. Briefly, we learned instead of moving our supplies in ahead of a storm, it is better for us to expand our stockpile and permanently keep them in risk areas. We learned where our systems need to be bigger, especially our systems to use untrained

spontaneous volunteers, and to move large numbers of people around the country to help.

A key learning, we learned where our relationships with community groups, particularly faith-based groups, were not as strong as needed. These are nondisaster organizations who step forward in a very large disaster and don't know how to plug into the system and help. We learned which of these community groups, such as churches, would step forward and didn't know how to get support, and we learned how we can do that better.

We learned that we needed year-round staff to work with state government in risk areas, and where we needed a larger team to work with our federal partners. We learned where our infrastructure, particularly our IT infrastructure, was completely overwhelmed and had to be rebuilt post-Katrina. We learned where our satellite communications system wasn't big enough, and where we needed more redundancy.

In short, we learned about our capacity, and we learned about our relationships, and we learned that we needed to grow both. We had a large number of projects post-Katrina that just had to be done by last hurricane season last year.

We gave ourselves 4 months to acquire 1.5 million square feet of warehouse space, to put in those warehouses additional supplies to shelter 500,000 people for a 6-day period of time, buying a half million cots, a half million blankets, and those related supplies. We now have 6 million prepackaged meals ready to go.

We now have 21 cities in risk areas with permanent triple-redundant communications equipment along the coast, and we are adding more cities. We have hired full-time staff for 14 state emergency management offices, such as Mr. Fugate's, and staff to work with partner groups to help national partners, national organizations, become part of the disaster response. We redid our IT systems, and we did a lot of work on our supply chain.

Locally, our chapters have created new partnerships, especially with faith-based groups, to enable the work, and we even worked with about 100 national partners. A good example would be the NAACP, where we trained over 1,000 of their members, and they helped respond to the tornadoes in Florida and to Alabama and Georgia.

You might also remember that our role in the National Response Plan has changed recently. We have a separate team that supports the federal structure in disaster. They help receive requests from states for support items for mass care, and help the federal agencies fill those requests.

This team is very different from our operating team. It does not direct our operating team. It takes information from the operating team, and gives it to federal partners.

In the new construct, in the new National Response Plan, in a key learning from Katrina, if you are going to be a primary agency in the National Response Plan, you need to be able to help make quick and decisive commitments of federal assets.

It is clear that the Red Cross can't commit federal resources. I can't sign a contract on behalf of government for water or fuel to appear. And now that ESF6 is growing to include evacuation plan-

ning and pet planning, it is appropriate that a federal agency take that role, and FEMA has agreed to do so.

The key point here is that there will be no change in our service delivery on the ground. This is a separate team from the people who feed and shelter and do those seven things that I described.

Are we ready? We are never ready enough. We have made big strides with our people, in our supplies, in our plans, in our systems, but we work every day and we see the problems at county level, we see the problems at state level, we see the problems in our federal family. And we know there is much more to be done.

The Red Cross has learned a lot. We have done a lot, but we have a lot more to do. Thank you very much.

[The statement of Mr. Becker follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSEPH C. BECKER

Chairman Thompson, Congressman King, and Members of the Committee on Homeland Security, thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify before you today on this important topic: Hurricane Season 2007. I am pleased to inform the Committee that we have made substantial improvements in our capacity to respond to the challenges that may come our way.

I would like to start by recognizing the selection of Mark W. Everson as the next president and chief executive officer of the American Red Cross. Many of you know Mr. Everson, who has led the Internal Revenue Service for the past four years. We at the American Red Cross are excited and encouraged about his selection and look forward to him officially joining the organization on May 29.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for your support of H.R. 1681, *the American National Red Cross Governance Modernization Act of 2007*, which was signed into law by President Bush on May 11. This legislation modernizes the governance structure of the American Red Cross and enhances the Red Cross Board of Governors' ability to support the critical mission of the Red Cross in the 21st century.

In today's testimony, I will focus on the significant improvements made by the American Red Cross since Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma devastated the Gulf Coast during the 2005 hurricane season. I will also address recent changes to the National Response Plan (NRP), in which the American Red Cross plays a significant role.

About the American Red Cross

For more than 125 years, the American Red Cross has been our nation's partner in preventing, preparing for, and responding to disasters. Our past and present Congressional Charter mandates that the Red Cross "maintain a domestic and international system of disaster relief." In fact, the Red Cross responds to more than 70,000 disasters each year, ranging from single family home fires to large scale hurricanes and tornadoes. In addition to family home fires and small scale events, today the Red Cross has 39 large scale disaster operations in 26 states and the Northern Mariana Islands, including the tornado that struck Kansas earlier this month and our continuing work to support the tragedy at Virginia Tech.

The Red Cross must function at many levels and across multiple jurisdictions. It is simultaneously a local responder, a state partner and a national organization. At the local level, we provide immediate services: food, shelter, immediate and longer-term assistance, for people in all disasters ranging from home fires to large scale disasters.

While the American Red Cross is the nation's largest mass care provider, we are not the only mass care provider. As an independent, nonprofit organization, we rely on the generosity of the American people to provide services to victims of disasters. We also rely on our partners, such as the Southern Baptists, the Salvation Army, Catholic Charities, and the United Way, to provide their services in larger events. Since Hurricane Katrina, the Red Cross has reached out to hundreds of organizations across the nation to ensure our partnerships are solid, to find mutual ways of providing services during times of disasters, and to ensure that the gaps that existed in our response to Katrina are filled.

Hurricane Katrina

In August 2005, our nation awoke to the inconceivable wrath that was Hurricane Katrina. Millions of people were immediately displaced. The sheer magnitude of

Katrina's impact was unprecedented, and the American Red Cross, along with all other response and human services organizations, was not prepared for the magnitude of the response required by such a disaster. In our planning, we failed to "think big" enough.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the largest domestic events the Red Cross ever responded to were the 2004 hurricanes—Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne—which crisscrossed their way across the southeast. Our response to these storms easily surpassed anything done in prior disasters, such as Hurricane Andrew in 1992. After those storms, we made significant strides to increase our feeding, sheltering, and emergency assistance capacity.

Before Katrina made landfall, we enhanced local Red Cross chapter capacity with supplies, emergency response vehicles (ERVs), kitchens, communications equipment, and a first wave of almost two thousand additional volunteers—a force that would ultimately grow to 240,000 workers. But, for Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, this was not enough. The 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes were 20 times larger than our previous largest disaster.

To say that the organization was stretched beyond capacity is an understatement. Some shelters became exceptionally crowded, we were slow to reach some rural areas, and when we gave emergency financial assistance our systems became overwhelmed. We responded by creating new systems utilizing our relationships with some of the best and brightest in corporate America to give aid to people in need. We also ramped up our workforce and trained tens of thousands of spontaneous volunteers who stepped up to help their neighbors.

It was not perfect—it was far from perfect—but we were successful, with the help of our partners, in getting the critical emergency aid to those who had nothing else on a scale that was unprecedented.

Hurricane Katrina exposed systemic vulnerabilities for the Red Cross and governmental agencies that respond to disasters. Yet, by bringing them to light, we were given the opportunity to identify them, fix them, and ensure that we are prepared for future disasters that may lie ahead.

Lessons Learned and Improvements, 2005–2007

Mr. Chairman, I shared lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina in preparation for the 2006 hurricane season with this Committee last June. While we were fortunate as a nation to have a relatively quiet hurricane season last year, that did not give the Red Cross reason to delay our progress, it simply gave us time to do more—time to ensure that we rebuilt our systems right, and to create the necessary capacity.

Today, I welcome the opportunity to address two specific issues that might have characterized the Red Cross in years past. The first is a cultural issue, the second is capacity.

First our culture. The Red Cross had a history of acting as an insular organization too many times and in too many places. As the nation's largest mass care provider, we have been successful in responding to disasters for more than a century. On larger relief efforts, we have worked with key partners over the years, typically faith based groups like the Southern Baptists and the Salvation Army. In very large events, like Katrina, many new groups step forward, especially the faith community. Our ability to work with these non-traditional disaster response organizations was limited. While overwhelmed providing service, we had difficulty helping them become part of the community response. This was a hard, but valuable lesson for the Red Cross to learn. In very, very large events, non disaster groups and new partners come forward to serve—and the Red Cross can take a lead role in helping them become part of the response.

Katrina also was a wake up call for the Red Cross that partnering in fact is important in all disasters—small and medium ones, not just the catastrophes. Since Katrina, the Red Cross at the national level and our more than 700 chapters nationwide have worked diligently to create and foster strong partnerships with many new organizations that would typically not be in the disaster response business. From faith groups and businesses to local civic organizations, our chapters have been working with local community organizations to ensure that partnerships are in place so that organizations—that selflessly step up to help their neighbors—know in advance how to access supplies, resources, and expertise. Through partnerships, Red Cross chapters are providing training and supplies to community-based organizations to strengthen response efforts across the nation. If and when a disaster strikes, these community-based organizations will be better prepared to assist in their response efforts, and the Red Cross will be better prepared to identify and reach out to people are that may need assistance. We have seen the benefit of working with these new partners in many significant responses over the last year. The

Red Cross does not think or act alone. . .our commitment to partnerships is here to stay.

