

**EMPOWERING STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS  
THROUGH ENHANCED FEMA REGIONAL OFFICES**

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**JOINT HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT,  
INVESTIGATIONS, AND OVERSIGHT,

WITH THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY  
COMMUNICATIONS, PREPAREDNESS,  
AND RESPONSE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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(III)



# CONTENTS

	Page
STATEMENTS	
The Honorable Christopher P. Carney, a Representative in Congress From the State of Pennsylvania, and Chairman, Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight .....	1
The Honorable Rogers, a Representative in Congress From the State of Alabama, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight .....	2
The Honorable Henry Cuellar, a Representative in Congress From the State of Texas, and Chairman, Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response:	
Oral Statement .....	4
Prepared Statement .....	4
The Honorable Charles W. Dent, a Representative in Congress From the State of Pennsylvania, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response	
Oral Statement .....	5
Prepared Statement .....	5
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson, a Representative in Congress From the State of Mississippi, and Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security ..	6
The Honorable Ed Perlmutter, a Representative in Congress From the State of Colorado .....	36
The Honorable Loretta Sanchez, a Representative in Congress From the State of California .....	34
The Honorable Gene Taylor, a Representative in Congress From the State of Mississippi .....	38
WITNESSES	
Mr. Bruce Baughman, Director, Alabama Emergency Management Agency:	
Oral Statement .....	13
Prepared Statement .....	16
Mr. Steve Delahousey, National Vice President, Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Preparedness, Emergency Medical Services Corporation:	
Oral Statement .....	17
Prepared Statement .....	19
Major Phil May, Regional Administrator, FEMA Region IV:	
Oral Statement .....	7
Prepared Statement .....	9
Mr. Brien C. Ruiz, President, St. Bernard Parish Fire Fighters Association (IAFF Local 1468):	
Oral Statement .....	21
Prepared Statement .....	23
FOR THE RECORD	
The Honorable Bobby Jindal, a Representative in Congress From the State of Louisiana, Prepared Statement .....	3



**EMPOWERING STATE AND LOCAL  
OFFICIALS THROUGH ENHANCED  
FEMA REGIONAL OFFICES**

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**Monday, June 4, 2007**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT, INVESTIGATIONS,  
AND OVERSIGHT,  
WITH THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS,  
PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:00 p.m., 228 South Beach Boulevard, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. Hon. Christopher P. Carney [chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Carney, Dent, Rogers, Cuellar, Thompson, Sanchez, and Perlmutter.

Also Present: Representative Taylor.

Mr. CARNEY. The subcommittee will come to order. The subcommittees are meeting today to receive testimony on the Empowering State and Local Officials Through Enhanced FEMA Regional Offices.

I welcome Mr. Taylor and ask unanimous consent that he join us today. Hearing no objections so ordered.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement. First I would like to thank the City and the people for being so kind as to host us here today. I know you've been through a lot and I hope hosting this hearing hasn't been too much of a burden.

I would also like to take a second to thank Mr. Taylor for joining us. Every time I see him in the halls at the capital or on the floor of the house I'm reminded of the catastrophe you all endured, not that Gene's a catastrophe by any stretch, he has represented you very, very well.

Finally, I would like to thank the mayors who took us on an amazing tour this afternoon. He chauffeured us around to visit this morning, and he shared many of the stories with us. They're very touching, but they didn't really paint the picture of what has happened down here and how far you've come and how far you really need to go.

This is my first trip down here since the storm. I spent time in the gulf region, navy training at Pensacola, and I spent time in Houston as an educator.

But today we're hoping to have some candid conversations, and we're here today to assess how well FEMA has been working with state and local officials in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

I ran for congress because I was frustrated with what I saw was a lack of good government. FEMA's poor responses to major disasters such as flooding in northeast Pennsylvania where I'm from, and Hurricane Katrina are prime examples.

I understand the severe devastating impact a flood can have on a community. Pennsylvania has seen several of it's 100 year floods in the last few years, which has destroyed lives and towns and houses. This was about the significant winds of your hurricane, so I have some small empathy for what you have gone through.

But our flooding season in Pennsylvania is coming up and June is the official time when it begins. And we are not rest assured unfortunately that FEMA will be able to respond. We need accountability for FEMA so that we can better prepare ourselves for the future. I think we're all interested in hearing how, if at all, cooperation between local and state entities has improved with FEMA since congress enacted FEMA reform. So, please speak freely. We are here to listen. I thank you and I look forward to your thoughts.

I now recognize the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee of Management Investigations and Oversight, the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Rogers, for an opening statement.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I'm proud to be back in the south and here in our neighboring state of Mississippi, and I want to thank all the witnesses for being here. I particularly want to take note of Bruce Baughman from the Alabama Department of Emergency Management. We are very fortunate to have him. Mr. Baughman was one of the highest ranking officials at FEMA before he left and came to Alabama, and he's also a past president of the National Emergency Management Association and a real pro.

The folks in Alabama and Mississippi are lucky to have strong leadership for emergency management, and like Governor Riley and the folks in Alabama impacted by Hurricane Katrina, Mississippi has shown great resolve in leadership to build back. Under the strong leadership of Governor Barbour new programs have been rolled out that have allowed the folks in Mississippi to get back on their feet and begin rebuilding their state. As the Governor said, Mississippi will rebuild bigger and better than ever.

One aspect of the Mississippi experience we will explore today is the interaction between state and FEMA regional offices. In the wake of hurricane Katrina Congress passed sweeping legislation to reform FEMA last year, and on January 18, of 1907 Homeland Security Secretary Chertoff announced the reorganization plan for FEMA, which took effect March 31st.

This is our committee's first field hearing after the reorganization of FEMA to hear firsthand from those involved in the process at the state and local levels. We will examine today how things have improved, if they've improved, in FEMA's regional structure, and whether additional steps may need to be taken to ensure states have the support they need from FEMA when disaster strikes.

One of the first needs that's being faced after a disaster is to restore electrical power and key facilities such as water plants and secure drinking water for the residents. Therefore, one area we will explore is the extent to which FEMA has pre-positioned bottled supplies, specifically water and generators, in states such as Mississippi and Alabama that are in the direct path of Gulf Coast storms.