The second area is capacity. The Red Cross has significantly increased the investment in our capacity to respond. Today, we have six million pre-packaged meals are at the ready, and sheltering supplies, like blankets, cots, toiletry kits, and clean up kits for up to a half million people are stored in warehouses spread along the coasts and in other high risk areas.

For many years we had mobile communications vehicles, complete with interoperable satellite and redundant communications that we would roll in ahead of a storm. Today we have 21 cities stocked with permanent satellite equipment along the Gulf Coast, and are working to add more.

We have worked even more effectively with the state and federal governments as well, hiring full-time Red Cross employees for 14 state emergency management offices, and for each of the FEMA regions. This is in addition to the employees we have added to work with NGO partner groups to help coordinate relief efforts. We have trained more than 165 government relations volunteers and have worked hard to strengthen our relationship with FEMA, clarifying and redefining roles and responsibilities. We have increased our efforts to work with and accommodate people with disabilities and continue to seek appropriate community partnerships to help us serve other vulnerable communities. We have changed our information sharing policies to allow transparency with other organizations and local law enforcement while respecting client confidentiality.

We also have added the following capacity:

- A web-based shelter management application developed in conjunction with FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security. This system has the ability to track shelter inventory, facility survey data, and population counts of the shelter population nationwide. Data on our 44,000 shelters is entered in the system.
- Improvements to the Disaster Services Human Resources (DSHR) system to track in real-time staff assigned to relief operations and strengthen the process used for registering spontaneous volunteers. The DSHR system software has also been modified to accommodate DSHR ID Smart Card technology. These improvements provide better information about our volunteers, their skills and availability.
- Addition of six on-staff disaster relief operation directors to provide leadership to major relief operations as well as mentor and coach chapter and multi-chapter relief operation directors. This will improve the skill sets of administrators and managers in the DSHR system.
- Development of national partnerships that chapters can utilize at the local level to engage underserved groups in their communities.
- A "Disaster Welfare Information" system for chapters to provide "safe and well" status information to the families and loved ones of disaster victims.
- Response Center Network expansion for a group of chapters that staff the 1-866-GET-INFO line. We have 250 simultaneous workers in chapters nationwide supporting the information center's work.
- An enhanced Volunteer Match Portal to help manage expectations of large numbers of spontaneous volunteers and provide updated guidance.

All of this was completed by the beginning of the 2006 hurricane season. Since last fall, we have worked to sharpen our planning, starting with the six of the highest disaster-risk regions of the country. Working with partner organizations, state and local governments, and our federal partners, we have tried to quantify the worst case catastrophic scenarios: (1) a hurricane hitting New York City; (2) a terrorist incident in Washington, D.C.; (3) a hurricane on the Carolina coast; (4) multiple hurricane strikes in the Gulf Coast; (5) an earthquake in southern California; and (6) an earthquake in northern California. Taking these scenarios, we are asking real-world questions. How many would need shelter and are we prepared to shelter this many people? How many would need to be fed? How many would need to be cared for? These numbers are daunting, Mr. Chairman, and the Red Cross—and the country—have many challenges to be prepared to respond.

Changes to the National Response Plan

As you know, the American Red Cross role in the National Response Plan (NRP) is evolving. This is the result of an expansion of responsibilities in Emergency Support Function (ESF) 6 (ESF6) and a change in the expectations of the role of the Primary Agency.

Historically, the Red Cross role in the National Response Plan (and its predecessor, the Federal Response Plan) has been the primary agency for mass care, and as a support agency for six other functions. In the primary role, the Red Cross has:

- Received, evaluated and forwarded State requests for mass care related support to FEMA for approval and fulfillment by the federal government in time of disaster;
- Assisted in federal planning efforts;
- Participated in federal level planning for mass care; and
- Provided liaisons to FEMA locations in support of ESF6 Mass Care activities.

Three years ago when the NRP was created, the American Red Cross assumed the role of the only nongovernmental organization named as a “primary agency” in an Emergency Support Function. We were very proud of this important role and approached it with the care and consideration necessary to serve in this function. Nevertheless, over the years, one of the lessons we learned is that this “primary agency” role was never fully understood, and for good reason. The American Red Cross is not a government agency, and we do not have, nor have we ever requested, the federal authority or ability to assign federal assets during times of disaster.

Additionally, our operation as a mass care sheltering service provider is separate and distinct from our role in the NRP. We have a separate Red Cross NRP team that supports the federal structure in disaster. This team receives requests from states for mass care (feeding and sheltering) and helps the federal agencies determine how to best fill the requests. This team is very different from our service provider team operating on the ground running Red Cross shelters and feeding clients—the Red Cross NRP team does not direct sheltering or other mass care services.

In the new NRP, currently being rewritten, the confusion regarding the Red Cross roles as a federal surrogate and a NGO mass care services provider is eliminated. It is imperative that the primary agency in the ESF needs the authority to make quick and decisive commitments of federal assets. As I stated above, the Red Cross is not a federal agency, and does not have the authority to require or commit the federal resources of several cabinet agencies. The Red Cross is very pleased with the redesign of the NRP and its designation as a support agency.

For these reasons, and because of the expanded ESF6 role in the post-Katrina reforms implemented in the fiscal year 2007 DHS Appropriations bill, the American Red Cross and FEMA have concurred that it is imperative that it is much more appropriate for FEMA to perform the federal role of “primary agency.” The Red Cross will become a “support agency” under ESF6, and our support role for the other six emergency support functions will continue unchanged. We participated significantly in rewriting the NRP along with FEMA and other federal agencies. In the end, we believe it is in the best interest of the American people for FEMA to perform the federal government’s role as the Primary Agency for all areas of ESF6. It has the needed federal statutory authority to commit federal resources of other federal agencies and to ensure a unified command structure during operational response.

While our “NRP status” has changed, our operations—as a service provider—have not. The American Red Cross and our partners, regardless of our role in the NRP, will continue to provide shelter, feeding, bulk distribution, welfare inquiry, recovery planning, emergency assistance, health and mental health assistance, and long term recovery.

Hurricane Season 2007

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I have outlined the steps the Red Cross has taken to prepare for Hurricane Season 2007. We have made immense strides in our supplies, plans, systems, and culture. We have learned that what was “unimaginable” can, in fact, become reality.

While we have made significant improvements, the fact is that we—and federal government agencies—can never be ready enough.

There are significant national issues that still exist. The NRP is not complete. While we applaud the work that FEMA, DHS and all the contributors have done on the NRP, we need to have an operational plan complete.

We also need to see significant improvement in the areas of community and personal preparedness. The greatest defense to surviving a disaster is being prepared. The American Red Cross works with individuals, communities, states and the federal government to help our nation and our citizens become prepared for any disaster that comes their way. Red Cross programs are configured to disaster risk, that is, we design programs for individuals and families to prepare for natural disasters that are conducive to their geographic areas. As we rely on the neighbor helping neighbor philosophy, we encourage local communities to become more aware of potential hazards that could adversely impact their regions and prepare accordingly.

The Red Cross firmly believes in the importance of preparedness and has developed numerous tools and resources offered in a number of different languages to help families prepare for any unexpected disasters, from a house fire to a hurricane.

Over the past several years, organizations that help to prepare communities, as well as local, state and federal governments, have made efforts to streamline our messages on preparedness. We know that a single national message helps individuals better understand what they need to do to protect themselves and their loved ones during times of disaster. It is important that all levels of government and the Red Cross convey a unified message to the public on preparedness.

We encourage families and individuals across this country to "Be Red Cross Ready." Our campaign, which parallels the Department of Homeland Security's Ready Campaign, provides tools for individual households to take three important steps: (1) Get a Kit; (2) Make a Plan; and (3) Be Informed.

Get a Kit—Every household should have prepared and ready to go a disaster kit that includes enough food and supplies to last each family member for three days. This could be an old knapsack or backpack with water, basic first aid supplies, any critical documents (such as photocopies of driver's licenses), necessary medicines, a change of clothes, and a small amount of cash. This kit should be replenished as necessary to ensure that food, water, and medicines are fresh. This should be the one thing that anyone needing to leave in a hurry can grab to take with them. In addition, families should consider any special needs, including those of loved ones as well as their family pets.

Make a Plan—This plan should incorporate such things as where an individual and their loved ones would go in the event of a disaster, how they would communicate with a friend or loved one to let someone know where they are and that they are safe, particularly when critical infrastructure like phone lines are down. A good family plan also considers the care of pets.