Another area we will explore is the extent to which FEMA works with states and localities to support prenegotiation of contracts for emergency goods and services. The ability of state and local agencies to negotiate contracts before disaster strikes is important to ensure emergency goods and services will be available when needed and to ensure localities are not victims of price gouging. To help states and localities in this area Congress included a provision in the FEMA reform legislation that provides for advanced contracting.

Specifically, this provision requires FEMA to establish a process to ensure Federal prenegotiated contracts are coordinated with state and local governments. The provision also requires FEMA to encourage state and local governments to negotiate contracts for goods and services before a natural disaster or terrorist strike. This approach increases the safety of local residents while safeguarding taxpayer dollars in the future.

We look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the extent to which this approach has been implemented and what can be done to encourage more prenegotiation of these contracts.

And, Mr. Chairman, before I yield back I would like to note that Representative Bobby Jindal could not be here today, so I would ask that his statement be included in the record.

Mr. CARNEY. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]

#### FOR THE RECORD

##### PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE BOBBY JINDAL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

On May 22, 2007, the National Hurricane Center predicted a very active hurricane season, with 13—17 named storms, 7—10 hurricanes, and 3—5 major hurricanes. The prediction signifies an expected increase in storm activity in comparison to last year's hurricane season.

As we enter this year's hurricane season, it is critical for all levels of government to have an established posture of hurricane preparedness. This should entail a unified partnership of operational capability too provide effective response and recovery.

Federal and State governments were overwhelmed on the onset in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Over 90,000 square miles of Gulf Coast land was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, 650,000 people were displaced, 275,000 homes were completely destroyed. In Louisiana alone, a quarter of a million jobs were lost and 20,000 businesses were destroyed. Over \$590 million in agriculture damages occurred in Louisiana resulting from Hurricane Rita devastation.

Last year's Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 included provisions to provide grants to State and local governments to develop mass evacuation plans and to help stockpile commodities and shelters. The Act also required FEMA to enhance its regional offices through stronger coordination between federal, state, local, and private sector emergency response principals.

Better planning at a regional level should not just consist of forward leaning coordination between the different levels of government, but an integrated partnership fostering clear communication through a defined point of contact for the Department

of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other states for joint contingency planning and response.

When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, the response was uncoordinated and unorganized. The White House issued its assessment of the response in *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*, identifying critical flaws in national preparedness, including an absence of regional planning and coordination. According to the report, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not maintain the needed personnel or resources in its regional offices. This led to reduced communications and understanding of on-sit needs, further delaying an effective response.

The report recommended an increase in regional response capabilities. It specifically called on DHS to build its regional structures to integrate state and local strategies with response capabilities and to "encourage and facilitate" regional partnerships. In the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress mandated that DHS set up a regional structure. In an April 18, 2005 letter, four months prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita striking the Gulf Coast, I called on Secretary Chertoff to follow through with a regional framework in which Louisiana would have been equipped to facilitate a regional response.

In a May 15, 2007 statement before the House Committee on Homeland Security, FEMA Administrator David Paulison recognized Louisiana's fragile state of recovery by indicating that FEMA is collaboratively assessing the state's capabilities and potential need for further federal assistance. By June 1, 2007, data were scheduled to have been compiled and reviewed for Louisiana to help local officials understand potential disaster response gaps in critical areas of debris removal, evacuation, sheltering, interim housing, healthcare facilities, commodity distribution, communications, and fuel. We are now four days into the hurricane season, and this analysis has not yet been completed.

We need to build upon lessons learned and correct mistakes at all levels of government, ensuring that response authorities have the necessary resources and capabilities to provide a unified response. A DHS regional office structure should be implemented to strengthen state and local preparedness capabilities, facilitate regional cooperation among governments and the private sector, and plan and exercise with first responder entities that support regional disaster response.

The regional structure should maximize the strengths of a region and work in partnership in identifying critical gaps in preparedness and infrastructure protection. Through a unified command structure, proper training, and open communication, we all can be better prepared for the hurricane season.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you.

Mr. CARNEY. The Chair now recognizes the chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Communication Preparedness to respond, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Henry Cuellar, for any opening statement.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for allowing us to be here. Again, I apologize, trying to get from Lorado's small airport to here, and I apologize, but for the sake of time I would like to go ahead and submit my written statement, the opening statement, so we can go ahead and continue and hear from our witnesses.

So, again, we are very interested in finding out the status of the FEMA reforms and see how that's being done at a regional, so I will submit my written testimony.

[The statement of Mr. Cuellar follows:]

PREPARED OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE HENRY CUELLAR, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

- Good afternoon. First, I would like to welcome our panel. We're glad that you're here to discuss the status of FEMA reforms at the regional level.
- Hurricane Katrina exposed significant flaws in our government's ability to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from catastrophic events. It is our duty to ensure that this never happens again.
- The Members of our Committee just finished touring damage along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and I think we can all agree there is much work left to be done to bring the coast back to where it was before Katrina.

- Last October, the Post Katrina emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 was signed into law. The bill made substantial changes to FEMA and the Department of Homeland security, including making the Administrator of FEMA responsible for all phases of emergency management.
- It created new leadership positions with clear requirements, new missions and restored some responsibilities that had been removed.
- Additionally, it called for the enhancement of FEMA's regional office to allow more decisions during emergencies to be made by those on the ground and not in Washington.
- Efficient, timely and effective implementation of the Act is critical to homeland security and is a high priority for our Committee.
- While progress is being made by FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security in reforming their emergency management capabilities, enormous challenges still remain.
- I am specifically interested in hearing from the witnesses whether they think we are making significant progress in the following areas: 1) evacuation planning; 2) mass care and housing; 3) emergency communications; and 4) assisting individuals with special needs.
- I also want to discuss how FEMA and the Federal government can better address the unique challenges local first responders face when their community is devastated by a catastrophic disaster.
- These brave men and women are forced to juggle their sense of duty with the need to ensure the safety of their families.
- I believe we need to better acknowledge their sacrifices during future disasters and provide expedited assistance to them.
- I want to thank the witnesses again for being here today and I look forward to their testimony.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member on the Subcommittee of Emergency Communications Preparedness and Response, the gentleman from Pennsylvania Mr. Charles Dent for an opening statement.

Mr. DENT. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Carney, and Chairman Thompson, and also I want to thank our friend Gene Taylor too for all the hospitality that you've shown here and to all the people. I've only been here a couple of hours, it's my first trip to southern Mississippi, but I'm just so amazed by the spirit of the people I've met. I've only met a few, but the spirit is remarkable, and obviously there's a tremendous sense of pride about this community, and a certain toughness too that I think a lot of us would love to emulate.