Be Informed—Get information from either your local Red Cross chapter or another organization that offers critical trainings on making a disaster plan, a communications plan, and first aid/CPR. Knowing what to do during a time of disaster is critical to ensuring one's safety and the safety of their loved ones.

Despite our collective efforts, there has not been a significant improvement in preparedness by individual households. We believe that Members of Congress could have an impact on this by addressing their constituents on preparedness issues, and partnering with organizations that promote disaster preparedness.

While we speak today of the upcoming hurricane season, other threats loom. One threat that continues to merit careful planning and attention is the potential pandemic influenza. In this regard, I come today with a specific request. While the Red Cross will be sharing vital family care information, providing a safe and adequate blood supply, and helping to meet the needs of isolated or quarantined people, we all know that our medical facilities will be overwhelmed. The medical community will turn to the Red Cross and other organizations for volunteers to help in overflow facilities. There is great risk in asking for volunteers to serve in support roles for those providing medical care, particularly in temporary facilities full of contagious people.

Our efforts on behalf of the Red Cross and other volunteers throughout the United States, their families and organizations to extend federal protections to them have been met with no success to date. We need strong health care protections for our volunteers, either through appropriate amendments to the Federal Volunteer Protection Act or new legislation that affords liability and benefits protections to volunteers who are placed in harms way. We ask your help here. America will need volunteers to help in medical situations. I encourage this Congress to act while we still have time.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, Congressman King, and Members of the Committee, thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony on Red Cross improvements leading up to the 2007 hurricane season. We want to assure you, and the American people, that you can rely on the American Red Cross to be there whenever, wherever disaster strikes.

I am happy to address any questions you may have.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

What I would like to do to start the questioning, Mr. Jenkins, in your analysis of FEMA, can you capsule what you think, post-Katrina, what you have seen FEMA do that is their politics, and what items if any that cause you pause with respect to FEMA not being up to what you would consider an acceptable standard?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, as Mr. Paulson pointed out in his testimony earlier, there is a number of things that FEMA has done in each

of the areas that I mentioned in terms of situational awareness, where they now have teams that go out, they have automated trucks with capacity to do that.

There is the same thing with regard to assistance. They have got now a greater capacity to do that, and a capacity to be able to do that in a way that also tries to identify duplicates and fraudulent applications. So in each of those areas that I mentioned, they have taken positive steps.

I think with regard to logistics, they have a long way to go. They can now, as you point out, track trucks that leave from two of their principal warehouses, but they still have quite a bit to go in terms of how they are going to refine what their requirements are and work with the private sector in that area.

They recognize that it is a multiyear effort, that they are not going to have that implemented for this hurricane season. They really just need to revamp that system from A to Z, and they are working on that.

The thing that I think I am a little bit concerned about is, I think it is important that if in this hurricane season, the new NRP comes in places he suggested in late June, it is whether or not you really want to try to implement that plan, that new plan, in the midst of the hurricane season?

Or do you want to go with what you have got, where that is what you have trained on, that is what people understand their roles and responsibilities are. They are not trained in the new system, whatever it might be? And so, I think that is one question as to whether or not you want to do that.

I think it is also important that there be a clear understanding of the roles of the FCO and PFO, and that is not always clear. Under the existing NRP, the secretary of homeland security can appoint a single individual to serve as PFO and FO except in the case of terrorist events, and the reason for that exception is not clear in the NRP.

But it is, in our view, probably better that that particular person, one person, serve both roles, as opposed to having it in two roles. It definitely provides clearer lines of communication and authority.

There is, at least, by having them predesignated, however, that these positions—now being predesignated for three regions and two states—there is an opportunity for both the FCO and the PFO to meet with state and local counterparts so that there can be a better discussion of what their roles would be, how they would interact with the states, what their individual roles would be in terms of the federal response. But that is an area of concern for us.

I think the other thing is that FEMA has put a lot of things into place that potentially are certainly much better than Katrina was. I think the real issue that we have is the extent to which these initiatives can actually be successfully deployed and implemented on a very large-scale basis, like a hurricane IV or V strength.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, I am glad you mentioned that. Mr. Paulison talked about a hurricane V scenario for Florida, Mr. Fugate. And part of that, phase one, focused on developing a regional response and recovery in the counties around Lake Okeechobee. Are you familiar with that scenario?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. It was at my request.

Last year, the Army Corps of Engineers responded to Governor Bush, who had asked for a review of the dike, came back with the water management district with concerns that the dike may have a higher percentage chance of failure in certain scenarios. That was not something we had previously planned for.

So we approached Director Paulison. We knew they were looking to do catastrophic planning in South Florida, and said, as a part of that, can we first look at Lake Okeechobee, and what would happen if we had a dike failure there, all along those very small rural communities, and lack of resources.

So we began there. We are going to shift that focus, as we have completed that planning, into South Florida. And much of what we are looking at is building upon the system that is already in place in Florida, with the state and locals.

Again, our critical issue is not what many people are talking about. Quite honestly, sir, the National Response Plan doesn't respond. People do.

Here is the challenge I want to talk about: We look at a Category V hurricane hitting South Florida, similar to the Great Miami Hurricane that actually hit in 1926. Based upon today's population, that would result in losing over 300,000 housing units in less than 24 hours in a band that will stretch from the Miami-Dade-Broward County line all the way through Tampa.

I have yet to hear anything in the National Response Plan, or anything that is being proposed in the Katrina after-action reports, that tells me how we are going to house 300,000 families—close to 1,000,000 people—without having to disperse them all over this country.

Those are the kind of challenges, when we talk about catastrophic planning, we are trying to get down to, not who is on first base or who is in charge. We knew that in Florida the day our constitution got written. It is the governor of the state of Florida and the local official declares the emergency.

Chairman THOMPSON. And I appreciate this line of discussion. Have you shared any of your concerns with anyone at FEMA, or anything of this nature?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir, and that is part of why we were very fortunate to receive that catastrophic planning. Our primary emphasis, as we move into the South Florida areas, will be, again, looking at our existing plans for evacuation response, but really starting to challenge some of these things that we don't have answers for.

In Florida, we have moved millions of people in hurricanes. We have responded after disasters, but there are some challenges that we have yet to see the impacts of what people term catastrophic.

I tend to still term that a major disaster, but what happens when you have the challenges of housing loss of that nature, based upon not theoretical, but actual hurricanes that have hit and applied to today's population.

Chairman THOMPSON. And I think part of what we saw with Katrina—even though we had a scenario run before Katrina—it was whether or not we knew what the outcome would be.

But we did not prepare for the impact on the population, so we saw that dispersal of people, and to some degree, the abandonment

of quite a few. But we knew the physical damage, but it was the human aspect of it that was not included.

And we will probably come back to another round. I see my time has expired.

I yield to the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much. And I want to thank you for calling us back. This is really important, and I am glad you extended the time. I appreciate it very much.

And thank you for your patience, panel.

And I love these recesses, because my seniority increases every time we come back—climb the ladder of seniority.

Director Fugate, I would like to thank you for testifying, of course, before this committee. The state of Florida has been the national leader in disaster prevention and response.

I know I am a little biased, but I think it is true. Mississippi doesn't do bad either. I want to thank you for your years of service in making our state a national standard, and under, as you said, Governor Chiles first, Governor Bush, and now Governor Crist.

Maybe you can elaborate on this, but what do you attribute Florida's success to? I know you touched upon it, but if you can elaborate, we would appreciate it.

Mr. FUGATE. I appreciate the question. And again, I think it is the leadership that our governors have given us. But more importantly, it is the fact we learned we had to be a team.

Mr. Chairman, I am looking around me, and you have got two government officials and the Red Cross. That is not the team. We don't have the private sector here. For a long time, when we talked about volunteers, we only talked about the Red Cross. We left the faith-based off the table.

When we talk about disasters and building a team, it has to be all levels of government as partners. And partners mean you bring something to the table. You just don't hand your hand out and say, "Give me something."

It means that we have to have our volunteers, and all of our volunteers, both those that deal with disasters as a primary, to those that step forward with resources that may be emergent during an emergency. You can't say no when you need the help.

But following the other leg of that stool is the private sector. We oftentimes find ourselves competing and duplicating with our private sector when what we really should be doing in many disasters is not ordering up more ice and water, but spending more time thinking about how we get those local retailers back on line, so FEMA's disaster assistance can go to people and they can go out and take care of themselves.

And again, when you talk about building a team, it has to be something that is not seen as a local issue, a state issue, or a federal issue. It cannot be seen as government solution or volunteer solutions. You have to look at what works in a community on a day-to-day basis, and look at those elements.

And from that, that is how you build a team. And the focus is always going to be on our citizens we serve. But without the private sector, without the volunteers, government is one leg of a broken stool. That was the lesson of Hurricane Andrew.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, appreciate that. Again, Director Fugate, would you also address the National Guard issue, if you would like, with regard to readiness to respond to a natural disaster?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Again, Mr. Chairman, in the state of Florida, we currently have more National Guardsmen back in Florida with more equipment than we had in the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons. Throughout all of the response to the world terrorism and to the deployments, we had more National Guardsmen available for deployment than we had deployed at any time during Hurricane Andrew.

I think there is a clear distinction between the warfighting mission and the long-term impacts on the Guard to carry out that federal mission at the expense of training and equipment. But in the short term, the disaster response in Florida has not been compromised.

We use our Emergency Management Assistance Compact very effectively. I currently have authorized, and we have EMAC missions from the state of Georgia and South Carolina supporting us with firefighting helicopters fighting fires. Those are the types of things we do every day to get ready for disasters, and I think it is the way to multiply and maximize our forces.

But I do think long term, the nation needs to look at the role of the National Guard in the federal mission, and how do you keep them equipped and trained for the long term. But I am not concerned about the ability of the Florida National Guard to support Governor Crist and the team this hurricane season.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you. Unfortunately, we have been seeing numerous disasters have plagued our country. Tornadoes, floods, and recently, wildfires have caused millions of dollars in damage and tragically, have taken lives. Do you believe that the standards outlined in EMAC need to be revised to ensure the states are best prepared for these disasters?

Mr. FUGATE. Well, I think in our process that we are using, the thing that we lose sight of when we talk about disasters are local is, we always look at the community's impact. And we forget about the communities nearby that weren't impacted, and the states that weren't impacted.

Our ability to leverage our responders in those communities is our biggest force multiplier. They will bring more to the table faster than any federal program or any state program. And so, as we continue to enhance and develop our Emergency Management Assistance Compact, we have asked for is the National Emergency Management Association funding to support that.

Again, our goal is, don't leave the resources of this nation off the table just because they are not part of the federal or state response. And to do that effectively, we have to have a system across state lines, get into the areas and serve citizens without the paperwork becoming so burdensome that it stops a response.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay, thank you. I know I have got 10 more seconds.

Quickly, any additional suggestions you may have, how the federal government can help out the states?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir. We have got to stop responding to disasters as our only course of saving the taxpayers' dollars and saving lives, and start mitigating them before they happen. Most of these disasters are well known. The hazards are well known.

And we have a backwards system of dealing with disasters. We spend billions of dollars after a disaster fixing what would have cost hundreds of millions to fix beforehand, at the loss of life and misery that is unimaginable.

I think again, because of our priorities, we need to go back and look at how do we get citizens to take greater ownership of mitigating their homes, protecting their families, so they are not a burden to you and me when disaster strikes, but we have given them the tools to make their homes safer and protect their family.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Very good. I have a couple of suggestions.

Thank you very much, appreciate it.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

We have been joined by the gentleman from Colorado for 5 minutes. Mr. Perlmutter?

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

And Mr. Fugate, I think the comments you made right at the end is just so on the mark. We can always find—whether it is in business or something else—you can always find time when the car breaks down to take it to the shop and get it fixed, most of the time you can.

And it takes much more time and it takes a lot more in dollars if you just spend a few bucks early on to prevent it, you have saved yourself the time and the money. And we always kind of forget that. And the same thing applies on a much grander scale when it comes to disasters.

But I want to go back to the National Guard piece, because you heard my questions earlier, I assume, of Mr. Paulson. So, I am looking at your testimony, and I apologize, I didn't hear all of your testimony. But it says that you deployed 497 National Guard personnel to Mississippi during Katrina?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Did you deploy any to Louisiana?

Mr. FUGATE. No, sir we did not deploy battalion strength. We provided technical advisor and aircraft to the request we got from Louisiana.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Did you retain National Guardsmen and women in Florida at the same time you deployed to Mississippi?

Mr. FUGATE. Oh, yes, sir. We probably had about 8,000 Guardsmen available. In fact, we were faced with a couple of tropical storms and hurricanes during that deployment. It did not result in us having to back off our support to the states when we were facing other threats, not as severe, of course. And then we were able to respond full speed to Hurricane Wilma with many of the folks that had rotated back out of Mississippi when they had been released.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. So you maintained some in Florida, just in case something bad happened in Florida, but you were able to send some to Mississippi to assist them?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir. And also, understand that over 7,000 responders went from Florida to the National Guard. In many cases,

the majority of the resources that came from other states under EMAC were National Guard.

In the state of Florida, that was actually local governments. Over half those responders came from local governments through mutual aid and EMAC. So again, we were able to reach out to all our resources, including the National Guard, and still be ready in Florida for other disasters.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Do you know how many in total, in terms of the National Guard, were deployed to either Mississippi or Louisiana during Katrina?

Mr. FUGATE. No, sir. I believe you can get that information from General Blum, commander of the National Guard Bureau. It was in the tens of thousands. I want to say in testimony—I don't want to guess—but it was in the tens of thousands. He can give you the best number. And they were coordinated under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Do you know whether—and again, this may be outside of your purview, but how many—you said in Florida today, you have more Guardsmen available than you did in 2004–2005?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Do you know how many in Florida have been deployed today to Iraq?

Mr. FUGATE. Actually, sir, the Florida National Guard, in the war on terror, had been deployed. We had one full brigade. The 53rd Infantry Brigade was deployed to Afghanistan. We have units that have been deployed to Iraq as well as to Africa, and also Bosnia.

So our Florida National Guard has pretty much been everywhere in this world that our Department of Defense has called upon them. I can ask General Burnett to provide that information. But the Florida National Guard has been in a lot of countries and a lot of wars since the September 11 attack.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. But today, do you know how many, actually from Florida, are deployed outside of Florida to another country? I assume that you don't have anybody deployed to any other state today?

Mr. FUGATE. No, sir. We actually have other states deployed to us fighting fires today. One of our main?

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Why?

Mr. FUGATE. The helicopters that fly the firefighting mission, the Florida National Guard does not have—as organic to their mission—sufficient platforms. So it is not an issue of the war on terror or any other war. It is actually that we don't have that many Blackhawks, so when we are fighting wildfires, we routinely—and this is well before September 11—reach out to our neighboring states for more rotary wing.

We had more air defense units, most of our infantry-type units. We did not have a lot of aviation assets. So, we used the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, which we have been using since I have been in the division back in 1997, to access those National Guards that have particular units that we did not have. And that gives us the ability to reach out.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. All right, because I just want to understand the system. So the system, what you have in place, basically it is a national system?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. If you don't have the Blackhawks, they come in from New York City, or someplace like that, who might have them. Some National Guard will be deployed to Florida when called upon, or from Colorado or wherever?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Let me go back to my other question. My other question was, from Florida today, how many units, if you know, have been deployed outside of the United States?

Mr. FUGATE. I would have to defer to General Burnett. I know we just got back one of our combat engineering units—the Red Horse came back. I think that our Special Forces just came back. And so, the last count I got, was we actually had our highest number of troops back since we actually engaged in the airport security missions right after September 11.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you. I do have one more question, if I could, Mr. Chairman. When they return, are they bringing their equipment, or are they leaving some or all of it in Iraq, or wherever it was they were deployed outside the country?

Mr. FUGATE. By and large, when they deploy their equipment, they don't come back with their equipment. But we have been successful in getting equipment moved back into Florida, and releveling those units.

I think our primary concern isn't being able to respond to disasters in Florida. I think it is the longer-term issue of the federal mission, of the equipment and training that will be a deficit for the National Guard, but from what we see in Florida, is not an immediate threat to our ability to respond to disasters, particularly this hurricane season.

But I think it is nationally a long-term concern that we don't equip the National Guard for their federal mission, particularly in the training, as we go in the out years without this equipment.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you very much.

Chairman THOMPSON. Thank you very much.

And I think we will do another round, since we only have these members present.

Mr. Becker, you referenced some operating agreements that you have in place, you said Catholic Charities, Southern Baptist Convention, and Salvation Army. Now, those are three agreements you have?

Mr. BECKER. On a national level, we have about 130 agreements with national partners. Those are the partners that we know are going to respond on a larger-scale disaster. A lot of our other partnerships are with the types of partners that Mr. Fugate was referring to. They are not necessarily disaster organizations, but they have great resources that the country needs in time of disaster.

Chairman THOMPSON. What I am trying to get at is, are you talking about Tier 1 operating agreements with those three organizations that I talked about? Are all operating agreements the same?

Mr. BECKER. We specify what each party can expect of the other, and what we think they will bring in a disaster, and what they can expect from us in terms of support. But I think what is important here is, when it is a very small disaster, when there is going to be six houses burnt tonight in the Capital area, the Red Cross will be there at 2 in the morning with our volunteers.

If the disaster is a little bit bigger than that, a small flood or a tornado, the Salvation Army will most likely be there, Southern Baptists would most likely be there. And we work nationally and locally with them. It is a well-oiled machine.