Just like Chairman Cuellar, I too will submit my opening remarks for the record so we can get on with the hearing and hear from our distinguished panel. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHARLES DENT, RANKING MEMBER,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

I am pleased we're here today to discuss reforms to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Regional offices.

This hearing offers a good opportunity to discuss how State and local officials—working with the Federal government—are building a more robust capacity to prepare for and respond to natural disasters or terrorist attacks.

This hearing will help review the progress that's been made in improving preparedness while also allowing us to assess the challenges that remain.

Last year, this Committee was instrumental in the enactment of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. This legislation addresses the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and requires a number of structural and operational changes.

For instance, the legislation seeks to ensure that a national system of preparedness is put in place and the Federal resources are more efficiently and effectively deployed to assist State and local officials during catastrophic events like Hurricane Katrina.

I look forward to discussing today how the reforms mandated by last year's legislation, as well as steps being taken at FEMA's initiative, are helping build and support strong partnerships for emergency preparedness and response.

For instance, I understand that through the regional offices, FEMA is working with the 18 hurricane-impact States to conduct an analysis of specific vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities are then being used to develop focused hurricane plans.

Another effort underway is the development of a regional Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan. I am particularly interested in discussing this effort, including its coordination and leadership, and the agencies and organizations involved.

And finally, I look forward to discussing with our witnesses the steps they are taking this year to better prepare their respective agencies and their local communities for this year's hurricane season.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Chair now recognizes the Chairman of the full committee the gentleman from Mississippi Mr. Bennie Thompson for an opening statement.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Chairman Carney, Chairman Cuellar, and other members. I welcome you here to Gene Taylor's District, but I also welcome you here to my home state.

This morning the committee had an opportunity, as well as this afternoon, to see the devastation of what happened with Hurricane Katrina.

There's no question that we have been adversely impacted. There's no question that FEMA was not up to the task when Katrina came, but we want to make sure if another Katrina type event would occur that with the changes that have gone on things will be better. Let's talk about a couple of things.

First of all, are insurances companies going to treat people any better in this community if another hurricane comes, or are they going to be jacked around like they were before. If that's the case that's a problem.

Secondly, whether or not FEMA has produced a written hurricane preparedness plan for this hurricane season. I came to ask specifically of our Regional Administrator if he has the plan. We had a hearing two weeks ago, we did not have the plan for the beginning of this hurricane season. I want to make sure that we have the plan. If not I want to know how can we fix anything without a written plan.

In addition to that, the local first responders who have done a wonderful job, but I'm still hearing that there are a lot of problems that we're not getting cooperation with. For instance, there's an issue with formaldehyde in trailers and whether or not that is being investigated. Congressman Taylor's office has been intricately involved in that, as well as my office. I've gotten two answers to the same question. I will ask the formaldehyde question again today to see if I get a third answer, or at least will I get one of the two answers that I've gotten before.

And lastly, let me compliment the committee chairpersons for coming here. The people in the audience have probably seen as many congress people as they need. I think what they're looking for now is how do we fix it to make sure that if something bad happens, will in fact the cavalry come on time, can we bring the resources, or whether or not the resources are available.

We had a hearing, Mr. Carney week before last, we found out that our guard and reservist most of the equipment is not here. So,

how are we going to get the equipment here if in fact we have a major problem.

So there are a lot of issues associated with FEMA that I think are really important, and that's why as Chairman of the Committee I supported the effort of our two subcommittee chairpersons to come here, and I look forward to the witnesses testimony and look forward to the questions after. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Other members of the subcommittees are reminded that under committee rules opening statements may be submitted for the record. I want to welcome the witnesses.

Our first witness is Major Phil May, the FEMA Regional Director from Region 4, which covers Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Our second witness is Bruce Baughman, Director of Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

Our third witness is Steve Delahousey, Vice President of Emergency Preparedness for American Medical Response.

Our fourth witness is Brian Ruiz, President of the Saint Bernard Parish of the Firefighters Association.

Mr. CARNEY. Without objection the witnesses full statements will be inserted in the record. I now ask each witness to summarize his statement for five minutes beginning with Major May.

**STATEMENT OF MAJOR PHIL MAY, REGION 4  
ADMINISTRATOR, FEMA REGIONAL DIRECTOR,  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Major May. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chairman Carney and Chairman Thompson, Mr. Taylor. Thank you so much for inviting me to be here today.

My name is Major Phil May and I am privileged to serve as the FEMA Regional Administrator for the Department of Homeland Security FEMA. I oversee FEMA's all hazards efforts to the south-east.

I am pleased to appear before the committee today to discuss how Dave Paulison's vision for the new FEMA is being implemented at the regional level.

As Regional Administrator my goal is to help build a new FEMA, one that will be a nation's preeminent emergency management preparedness organization by ensuring that FEMA Region 4 has a robust infrastructure, and all the appropriate resources in terms of people, operational systems, planning assessment tools, training, exercises and equipment.

I know that Administrator Paulison has appeared before this committee and discussed how FEMA is strengthening it's regions through improved leadership and enhanced regional coordination. As Administrator Paulison told you at a hearing back on May 15th, I am but one of 10 full-time administrators currently in place. This is the first time in recent memory that this has been achieved.

FEMA learned a number of important lessons from Hurricane Katrina. One that I believe is most relevant for this hearing is the importance of close coordination with our partners before a disaster strikes every level of government. One of the lessons that Administrator Paulison has repeatedly emphasized is the breakdown in

communications. Not just in a technical sense, but in the procedural sense. At every level of government officials were not talking to one another or not being heard.

That is why one of the hallmarks of the new FEMA is improved regional coordination. FEMA's Regional Administrators have been charged to be more active in engaged states than we've ever been before. We're working to improve the regional communications performing GAP analysis with each state undertaking the multi state evacuation planning effort and supporting regional exercises.

Over the past two years we've taken major steps to make sure the breakdown in communications that you saw in Katrina do not happen again. In 2006 we completed the upgrades and renovations that were needed to create a state of the art national response coordination center in Washington.

In addition, we're complimenting assets assessments and upgrading our regional response coordination centers, which are regionally based multi agency coordination centers that perform complementary roles to the RCC in Washington.

Operating in each of the 10 FEMA regions the RRCC provides situational awareness information, identifying and coordinating response recommendations, to perform capability analysis and report on the status of Federal disaster response operations.

In addition, each regional administrator will have a regional emergency communications working group comprised of representatives from all levels of government, whose primary objective is to advise the regional leadership on matters pertaining to emergency communications.

FEMA is employing the GAP Analysis Tool, which is serving as the basis for the better understanding of the vulnerabilities in a more consistent manner. This is an initiative that is a joint effort between the state and FEMA. The analysis consists of a series of structured discussions with local jurisdictions to better understand the potential disaster response asset gaps in critical areas of debris removal, evacuation, sheltering, interim housing, healthcare facilities, commodity distribution, communications and fuel. We're confident that through these structured discussions we will be better prepared.

FEMA is helping Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama develop a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan that extends to adjacent states which potentially may host Gulf Coast evacuees. The purpose of a synchronized separate state evacuation plan is to create a more jointly organized effort. Teams are engaging with each state, identifying requirements and capabilities, and then will develop a plan to integrate shelter planning and transportation planning. The result will be a timelier better organized coordinated evacuation by those with their own transportation and for those who may need assistance to evacuate either by bus or air.

To further strengthen our partnership FEMA is actively engaging state governments in joint exercises as we prepare for the 2007 hurricane season. During the first week of 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.

This is just the first of what we will do nationwide through these exercises testing a variety of scenarios, which will eventually take place in all the FEMA regions in close cooperation with all partners.

In conclusion, I believe we've made real progress in strengthening FEMA's regions as we embark on the new journey and in a new direction, one that reflects a broader mission challenge, a wider set of partners, a greater depth of mission perspective.

The new FEMA will require new skill sets, a greater investment in our people, new tools to ensure more effective emergency management at the national and regional level. And ultimately the new FEMA we're creating will keep the American people safer than they've ever been before, and make our services more accessible by having more regional staff and resources available in the field.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. May.

[The statement of Major May follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF MAJOR PHIL MAY

Chairman Thompson, Chairman Carney, Chairman Cuellar, and Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today in Mississippi.

My name is Major Phil May and I am privileged to serve as the Region IV Administrator for the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In this role, I oversee FEMA's all hazards efforts in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. As the primary FEMA representative and coordinator to a disaster prone region, I oversee the development, implementation and execution of all FEMA Region IV programs and initiatives, and have planning and operational oversight of special projects related to building a strong, capable, and responsive Region. My goal is to help Administrator Paulison build a new FEMA that will be the Nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness organization by ensuring FEMA Region IV has a robust infrastructure and all the appropriate resources, in terms of people, operational systems, planning and assessment tools, training, exercises, and equipment. In addition, I work to foster the necessary relationships before disasters strike across the full spectrum of emergency management on all levels of government, the private sector, nonprofit, and non-governmental entities.

In keeping with the guiding principle of the new FEMA, 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 tornadoes that struck Florida in January and Georgia and Alabama in March tornadoes, as well as the Nor'easter that flooded areas of the New England States and last month in Kansas where the community of Greensburg was devastated by a tornado.

In those disasters you witnessed a FEMA that became an engaged partner with the State within minutes of the disaster, rapidly deploying operational and technical experts to the disaster site. You also witnessed a proactive FEMA that led the charge by ensuring an effective Unified Command with other Federal agencies, and State and local officials, working together to help a devastated community.

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.

As many of you are aware, on May 22nd, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center released its 2007 Atlantic Hurricane Season Outlook. NOAA scientists projected a 75 percent chance that the Atlantic hurricane season will be above normal. This prediction includes 13 to 17 named storms with 7 to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which 3 to 5 could become major hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher. NOAA's prediction is in line with the Colorado State University prediction, which predicted 17 named storms, including 9 hurricanes, of which 5 are expected to be major hurricanes.

Accordingly, FEMA is leaning forward as we prepare for an active 2007 hurricane season. Engaging our tribal, local, State and Federal partners in more thorough and informed hurricane planning; building FEMA's operational capabilities for a more effective response and recovery; and amplifying our stance on hurricane readiness will put FEMA in good standing to meet whatever challenges unfold.

## **BACKGROUND**

FEMA has learned much from the 2005 hurricane season and the damage that was inflicted on the communities and families of the Gulf Coast. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have served as a catalyst for major changes in federal policy, approaches, and the relationship between DHS-FEMA, the private sector and at all levels of government.

The Department appreciates the tools given to us in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA). PKEMRA codifies and expands FEMA's regional office structure and strengthens our all-hazards operational framework and coordination capabilities. The ten Regional Administrators provided for in the Act report directly to the FEMA Administrator. The statute also provides for the creation of Regional Advisory Councils and new regional incident management assistance teams.

The Regional Advisory Councils will provide valuable advice and recommendations to each

Regional Administrator on regional emergency management issues and identify weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, operations, assistance, and mitigation for State, local and tribal governments based on their specialized knowledge of the region. We hope to make selections for the Regional Advisory Councils later this year. Additionally, the Act calls for the establishment of regional emergency communications working groups, which would report to Regional Administrators and advise them of emergency communications concerns and issues. This new structure will help to facilitate and further enhance our national and regional based evacuation and catastrophic planning efforts.

## **STRONG REGIONAL LEADERSHIP**

As Administrator Paulison previously testified before your Committee, FEMA has staffed each Region with an Administrator who possesses an extensive background in emergency management. Collectively, all ten Regional Administrators possess over 300 years of experience in preparing for and responding to disasters. Three of the ten Administrators, including me, are career senior executives. Having career staff in three of the Regions will ensure continuity of best-practices from administration to administration. I am pleased to report that all 10 Regional Administrators are on board and prepared to meet the needs of their respective regions.

## **ENHANCED REGIONAL COORDINATION**

### *Regional Advisory Council*

FEMA has worked diligently to fine tune the appropriate framework to establish the Regional Advisory Councils. The charter for the councils is presently under final review by the FEMA Administrator. These councils will advise the Regional Administrators on all aspects of emergency management and will comprise representatives from State, territorial, local and tribal governments. The councils will also identify any geographic, demographic, or other characteristics specific to any State, territorial, local, or tribal government within the Region that might make preparedness, protection, response, or mitigation more challenging. Finally, the councils will advise the Regional Administrators on any weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation within the regional area of responsibility that should be addressed. These Regional Advisory Councils will significantly improve communication between the multiple levels of government and give Regional Administrators the critical insights to address the needs of the communities in which they serve.