That part worked during Katrina. What didn't work during Katrina was the local faith-based groups in particular, who stepped forward and said, "I have got a kitchen," or "I will be a shelter," and it was a pastor and a key and an empty building.

And after 2 or 3 days, they fatigued. They didn't know where to get supplies, they didn't know where to get help. And the local emergency management didn't know they were there, didn't know they needed law enforcement, didn't know they needed infrastructure.

What we have done in our local chapters is ask the community, in a common structure, to say who will be willing to step forward. And we have sought out partners, partners in hard-to-serve locations, maybe very rural areas, that speak specific languages that we don't have a competence in. So those are local partnerships—

Chairman THOMPSON. Not to cut you off, but let me tell you personal experience, what happened to me. A number of those individuals came to offer help, and was rejected, turned away. They said that you were not qualified to serve as a volunteer in time

Many of them were people in the faith community. And I am of the opinion that that is not the time to turn help away. Now, I am glad to hear that you indicate that that is not the case any more. But you have not changed the national operating agreement.

One other issue is that in many instances, like in New Orleans and areas where there is a high percentage of minority populations, you don't have an operating agreement that provides reimbursement for expenditures, to my knowledge. Now, I stand corrected. But you called three organizations.

One of the problems associated with Katrina is, you could not get individuals to go into the impacted areas for quite some time, fear of harm or what have you. So a number of people suffered because of that.

Now, other than the three groups I identified based on your testimony, you talked about NAACP and some other groups. But that is down the line. Southern Baptist Convention, wonderful group, but they are not the only religion in America. Catholic Charities is another, but there are a number of other faith groups that ought to have a similar operating agreement with the Red Cross. Now, are you saying that they do have one?

Mr. BECKER. Yes sir, Mr. Chairman. We have operating agreements, particularly with churches, where we will train them ahead of time, we will give them access to our supplies, our cots and our blankets, and we will pay their expenses if they are feeding or if they are sheltering or doing our core work. That is new since Katrina.

Chairman THOMPSON. What I would like for you to do for the committee, and I appreciate you, because that was one of the difficulties—a number of churches offered shelter. They were told, “You are not a qualified shelter.”

I had an armory in my district that offered shelter. They were told, “You are not a qualified shelter,” even though they housed men and women who served us every day. So I would hope that we have bridged the Red Cross bureaucracy, and moved it into the service bureaucracy for the community, because that was one of the major criticisms we heard all along. But I would like for you to get me the new list of people you have operating agreements with.

Mr. BECKER. Mr. Chairman, just to address the one issue you raised, we need to be clear about who designates a shelter, who declares a building to be a shelter. The local emergency manager would declare a public building to be a shelter.

The Red Cross just can’t show up and take over a school and say, “We are here and we are going to run a shelter.” We have about 40,000 shelters in our Red Cross system. We don’t own those buildings.

Those are typically high school gyms, and the ones that are churches now would be typically outside the emergency management system. And that is where we can reimburse, that is where we can enter into those types of agreements.

Chairman THOMPSON. Well, what I am of the opinion is that my experience with the Red Cross and the state of Mississippi in trying to get an armory that had a full kitchen, full bathrooms, showers, cots, mattresses, air conditioning, everything you would need, the Red Cross personnel said, “This is not an approved shelter for us.” Do you understand?

Mr. BECKER. Thank you. I would like to look into that, if I can.

Chairman THOMPSON. Greenwood, Mississippi.

I yield to Ranking Member.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it very much. And thanks for bringing that up, too, on the shelters.

Mr. FUGATE, following up on your comments regarding the private sector as an equal partner in disaster preparedness and response, will you please discuss how Florida encourages the private sector to participate before, during, and after a disaster?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir. After the Hurricane Wilma response, we realized that in many cases, we were handing out food, water, and ice in front of an open store, oftentimes within hours to a day after the storm had hit. Didn’t make sense to us, didn’t make sense to them why we were competing.

So we had individual meetings with all of our major retailers in the grocery and in the hardware chains, and sat down. And the first question we began asking was, how they could do more of our job?

We realized very quickly we asked the wrong question. The question should have been, what can we do to get them open? Because when you can get the private sector back open in a disaster area, you put people back to work, you jump-start the economy, and they are much more effective with their already existing logistical chains to meet demand.

We then can focus on our more vulnerable citizens in those areas the retailers don't serve, which if we go back to Hurricane Wilma, we should not have been setting up in front of an open grocery store. We should have been in Belle Glade and Pahokee, where there were no stores, and where our most vulnerable citizens were at.

Because quite honestly, the other thing we never talk about in disasters is, who is the most vulnerable in this nation? And it is generally the poor. Poverty is the most underestimated impact in trying to deal with disasters, because without resources ahead of time, they are not prepared.

They end up in these programs the most vulnerable. The programs were never designed to fit them. And they are the ones that much later, we find, that are still in need, and there are still challenges.

So we said we should be focusing on those folks, our most vulnerable citizens, and support, and asked a question of how do we get our retailers back up faster, so they can serve the rest of us? those of us that can afford to go get our food, water, and ice after a disaster? so that government and volunteer agencies can focus on our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you very much.

And I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

Mr. GREEN. [Presiding.] Thank you very much.

Mr. Perlmutter is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

And Mr. Jenkins, I would like to ask you a couple questions about the quotation that I read to Mr. Paulison, where it says: "Thus it is difficult to assess the probable results of these initiatives in improving response to major catastrophic disasters, such as a category IV or V hurricane."

Can you explain what you meant by that sentence, and how you came to that conclusion that you are concerned there is not a good plan in place, or I don't know what it is you are saying. Let me just ask you what you meant by that sentence.

Mr. JENKINS. Well, it is not so much that there is not a good plan in place. FEMA has taken certain actions. Let me just give you an example.

They had a major problem in Hurricane Katrina registering people for individual assistance. If you registered by Internet, they could then check for duplicates and check your address, and so forth. If you registered by telephone, they couldn't, and a lot of people that registered by telephone who were not eligible or made multiple applications.

They now say that they can register up to 200,000 people a day with their system, and that they have the ability to check addresses and make sure that those addresses are correct. And the question that we have is it has never been tested for 200,000 people a day.

In other words, it has never been stressed to that point, and it is not clear what would happen, and what kind of contingency plan they have if that system goes down, for being able to register people.

There is another issue, is a particular file they are using to check addresses is a file that very often election officials use, and it has one particular flaw. And that is that it tries to identify residential addresses, but in that particular file, if you live above your business, the address may be shown to be a business address, not a residential address.

And therefore, you might not be able to register, because it doesn't show that this was a residential address. So it is those kind of issues that we are concerned about.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. In the next paragraph, you talk about the National Guard, and you say, "The National Guard needs to respond to large-scale disasters that have not been fully identified because the multiple federal and state agencies—such events have not completed and integrated their plans."

I mean, when you put together your report, what kind of research did you do into the National Guard's part of any disaster response?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, this particular paragraph is actually a very high-level summary of a much more detailed report that we issued on the National Guard and domestic preparedness in January.

And that did look at the equipment that the Guard had, how they were determining what equipment was needed for their domestic missions, what kind of equipment they had, how DOD was assessing their role in domestic missions.

As we point out in that report that DOD doesn't routinely measure the readiness of the Guard for domestic missions. So this is a high summary of a much more detailed report which I can send you that was issued in January of this year.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Yes, I would appreciate it if you would send me a copy of that, please.

No further questions, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you.

And I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes. I am the acting chair, as you can see.

And Chairman Thompson made a salient point that I would like to revisit just for a moment, if I may. He talked to you about the relationship between the Red Cross and what I would call other NGOs.

And I assure you, I was not in his district, so I have no idea as to what was said, other than what I heard him say. But I heard similar comments in my district, and I want to help improve the image that has been somewhat tarnished because of what happened in the aftermath of Katrina.

So my first question to you is this: What is the most important thing that you have done since Katrina to help you become proactive as opposed to reactive with reference to your emergency response?

Mr. BECKER. You are referring to the partnerships or to our capacity to respond in general?

Mr. GREEN. Capacity to respond as well as partnerships.

Mr. BECKER. I would say one of the most significant things we have done is, rather than roll resources to a hurricane area ahead of the storm—which we have done in the past, and prepositioned items as the storm is coming.

We now have every state, from here to Texas along the coast, with at least one prepositioned warehouse with what it takes to shelter 500,000 people for a 6-day period of time. To have the supplies already in the affected area helps us, because we had problems moving items into the affected areas and through the affected areas post-Katrina.

I would say of all the action we took, and there were 40-something projects that we undertook before last hurricane season, that was probably the most significant, to have our capacity there before the storm, to have it there year-round.

Mr. GREEN. And with reference to the NGOs other than yourself, your entity?