### *Defense Coordinating Officers*

FEMA and the Department of Defense (DOD) have taken major strides to ensure that federal and military response is coordinated and seamless, especially at the regional level. DOD has assigned Regional Defense Coordinating Officers (DCO), supported by Defense Coordinating Elements (DCE), in each of FEMA's Regions to ensure military coordination at the Regional level. Currently, all 10 FEMA Regions are staffed by a DCO and support DCE.

### *Regional Communications*

Among the lessons learned after the 2005 hurricane season, none has been taken more seriously than the breakdown of interagency and intra-agency communications. Communication between the Federal government and our partners at the State and local levels is an integral part of emergency management. Over the past two years we have taken major steps to make sure this breakdown does not happen again.

In 2006, we completed the upgrades and renovations needed to create a state of the art National Response Coordination Center (NRCC). The NRCC is a central location where Federal agencies meet during a disaster to coordinate national re-

sponse under the National Response Plan (NRP). In addition, we are completing assessments and upgrading our Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC), which are the regionally-based multi-agency coordination centers that perform a complementary role to the NRCC. Operating in each of the ten FEMA Regions, the RRCC provides situational awareness information, identifies and coordinates response requirements, performs capabilities analysis, and reports on the status of Federal disaster response operations.

During Katrina, we had a failure in our communications with people in the field—key element which needed for us to have situational awareness of what was happening on the ground—coupled with substandard coordination with our partners across the Federal government. Both the NRCC and RRCC have a seat at the table for each of the 26 agencies that have roles under the NRP, as well as secure links to key offices around the country and the capability to bring State and local officials into the conversation.

One of the key lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was the need for a state-of-the-art national warning system. In 2006, FEMA's Office of National Security Coordination (now the Office of National Continuity Programs) focused on the multi-year task of building an Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). Last year, we successfully completed the Digital Emergency Alert System pilot and worked with the Association of Public Television Stations deploying the system to all PBS affiliates around the country. In addition, FEMA helped in establishing two new Emergency Alert System Primary Entry Point radio stations—one located here in Mississippi and the other in Alabama—and 15 hurricane region stations were provided with satellite links to improve their communications during disasters. When this project is completed over the next five years, it will greatly enhance our nation's emergency communications capabilities.

Administrator Paulison has made communications and outreach to tribal, State and local officials a high priority for the Regional Administrators. Our expanded role in the regions will help us to build strong ties on the ground before disasters strike, so that we are not exchanging business cards in the emergency operations center.

DHS has provided true leadership for FEMA to lay the groundwork to build a more robust national communication capability. In January 2007, DHS issued the Tactical Interoperable Communication Scorecards. These scorecards assessed the maturity of tactical interoperable communications capabilities in 75 urban/metropolitan areas. They were developed by subject matter expert panels that reviewed documentation on current communications plans, exercises, and a self-assessment to arrive at consensus findings and recommendations for each region on how to best improve that region's communications capabilities.

Moreover, by November 1, 2007, each State and Territory must submit a State-wide Communication Interoperability Plan to DHS. The goal of this plan is to provide a strategic vision for how each State and Territory will achieve and further invest in statewide interoperability and communications.

In addition, DHS, in conjunction with the Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration in consultation with DHS will make nearly \$1 billion available to states and localities later this fiscal year through a Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program, authorized by the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 and amended by the Call Home Act of 2006. Through FEMA's disaster relief fund, an additional \$1.3 million has been made available for Mississippi for emergency communications equipment in Pike, Pearl River, Stone, Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties. The money will be spent to install interoperability equipment, including repeaters on six South Mississippi communications towers.

Finally, each Regional Administrator has been provided a workgroup comprising representatives from all levels of government, whose primary objective is to advise the regional leadership on matters pertaining to emergency communications. The Regional Emergency Communications Working Group, referred to as an RECC Working Group reports to the Regional Administrator and advises him or her on all aspects of emergency communications. The Regional Managers, in turn, will share this advice on emergency communications with State and Local emergency managers within the Region.

#### **HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS**

I know that Administrator Paulison has briefed you on FEMA's readiness for the Hurricane season from the National perspective; however, please allow me to expand upon a few of its components and talk briefly about what we are doing here in Region IV to prepare.

*Enhanced Response Teams*

To further enhance disaster response capabilities and ultimately provide for the three national-level response teams and regional-level emergency response "strike" teams required in the Post-Katrina Act, FEMA is developing the next generation of rapidly deployable interagency emergency response teams, tentatively identified as Incident Management Assistance Teams, or "IMATs." IMATs are designed to provide a forward Federal presence to facilitate managing the national response to catastrophic incidents. The primary mission of a FEMA IMAT will be to rapidly deploy to an incident or incident-threatened venue, provide leadership in the identification and provision of Federal assistance, and coordinate and integrate inter-jurisdictional response in support of the affected State(s) or U.S. Territory(s). The IMATs will support efforts to meet 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.

The teams are still being designed and decisions on team assets, equipment, and expected capabilities have not yet been finalized. When not deployed, the teams will 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.

Initially, our goal is to establish interim Regional and National teams utilizing 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.

#### *Gap Analysis*

FEMA is employing a Gap Analysis Tool, which 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 and the New York City Office of Emergency Management, and has been implemented to provide FEMA and its State and local partners in the hurricane prone regions of the country with a snapshot of asset gaps at the local, State, and National levels.

This initiative is a joint effort between State Emergency Management representatives and FEMA Regional representatives. The analysis consists of 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 provide 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. Although our initial use of this concept 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 have people on the ground at this moment conducting these analyses with state emergency managers.

Modeling is also an essential element of FEMA's planning efforts for different circumstances and data sets. FEMA is coordinating with the DHS Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate to adapt modeling tools for the specific circumstances of large metropolitan areas. As the use of the Hurricane Gap Analysis Tool matures, FEMA plans to incorporate additional modeling capabilities to validate the data received and forecast needs based on different variables.

#### *Evacuation Planning Initiative and Coordination*

FEMA is helping Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama develop a Gulf Coast Evacuation Plan that extends to adjacent States which host Gulf Coast evacuees. The

purpose 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 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.

*Catastrophic Disaster Planning Initiatives*

Using the Catastrophic Planning funding appropriated in fiscal year 06, Region IV, along with our sister Regions of V, VI, and VII, is developing scenario-driven workshops with each of the eight New Madrid Seismic Zone (NMSZ) States. The Workshop Execution Plan uses a bottom-up approach, where the states will take the lead and FEMA will provide guidance. The states clearly have taken ownership and are committed to working with each other, the FEMA regional offices, other Federal agencies, the private sector, and other stakeholders to create, as one state director noted, "the most comprehensive catastrophic response and recovery plan in our nation's history."

Over the next 12 months each state will conduct its own state-wide catastrophic planning workshop, tailored for its individual catastrophic planning goals and objectives, using a template provided by Innovative Emergency Management (IEM), our contracting firm. The Mississippi Emergency Management Planning Staff and the full-time FEMA-funded contractor are collaborating on developing a Workshop Execution Plan which will culminate in a Federal, State and local exercise during the second quarter of fiscal year 2008.

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 for the 2007 Hurricane Season continues with the State of Louisiana and its parishes.

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-phase project. Phase one focuses on developing regional response and recovery annexes, including evacuation planning, for the counties and communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee (in the event of a Herbert Hoover Dike failure) and will soon be completed. Phase two will address the effects of a Category 5 hurricane striking south Florida. The end product for phase two will be to standardize 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 also be used as planning templates for other large urban areas.

*Regional Exercises and Training*

To further strengthen our partnerships, FEMA is actively engaged with State governments in joint exercises to prepare for the 2007 Hurricane Season. During the first week in May, FEMA tested the national incident management system (NIMS) and its response operations during an exercise called Ardent Sentry—Northern Edge, which depicted a Category 3 hurricane that struck Newport, R.I.

**CONCLUSION**

I believe we have made real progress in strengthening FEMA's Regions as we embark on a new journey and in a new direction; one that reflects a broader mission challenge, a wider set of partners, and a greater depth of mission perspective. The new FEMA will require new skills, a greater investment in our people, and new tools to ensure more effective emergency management at the national and regional level. Ultimately, the new FEMA we are creating will keep the American people safer than they were before and make our services more accessible by having more Regional staff and resources available in the field.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. CARNEY. I now recognize Mr. Baughman. Five minutes.

**STATEMENT BRUCE BAUGHMAN, DIRECTOR, ALABAMA  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, I'm Bruce Baughman Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. I have got about 36 years experience in emergency management. At the state level, four at the State of Mississippi, four for the State of Alabama, and 28 years with FEMA.

I'm here to talk about FEMA, how FEMA's worked with the State of Alabama to enhance our capabilities to respond to disasters, both in our recent tornadoes and in preparation for hurricanes.

Recently after the passage of the first Katrina Emergency Reform Act FEMA launched what they called the new FEMA. They recommitted themselves to establishing stronger regions and more customer focused organization with regards to working with the states. I feel that they've done that. In a recent hurricane after March the 1st a tornado struck at 12:30, and at 3:00 I was on the phone with Director May and he was asking what type of assistance we need.

Within hours the Transition Recovery Director from the Alabama Transition Recovery Office was in my office where we coordinated our activities. The next day the Federal Coordinating Officer was there, and the next day we had Presidential Disaster Declaration. Couldn't have asked for any better response than that.

So, to us the new FEMA slogan it's just a slogan it's an actual commitment to the people of our state.

In preparation for hurricane season we've been working very closely with FEMA region and FEMA headquarters to preposition those commodities that we feel we're going to need in front of a hurricane, water, ice, cots, pillows, blankets, hygiene kits, tarps and personal comfort kits. We've worked with FEMA to establish what we project our first 72-hour consumption rate is for those commodities. Those have been either pre-positioned or are in the process of being pre-positioned in our state.

We're currently in the process of negotiating with FEMA for a 100,000 square foot warehouse to be located in Montgomery to store these items.

More importantly is exercising. On April the 16th Governor Bob Riley, myself and other members of the Cabinet, along with members of private industries in our counties, and FEMA and their counterparts met in Montgomery to walk through a disaster scenario.

In that scenario we established our operation priorities, what we would be looking for from the Federal Government, and basically turned over that list of requirements that we would need in a hurricane to them, which is not a large list in our particular case because we feel that we have done the planning required to get ourselves prepared for a major hurricane. That doesn't mean we've addressed everything or we would not need Federal financial assistance.

Other things that we've done is we're working as Phil mentioned in conjunction with FEMA headquarters and regions with a gulf state planning initiative. This planning initiative was designed to identify gaps that we might have in our evacuation plans and to look at ways we can enhance that. One of the things that we're doing right now in the State of Alabama since we have excess shelter capacity is to provide additional shelter space to the State of Louisiana.

On May 17th, as I mentioned, we did in fact do a lot of exercises. We activated our emergency operations center, brought all the state and Federal responders together and walked through a dis-

aster scenario so that people actually engaged in a disaster operation and had some hands-on experience in working together.

What we do in responding to disaster is we choreograph it, so at 96 hours out we activate our emergency operations center, we are on the phone twice a day with FEMA and the hurricane center and with the adjacent states looking at what their requirements are. We begin a volunteer evacuation at that time. We also understand the importance that the media plays in this in getting the word out to the public, so twice a day we are holding briefings with our Federal counterparts and with the various state agencies.

We start opening shelters at 96 hours. We're making sure that the shelters have emergency power. If we cannot provide it, FEMA's working with us to provide that emergency power.

We also have used Homeland Security dollars to create the Alabama Mutual Aid System. That system has 54 search and rescue teams, emergency medical teams and law enforcement teams to communities response. 5,200 members of that system responded to both Louisiana and Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina. These teams can help in search and rescue, traffic control, debris movement and other emergency response issues.

At 72 hours out we have FEMA emergency response teams in our emergency operations center. We are doing a unified command at that time so that they are looking at our operational priorities and filling in the requirements that we're relying on for additional supplemental assistance.

At 48 hours out the Governor issues an emergency proclamation, FEMA's hopefully moving in additional pre-positioned commodities. We are doing a mandatory evacuation at that time in Mobile and Baldwin Counties, and at that time the Governor would ask for an emergency declaration from the President.

And at 24 hours out our evacuations are complete. Over 130 shelters should have been opened housing more than 44,000 evacuees.