Mr. BECKER. I would say the most powerful thing that we have done is to enable each of our chapters to work within their communities on those right relationships, and give them ability to bring resources and money to the table, to the conversation.

When we go to a church and say "Would you like to help this community in time of disaster?", the answer is typically, "Well, call us when the big one hits and we will come if we can." And we need to do better than that.

And what we are trying to do is to work with the faith community in particular and say, "Would you help the Red Cross, would you be part of this community's disaster response? And if you will, we will give you the training you need so that you can run the Church X shelter when they have the shelter manager and the shelter workers and your supplies.

"We will train you, we will give access to our supplies. We will give you our cots." And then more importantly, what they really wanted to know is, "Will you pay my bills at the end of all of this?"

Mr. GREEN. How is this message being conveyed to the masses?

Mr. BECKER. I am sorry?

Mr. GREEN. The masses. How is this message penetrating to the entities that you desire to impact?

Mr. BECKER. What we ask our chapters to do is to look strategically at the community and see who the right partners would be. Some of it is about geography. Where are we slower to get to because it is very rural, or very far away from where our volunteers are?

Some of it is demographic. It is language, it is parts of town that were slower to respond to, or where do we not look like the people we are saving. So it is asking our chapters to reach out and form those right partnerships now and ahead of time, as we have done on the national level.

And then I mentioned before, we have about 130 national partnerships, and some of these are with organizations that aren't disaster responders. We trained 1,000 members of the NAACP, and resourced them. They responded in the Daytona area to tornadoes. They responded to Alabama with us. They responded to Georgia with us. They were doing mass care work, but they were representing the NAACP, not the American Red Cross. We all think that was a significant improvement.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you. Permit me to ask Mr. Jenkins a question if I may, sir. Mr. Jenkins, sir, with reference to the National Guard

and your survey, do you have a comparison between when we were at our peak of readiness at home, as opposed to where we are now?

Mr. JENKINS. The survey that we did really wasn't designed to do that. What we did is, we asked the various National Guard bureaus what kind of equipment they had, and what they thought their inventory was compared to what they needed, in other words, if you have 40 percent, 50 percent, or whatever.

But the survey wasn't really framed in terms of peak readiness versus current readiness. It was like, what equipment do you have and what kind of shortages do you have?

Mr. GREEN. Thank you. My time has expired.

Does Mr. Perlmutter have any additional questions?

Mr. PERLMUTTER. No, sir.

Mr. GREEN. All right. Well, we would like to thank all of the witnesses for your valuable testimony today, and the members for their questions.

The members of the committee may have additional questions for you, and we will ask that you respond expeditiously to their questions in writing, of course.

And the hearing is going to be adjourned, given that there is no further business. And I am instructed to strike the gavel.

Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 4:47 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

Appendix I: Enhanced Capabilities for Catastrophic Response and Recovery

Numerous reports and our own work suggest that the substantial resources and capabilities marshaled by state, local, and federal governments and nongovernmental organizations were insufficient to meet the immediate challenges posed by the unprecedented degree of damage and the number of victims caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Developing the capabilities needed for catastrophic disasters should be part of an overall national preparedness effort that is designed to integrate and define what needs to be done and where, how, and how well it should be done—that is, according to what standards. The principal national documents designed to address each of these are, respectively, the *NRP*, *NIMS*, and the *NPGs*. The nation's experience with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita reinforces some of the questions surrounding the adequacy of capabilities in the context of a catastrophic disaster—particularly in the areas of (1) situational assessment and awareness, (2) emergency communications, (3) evacuations, (4) search and rescue, (5) logistics, and (6) mass care and sheltering.

FEMA is taking actions to address identified deficiencies in each of these areas. Examples include designating national and regional situational awareness teams; acquiring and deploying mobile satellite communications trucks; developing an electronic system for receiving and tracking the status of requests for assistance and supplies; acquiring GPS equipment for tracking the location of supplies on route to areas of need; and working with the Red Cross and others to clarify roles and responsibilities for mass care, housing, and human services. This appendix provides additional details of FEMA's actions in each of these areas.

FEMA Taking Steps to Improve Situational Assessment Capabilities

One of the critical capabilities that FEMA is working to improve is their situational assessment and awareness. FEMA is developing a concept for rapidly deployable interagency incident management teams, at this time called National Incident Management Team, to provide a forward federal presence to facilitate managing the national response for catastrophic incidents. FEMA is planning to establish three national-level teams and ten regional-level teams, one in each of the ten FEMA regions. These teams will support efforts to meet the emergent needs during disasters such as the capability to provide initial situational awareness for decision-makers and support the initial establishment of a unified command. According to FEMA's plans, these teams will have a multi-agency composition to ensure that the multi-disciplinary requirements of emergency management are met. The teams are envisioned to have the capability to establish an effective federal presence within 12-hours of notification, to support the state, to coordinate federal activities, and to be self sufficient for a minimum of 48-hours so as not to be a drain on potentially scarce local resources. National-level and regional-level teams will be staffed with permanent full-time employees, unlike the ERTs, which are staffed on a collateral duty basis. Team composition will include representatives from other DHS components, interagency and homeland security partners. When not deployed, the teams will team-train with federal partners and provide a training capability to elevate state and local emergency management capabilities. The teams will also engage in consistent and coordinated operational planning and relationship-building with state, local, tribal, and other stakeholders.

According to FEMA officials, these teams are still being designed and decisions on team assets, equipment, and expected capabilities have not yet been finalized. The new teams are envisioned to eventually subsume the existing FIRST (Federal Incident Response Teams) and ERTs (FEMA's Emergency Response Teams), and their mission and capabilities will incorporate similar concepts involving leadership, emergency management doctrine, and operational competence in communications. FEMA plans to implement one National Incident Management Team and one Regional Incident Management Team by May 25, 2007.

Some Progress Has Been Made on Interoperable Communications

As our past work has noted, emergency communications is a critical capability common across all phases of an incident. Agencies' communications systems during a catastrophic disaster must first be operable, with sufficient communications to meet everyday internal and emergency communication requirements. Once operable, they then should have communications interoperability whereby public safety agencies (e.g., police, fire, emergency medical services, etc.) and service agencies (e.g., public works, transportation, and hospitals) can communicate within and across agencies and jurisdictions in real time as needed.

DHS officials have identified a number of programs and activities they have implemented to improve interoperable communications nationally. DHS's Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC) was established to strengthen and integrate interoperability and compatibility efforts to improve local, tribal, state, and federal emergency preparedness and response. SAFECOM, a program of OIC which is transitioning to the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC)—in response to the Post-Katrina Reform Act—is developing tools, templates, and guidance documents, including field tested statewide planning methodologies, online collaboration tools, coordinated grant guidance, communications requirements, and a comprehensive online library of lessons learned and best practices to improve interoperability and compatibility across the nation. DHS officials cited the development of the following examples in their efforts to improve interoperable communications:

- Statement of Requirements (SoR) to define operational and functional requirements for emergency response communications.
- Public Safety Architecture Framework (PSAF) to help emergency response agencies map interoperable communications system requirements and identify system gaps.
- Project 25 (P25) suite of standards and a Compliance Assessment Program. This project is in conjunction with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to support the efforts of the emergency response community and industry;
- Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning Methodology to offer states a tangible approach as they initiate statewide interoperability planning efforts. SAFECOM also collaborated in DHS grant guidance to help states develop statewide interoperability plans by the end of 2007.

According to FEMA officials, the agency is taking actions to design, staff, and maintain a rapidly deployable, responsive, interoperable, and highly reliable emergency communications capability using the latest commercial off-the-shelf voice, video, and data technology. FEMA's Response Division is the designated lead for tactical communications, along with situational awareness information technology enablers that are provided by FEMA's Chief Information Officer. Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) detachments provide robust, deployable, command, control, and incident communications capabilities to DHS/FEMA elements for catastrophic Incidents of National Significance. The MERS mission supports Emergency Support Function partners at the federal, state, and local levels of government. The plan is to utilize enhanced MERS capabilities and leverage commercial technology to provide real-time connectivity between communications platforms in a manner consistent with emergency communication deployment doctrine being developed by DHS and FEMA. According to FEMA officials, emergency managers at the federal, state, and local levels of government will benefit from an integrated interoperable emergency communications architecture that includes the Department of Defense, United States Northern Command and the National Guard Bureau.

Our recent work noted that \$2.15 billion in grant funding has been awarded to states and localities from fiscal year 2003 through fiscal year 2005 for communications interoperability enhancements helped to make improvements on a variety of interoperability projects.¹ However this work noted that the SAFECOM program has made limited progress in improving communications interoperability at all levels of government. For example, the program has not addressed interoperability with federal agencies, a critical element to interoperable communications required by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004.² The SAFECOM program has focused on helping states and localities improve interoperable communications by developing tools and guidance for their use. However, based on our review of four states and selected localities, SAFECOM's progress in achieving its goals of helping these states and localities improve interoperable communications has been limited. Officials from the states and localities we reviewed often found

¹GAO, *First Responders: Much Work Remains to Improve Communications Interoperability*. GAO-07-301 (Washington, D.C.: April 2, 2007).

²See 6 U.S.C. § 194(a).

that the tools and planning assistance provided by the program were not helpful, or they were unaware of what assistance the program had to offer. The program's limited effectiveness can be linked to poor program management practices, including the lack of a plan for improving interoperability across all levels of government and inadequate performance measures that would provide feedback to better attune tools and assistance with public safety needs. Until SAFECOM adopts these key management practices, its progress is likely to remain limited.

Further, little progress had been made in developing Project 25 standards—a suite of national standards that are intended to enable interoperability among the communications products of different vendors. For example, although one of the eight major subsets of standards was defined in the project's first 4 years (from 1989 to 1993), from 1993 through 2005, no additional standards were completed that could be used by a vendor to develop elements of a Project 25 system. The private-sector coordinating body responsible for Project 25 has defined specifications for three additional subsets of standards. However, ambiguities in the published standards have led to incompatibilities among products made by different vendors, and no compliance testing has been conducted to ensure vendors' products are interoperable. Nevertheless, DHS has strongly encouraged state and local agencies to use grant funding to purchase Project 25 radios, which are substantially more expensive than non-Project 25 radios. As a result, states and local agencies have purchased fewer, more expensive radios, which still may not be interoperable and thus may provide them with minimal additional benefits. Thus, until DHS takes a more strategic approach here, progress by states and localities in improving interoperability is likely to be impeded.

FEMA Taking Steps to Address Logistics Problems

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, FEMA's performance in the logistics area came under harsh criticism. Within days, FEMA became overwhelmed and essentially asked the military to take over much of the logistics mission.³ In the Post-Katrina Reform Act, Congress required FEMA to make its logistics system more flexible and responsive. FEMA's improvements to their logistics strategy and efforts are designed to initially lean forward and provide immediate support to a disaster site mainly through FEMA-owned goods and assets, and later on to establish sustained supply chains with the private vendors whose resources are needed for ongoing response and recovery activities, according to FEMA officials.

According to FEMA officials, the agency is building forward-leaning capabilities that include, for example, its MERS resources designed to support a variety of communications requirements—satellite, land mobile radio, computer and telephone systems—with the ability to operate from one or more locations (mobile and stationary) within the response area of operations. FEMA has also developed a Pre-Positioned Disaster Supply (PPDS) program to position containers of life-saving and life-sustaining disaster equipment and supplies as close to a potential disaster site as possible, in order to substantially reduce the initial response time to incidents.⁴ Further, FEMA is developing a Pre-positioned Equipment Program (PEP) that also consists of standardized containers of equipment to provide state and local governments responding to a range of major disasters such equipment as personal protective supplies, decontamination, detection, technical search and rescue, law enforcement, medical, interoperable communications and other emergency response equipment. According to FEMA officials, currently FEMA has established 8 of the 11 PEP locations, as mandated by the Post-Katrina Reform Act, and FEMA is currently conducting an analysis to determine where the additional PEP sites should be located. FEMA has also stated that it has enhanced its relationships with the public sector with its disaster logistics partners and has worked to utilize the public sector's expertise through Inter-Agency Agreements with the Defense Logistics Agency, the Department of Transportation and Marine Corps Systems Command.

According to FEMA officials, another critical component of creating an effective logistics system is based upon FEMA's ability to work collaboratively with and leverage the capabilities of its public and private partners. FEMA's logistics efforts have identified private sector expertise to improve and develop software systems to increase logistics program efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the Logistics Information Management System (LIMS) is FEMA's formal accountability database system for all property managed within FEMA nation-wide or at disaster field locations. At the same time, FEMA is also developing a multi-phased Total Asset Visi-

³ GAO, *Hurricane Katrina: Better Plans and Exercises Needed to Guide the Military's Response to Catastrophic Natural Disasters*. GAO-06-643 (Washington, D.C.: May 15, 2006).

⁴ States participating in the PPDS program sign a Memorandum of Agreement with FEMA for the use of the containers.

bility (TAV) program with the assistance of the private sector to leverage the collective resources of the private and public sector to improve emergency response logistics in the areas of transportation, warehousing, and distribution. The current phase of the program, which is operational at two FEMA logistics centers (Atlanta, Georgia, and Fort Worth, Texas), encompasses two software management packages designed to provide FEMA the ability to inventory disaster response commodities upon arrival at a warehouse, place the commodities in storage, and track the commodities while stored in the warehouse. FEMA plans to expand the capabilities of this first phase of the system to all FEMA Regions during 2007. This will provide FEMA with sufficient logistics management and tracking capabilities until an expanded phase two can be implemented. For the second phase, FEMA is currently conducting market research to solicit input from the private sector and other sources to facilitate final design of the program's second phase. According to FEMA officials, initial operational capabilities for this phase are scheduled to be in place by June 2008, and fully-operational in June 2009. According to FEMA, the completed product will provide a more comprehensive approach to producing real-time, reliable reporting and incorporate FEMA's financial resource tracking requirements. It will also be able to support other federal departments and agencies, non-government organizations, and state, local and tribal organizations under the guidelines of the *NRP*.

While FEMA has been working to address its logistics capabilities, it is too early to evaluate these efforts. We recently examined FEMA logistics issues, taking a broad approach, identifying five areas necessary for an effective logistics system. Below, we describe these five areas along with FEMA's ongoing actions to address each.

Requirements: FEMA does not yet have operational plans in place to address disaster scenarios, nor does it have detailed information on states' capabilities and resources. As a result, FEMA does not have information from these sources to define what and how much it needs to stock. However, FEMA is developing a concept of operations to underpin its logistics program and told us that it is working to develop detailed plans and the associated stockage requirements. However, until FEMA has solid requirements based on detailed plans, the agency will be unable to assess its true preparedness.

Inventory management: FEMA's system accounts for the location, quantity, and types of supplies, but the ability to track supplies in-transit is limited. FEMA has several efforts under way to improve transportation and tracking of supplies and equipment, such as expanding its new system for in-transit visibility from the two test regions to all FEMA regions. *Facilities:* FEMA maintains nine logistics centers and dozens of smaller storage facilities across the country. However, it has little assurance that these are the right number of facilities located in the right places. FEMA officials told us they are in the process of determining the number of storage facilities it needs and where they should be located.

Distribution: Problems persist with FEMA's distribution system, including poor transportation planning, unreliable contractors, and lack of distribution sites. FEMA officials described initiatives under way that should mitigate some of the problems with contractors, and has been working with Department of Defense and Department of Transportation to improve the access to transportation when needed.

People: Human capital issues are pervasive in FEMA, including the logistics area. The agency has a small core of permanent staff, supplemented with contract and temporary disaster assistance staff. However, FEMA's recent retirements and losses of staff, and its difficulty in hiring permanent staff and contractors, have created staffing shortfalls and a lack of capability. According to a January 2007 study commissioned by FEMA, there are significant shortfalls in staffing and skill sets of full-time employees, particularly in the planning, advanced contracting, and relationship management skills needed to fulfill the disaster logistics mission. FEMA has recently hired a logistics coordinator and is making a concerted effort to hire qualified staff for the entire agency, including logistics.

In short, FEMA is taking many actions to transition its logistics program to be more proactive, flexible, and responsive. While these and other initiatives hold promise for improving FEMA's logistics capabilities, it will be years before they are fully implemented and operational.

Revisions Made to Evacuation Planning, Mass Care, Housing and Human Services

In an April 2007 testimony, FEMA's Deputy Administrator for Operations said that emergency evacuation, shelter and housing is FEMA's most pressing priority

for planning for recovery from a catastrophic disaster. He said that FEMA is undertaking more detailed mass evacuee support planning; the Department of Justice and Red Cross are developing methods for more quickly identifying and uniting missing family members; and FEMA and the Red Cross have developed a web-based data system to support shelter management, reporting, and facility identification activities.

Evacuation. Recent GAO work found that actions are needed to clarify the responsibilities and increase preparedness for evacuations, especially for those transportation-disadvantaged populations. We found that state and local governments are generally not well prepared to evacuate transportation-disadvantaged populations (i.e. planning, training, and conducting exercises), but some states and localities have begun to address challenges and barriers. For example, in June 2006, DHS reported that only about 10 percent of the state and about 12 percent of the urban area emergency plans it reviewed adequately addressed evacuating these populations. Steps being taken by some such governments include collaboration with social service and transportation providers and transportation planning organizations—some of which are Department of Transportation (DOT) grantees and stakeholders—to determine transportation needs and develop agreements for emergency use of drivers and vehicles. The federal government provides evacuation assistance to state and local governments, but gaps in this assistance have hindered many of these governments' ability to sufficiently prepare for evacuations. This includes the lack of any specific requirement to plan, train, and conduct exercises for the evacuation of transportation-disadvantaged populations as well as gaps in the usefulness of DHS's guidance. We recommended that DHS should clarify federal agencies' roles and responsibilities for providing evacuation assistance when state and local governments are overwhelmed. DHS should require state and local evacuation preparedness for transportation-disadvantaged populations and improve information to assist these governments. DOT should encourage its grant recipients to share information to assist in evacuation preparedness for these populations. DOT and DHS agreed to consider our recommendations, and DHS stated it has partly implemented some of them.