Let me in conclusion, I want to make some specific recommendations. One, I think that FEMA's regional role in preparedness needs to be strengthened. That's one of the things we tried to work on in the FEMA format. I think that needs to happen. They need to work closer with the state day in and day out. Prior to this the only time we saw FEMA was when a disaster occurred. Now we're working with Phil May and his staff day in and day out to make sure our emergency preparedness requirements are met.

In addition to that, the regions need additional staff. Right now the regions are woefully understaffed to carry out the missions of preparedness response and recovery. The regional staff needs to be bumped up.

And in addition to that additional funds need to be provided for training. But if we're ever going to get any better and FEMA is going to be able to carry out it's mission, additionally states have got to have additional dollars to prepare themselves because they are the first line responders along with local government in any disasters out there. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNEY. I thank you, Mr. Baughman.  
[The statement of Mr. Baughman follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRUCE BAUGHMAN

Good Morning Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member King. I am the Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, I have over 36 years experience in Emergency Management over four in my current job, twenty-nine with FEMA and the federal government and four with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. I am here to talk to you today about how FEMA has worked with Alabama during both recent declared disasters and in the preparation of the upcoming hurricane season. Earlier this year as a result of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act FEMA launched what they are calling "new" FEMA, and they re-committed to establishing stronger regions and a more customer-focused organization in regards to working with states impacted by disasters. I feel they have upheld their commitment. My staff and the people of Alabama saw it first hand immediately following the March 1st tornadoes. The first tornado struck at 12:30pm and by 3:00pm that same day, FEMA Region IV Administrator Phil May was on the phone asking what type assistance we might need. Administrator May has a Southern Linc radio provided to him by our office to make sure we are in constant contact, and not just during times of disasters, but on a day to day basis. Transitional Recovery Officer Robert Ives was also dispatched to our EOC just hours after the storm devastated Alabama. I also worked with Alabama's Federal Coordinating Officer, Gracia Szczech in the recovery phase, and she and her staff vowed to stay in our state until the survivors of the devastating storm got the assistance they needed. FEMA's quick response proves the term "new" FEMA isn't a slogan, but an actual commitment to the people in our state.

**Alabama/ FEMA Preparation for Hurricane Season**

Based on Colorado State University hurricane predictions there is a 74% chance a hurricane will make landfall on the U.S coastline and a 49% chance a major hurricane will make landfall on the Gulf Coast. Governor Riley asked FEMA Administrator David Paulison to preposition much needed emergency commodities in our state such as water, food, ice, cots, blankets, pillows, hygiene kits, tarps and personal comfort kits. We worked with FEMA to establish our projected 72 hour consumption rate for the above mentioned commodities. Not only did FEMA listen to our request, but they responded by making sure we have what we need in Alabama, or either committing to getting it here in a timely manner, as it's needed. FEMA is currently in the process of negotiating a 100,000sq foot warehouse in Montgomery that will store some of the pre-positioned items. On April 16, 2007, Alabama Governor Bob Riley, his cabinet members and private industry representatives participated in Governor's annual Hurricane Workshop. FEMA Region IV Administrator Phil May along with pre-designated EMA response and recovery staff also attended to see what the state has established as our operational priorities for a landfall event. This was our opportunity to discuss the operational requirements of a major hurricane prior to and after it makes landfall, as well as the preparation that takes place throughout the year at our agency. We are also working with FEMA Region IV on identifying gaps in our evacuation plans. We have had a series of meetings between FEMA, state, and local agencies to pre-identify what the locals will need from the state and in turn what the state will need in the way of support from FEMA to successfully evacuate the citizens of the coast of Alabama and other impacted states. We are also working in conjunction with FEMA Region IV to identify other operational gaps that might exist such as communications and emergency power. We are a participating state in FEMA's Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation planning initiative. This is an initiative to better coordinate a mass multi state evacuation. Alabama continues to work closely with FEMA Region IV in preparing for the 2007 hurricane season.

**AEMA Preparedness and Hurricane Timeline**

On May 17, 2007 we conducted a working level Hurricane exercise in our EOC, where we bring all the state agency representatives and run through emergency actions related to a major hurricane. This simulated event gives us an opportunity to make sure every agency is aware of their role during and prior to a disaster. My agency also conducts regional exercises with our coastal region to ensure that preparedness measures are being met. The state has pre-determined operational priorities for both post and pre landfall. These priorities are also shared with FEMA. We are conducting local elected official's briefings throughout the state to ensure proper interface with local governments during emergencies.

Our current procedures and priorities begin at 96 hours out from a potentially dangerous storm in the Gulf, the EOC activates at level 3. At that time we are activating resource contracts for food, water and ice. Also at this activation level we are beginning our twice-daily situation updates. FEMA, the National Hurricane Center

and the states are updating one another on the latest trace of the storm and what actions are being taken. At this time the counties begin voluntary evacuation. We understand the important role the media plays in conveying what's going on to the public, so at this time we hold twice daily media briefings. We start opening shelters and making sure there are generators at those facilities. The Alabama Mutual Aid System is now on alert, and this system consists of 54 teams throughout the state. About 5,200 members of the mutual aid system responded to Louisiana, Mississippi and the coast of Alabama during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Recently we dispatched four of these teams and 350 state personnel to assist the stricken communities following our recent outbreak of tornadoes. They assisted in search and rescue, traffic control, debris removal and other emergency measures.

At 72 hours out, the EOC is activated at level 2 and we receive our FEMA Emergency Response Team, and establish a unified command and begin joint action planning. County liaisons are deployed and back-up communications are on stand-by and ready to be deployed as needed.

At 48 hours from the hurricanes' anticipated landfall, the EOC is fully activated and staffed. The Governor will issue an Emergency Proclamation, pre-positioned commodities are also being moved, and our mandatory evacuation plan is implemented, which includes four zones in Mobile County and Baldwin Counties. 24 hours from land fall the evacuation should be complete. More than 130 shelters have been identified with a capacity of more than 44, 000. That number includes 23 two-year community colleges identified throughout the state.

#### **The Conclusion**

In closing, I understand the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA reorganized as a way to better serve the communities not only in Alabama, but across the United States, but I feel that FEMA must strengthen its regions and equip them with the tools to do the job. What I have found in all my years in emergency management, it's not so much how you organize but, it's the people you have in your organization, and FEMA has good people; and that makes the difference if you are successful in the time of a disaster.