In his April 26, 2007 testimony statement for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, FEMA's Deputy Administrator stated that FEMA is undertaking more detailed mass evacuation support planning to help State and local government plan and prepare for hosting large displaced populations. The project is to include the development of an evacuee registration and tracking capability and implementation plans for federal evacuation support to states.

Mass Care and Shelter. During the current NRP review period, FEMA has revised the organizational structure of ESF-6, Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services, and places FEMA as the primary agency responsible for this emergency support function. The Red Cross will remain as a supporting agency in the responsibilities and activities of ESF-6. FEMA continues to maintain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Red Cross that articulates agency roles and responsibilities for mass care. The MOU and addendum were recently revised in May 2006 and December 2006, respectively. FEMA is currently working with Red Cross and other support agencies to revise ESF-6 standard operating procedures. According to a February 2007 letter by the Red Cross, this change will not take place until the NRP review process is complete and all changes are approved. According to FEMA's Deputy Administrator, FEMA and the Red Cross have developed the first phase of a web-based data system to support shelter management, reporting, and facility identification activities. The system is intended for all agencies that provide shelter service during disasters to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the shelter populations and available shelter capacity.

Temporary housing. Other recent GAO work noted that FEMA needs to identify and assess the capabilities that exist across the federal government and outside the federal government, including temporary housing. In a recent report on housing assistance we found that the National Response Plan's annex covering temporary shelter and housing in ESF 6 clearly described the overall responsibilities of the two primary responsible agencies—FEMA and the Red Cross.⁵ However, the responsibilities described for the support agencies—the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Veterans Affairs—did not, and still do not, fully reflect their capabilities. Further, these support agencies had not, at the time of our work, developed fact sheets describing their roles and responsibilities, notification and activation procedures, and agency-specific authorities, as called for by ESF-6 operating procedures. Our February 2007 report recommended

⁵ GAO, *Disaster Assistance: Better Planning Needed for Housing Victims of Catastrophic Disasters*, GAO-07-88 (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2007).

that the support agencies propose revisions to the *NRP* that fully reflect each respective support agency's capabilities for providing temporary housing under ESF-6, develop the needed fact sheets, and develop operational plans that provide details on how their respective agencies will meet their temporary housing responsibilities. The Departments of Defense, HUD, Treasury, and the Veterans Administration, and Agriculture, concurred with our recommendations. The Red Cross did not comment on our report or recommendations. As part of a housing task force, FEMA is currently exploring ways of incorporating housing assistance offered by private sector organizations. FEMA says it has also developed a housing portal to consolidate available rental resources for evacuees from Federal agencies, private organizations, and individuals.

Appendix II: Related GAO Products

Homeland Security: Management and Programmatic Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security. GAO-07-833T. Washington, D.C.: May 10, 2007

First Responders: Much Work Remains to Improve Communications Interoperability. GAO-07-301. Washington, D.C.: April 2, 2007.

Emergency Preparedness: Current Emergency Alert System Has Limitations, and Development of a New Integrated System Will be Challenging. GAO-07-411. Washington, D.C.: March 30, 2007

Disaster Preparedness: Better Planning Would Improve OSHA's Efforts to Protect Workers' Safety and Health in Disasters. GAO-07-193. Washington, D.C.: March 28, 2007.

Public Health and Hospital Emergency Preparedness Programs: Evolution of Performance Measurement Systems to Measure Progress. GAO-07-485R. Washington, D.C.: March 23, 2007.

Coastal Barrier Resources System: Status of Development That Has Occurred and Financial Assistance Provided by Federal Agencies. GAO-07-356. Washington, D.C.: March 19, 2007.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Disaster Relief: Continued Findings of Fraud, Waste, and Abuse. GAO-07-300. Washington, D.C.: March 15, 2007.

Homeland Security: Preparing for and Responding to Disasters. GAO-07-395T. Washington, D.C.: March 9, 2007.

Hurricane Katrina: Agency Contracting Data Should Be More Complete Regarding Subcontracting Opportunities for Small Businesses. GAO-07-205. Washington, D.C.: March 1, 2007.

Hurricane Katrina: Allocation and Use of \$2 Billion for Medicaid and Other Health Care Needs. GAO-07-67. Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007.

Disaster Assistance: Better Planning Needed for Housing Victims of Catastrophic Disasters. GAO-07-88. Washington, D.C.: February 28, 2007

Highway Emergency Relief: Reexamination Needed to Address Fiscal Imbalance and Long-term Sustainability. GAO-07-245. Washington, D.C.: February 23, 2007.

Small Business Administration: Additional Steps Needed to Enhance Agency Preparedness for Future Disasters. GAO-07-114. Washington, D.C.: February 14, 2007.

Small Business Administration: Response to the Gulf Coast Hurricanes Highlights Need for Enhanced Disaster Preparedness. GAO-07-484T. Washington, D.C.: February 14, 2007.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Federal Actions Could Enhance Preparedness of Certain State-Administered Federal Support Programs. GAO-07-219. Washington, D.C.: February 7, 2007.

Homeland Security Grants: Observations on Process DHS Used to Allocate Funds to Selected Urban Areas. GAO-07-381R. Washington, D.C.: February 7, 2007.

Homeland Security: Management and Programmatic Challenges Facing the Department of Homeland Security. GAO-07-452T. Washington, D.C.: February 7, 2007.

Homeland Security: Applying Risk Management Principles to Guide Federal Investments. GAO-07-386T. Washington, D.C.: February 7, 2007.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Disaster Relief: Prevention Is the Key to Minimizing Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Recovery Efforts. GAO-07-418T. Washington, D.C.: January 29, 2007

GAO, Reserve Forces: Actions needed to Identify National Guard Domestic Equipment Requirements and Readiness, GAO-07-60 Washington, D.C.: January 26, 2007

Budget Issues: FEMA Needs Adequate Data, Plans, and Systems to Effectively Manage Resources for Day-to-Day Operations. GAO-07-139. Washington, D.C.: January 19, 2007.

Transportation-Disadvantaged Populations: Actions Needed to Clarify Responsibilities and Increase Preparedness for Evacuations. GAO-07-44. Washington, D.C.: December 22, 2006.

Suggested Areas for Oversight for the 110th Congress. GAO-07-235R. Washington, D.C.: November 17, 2006.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Continued Findings of Fraud, Waste, and Abuse. GAO-07-252T. Washington, D.C.: December 6, 2006.

Capital Financing: Department Management Improvements Could Enhance Education's Loan Program for Historically Black Colleges and Universities. GAO-07-64. Washington, D.C.: October 18, 2006.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Unprecedented Challenges Exposed the Individuals and Households Program to Fraud and Abuse; Actions Needed to Reduce Such Problems in Future. GAO-06-1013. Washington, D.C.: September 27, 2006.

Catastrophic Disasters: Enhanced Leadership, Capabilities, and Accountability Controls Will Improve the Effectiveness of the Nation's Preparedness, Response, and Recovery System. GAO-06-618. Washington, D.C.: September 6, 2006.

Disaster Relief: Governmentwide Framework Needed to Collect and Consolidate Information to Report on Billions in Federal Funding for the 2005 Gulf Coast Hurricanes. GAO-06-834. Washington, D.C.: September 6, 2006.

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita: Coordination between FEMA and the Red Cross Should Be Improved for the 2006 Hurricane Season. GAO-06-712. Washington, D.C.: June 8, 2006.

Federal Emergency Management Agency: Factors for Future Success and Issues to Consider for Organizational Placement. GAO-06-746T. Washington, D.C.: May 9, 2006.

Hurricane Katrina: GAO's Preliminary Observations Regarding Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. GAO-06-442T. Washington, D.C.: March 8, 2006.

Emergency Preparedness and Response: Some Issues and Challenges Associated with Major Emergency Incidents. GAO-06-467T. Washington, D.C.: February 23, 2006.

Homeland Security: DHS' Efforts to Enhance First Responders' All-Hazards Capabilities Continue to Evolve. GAO-05-652. Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2005.

Continuity of Operations: Agency Plans Have Improved, but Better Oversight Could Assist Agencies in Preparing for Emergencies. GAO-05-577. Washington, D.C.: April 28, 2005.