Mr. CARNEY. I now recognize Mr. Delahousey for 5 minutes.

#### **STATEMENT OF STEVEN DELAHOUSEY, VICE PRESIDENT, EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR AMERICAN MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION**

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. Thank you. Thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing. My name is Steve Delahousey, I'm a registered nurse and registered paramedic. I'm currently National Vice President of Emergency Preparedness or Emergency Medical Services Corporation, which through it's operating subsidiaries, American Medical Response and EmCare serves approximately 10 million patients each year. AMR is a leading provider of emergency and non-emergency ambulance service in the Nation with operations in 36 states and the District of Columbia.

EmCare is a leading provider of outsourced emergency department staffing and related management services contracting with more than 350 hospitals nationwide.

My testimony today to primarily related to my experiences and observations as the AMR Medical Disaster Officer during Hurricane Katrina.

Today's topic, Empowering State and Local Officials Through Enhanced FEMA Regional Offices, is timely and appropriate given the prediction for a very active 1907 hurricane season.

In August of 2005, prior to Katrina, there were approximately 5,000 patients in healthcare facilities, and another 45,000 non-institutionalized individuals with severe disabilities in the three Mississippi coastal counties. Many of them required assistance with evacuation. Katrina made landfall in Mississippi on Monday, August 29th. We began requesting state and Federal assistance for

medical evacuation two days prior to landfall. State agencies responded promptly, but their limited resources were quickly depleted. There was no Federal ambulance evacuation plan in place at the time. We therefore had to rely upon our internal resources within the private sector. Private ambulances from nearby states were deployed to south Mississippi to complete the evacuation prior to Katrina's landfall.

We are pleased to say that there were no deaths or no significant untoward effects that resulted from this massive medical evacuation effort in Mississippi.

26 days after Katrina wreaked havoc in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama hurricane Rita set it's sights on Texas and Louisiana. This time the Federal Government was ready. FEMA authorized hundreds of Federal contracted ambulances to be deployed to Houston, Texas to assist with the medical evacuation there.

We are thankful to congress for passing the post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, which reorganizes the Department of Homeland Security by reconfiguring FEMA and including national preparedness functions. We agree with FEMA's Administrator's policies when he said that the new FEMA reflects the expanded scope of FEMA's responsibility that supports a more nimble, flexible use of resources. It will deliver enhanced capabilities to partners at the state and local level with emergency management and preparedness organizations and to engage the capabilities of the private sector.

The post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act expands FEMA's regional office structure. It provides for the creation of Regional Advisory Councils to give advice and recommendations to the Regional Administrators on emergency management issues. We totally agree with Secretary Chertoff when he stated, "one of the greatest lessons from Katrina that we learned is you just can't show up and introduce yourself when the emergency is underway."

Mississippi is often recognized for its efficient post Katrina recovery efforts. There are many reasons for this success, but I believe these to be the most significant:

We utilized a unified command structure here in Mississippi.

We had strong leadership from the Governor's office.

We had a competent state emergency management agency.

Some of FEMA's best response personnel were sent to Mississippi.

And lastly, the resilience of Mississippians.

I have witnessed firsthand what a positive difference experienced leaders can make during disasters. FEMA appointed James Russo as the Federal Coordinating Officer for Mississippi post Katrina to work hand in hand with the Governor and senior leaders at the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Hopefully, empowering FEMA regional offices will allow experienced field commanders like Mr. Russo to carry out their job even more efficiently.

The creation of the Office of Health Affairs, led by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jeff Runge, has also had a positive impact and we look forward to working with Dr. Runge and his team of experts.

Finally, I'd like to comment on the need for additional DHS funding for EMS providers. Along with fire and police, EMS providers are one of three primary first responder groups. The vast majority

of EMS providers, however, lack sufficient access to Federal funding and are therefore under equipped and need additional training to effectively respond to a terrorist attack or natural disaster.

Chairman Thompson, you may recall in 2003 Congress asked the DHS Office of Domestic Preparedness to clarify whether ambulance providers are eligible for grant funds awarded the states. ODP provided a written opinion which states, "in recognition that in many communities private EMS providers are the sole providers of EMS, ODP determined that both public and private EMS providers are eligible for funding under the State Homeland Security Grant Program as long as it is consistent with the state's Homeland Security strategy, and the private EMS providers are components of the local or state response plans."

Despite this opinion, in fiscal year 04 and fiscal year 05, DHS reported that less than 4 percent of first responder grant money was awarded to EMS providers. EMS providers, however, represent a full one third of the first responder work force, and are the primary first responders for medical assistance as evidenced by the response during Hurricane Katrina.

For the past two years Congress has included conference report language to Homeland Security Appropriations Bills noting their concern over the lack of funding for EMS providers. You recommended a minimum of 10 percent of Homeland Security funding for EMS providers in the House Report for both of those years. We urge you to act on those recommendations.

It would also appear that perhaps an amendment to the Stafford Act is needed to resolve EMS funding inequities. Currently the Stafford Act makes no mention of funding eligibility for EMS providers or ambulance services. This explicit omission creates confusion to Federal, state and local government officials resulting in disparity for EMS providers to receive DHS or FEMA grant funds and reimbursement for services rendered during times of disasters. Your assistance in passing a simple amendment to the Stafford Act recognizing EMS as emergency work, and EMS providers as public safety personnel along with fire and police is requested. Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Delahousey.

[The statement of Mr. Delahousey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD OF STEVEN J. DELAHOUSEY

Chairman Thompson, Chairman Cuellar, Chairman Carney and Members of the Subcommittees:

Thank you for inviting me to testify at this hearing. My name is Steven J. Delahousey. I am a registered nurse and a registered paramedic. I am currently the National Vice President of Emergency Preparedness for Emergency Medical Services Corporation (EMSC) which through its operating subsidiaries, American Medical Response, Inc. (AMR) and EmCare, Inc. (EmCare), serves approximately ten million patients each year.. AMR is a leading provider of emergency and nonemergency ambulance service in the nation with operations in thirty-six (36) states and the District of Columbia. EmCare is a leading provider of outsourced emergency department staffing and related management services, contracting with more than 350 hospitals nationwide.

My testimony today is primarily related to my experiences and observations as the AMR Medical Disaster Officer in Mississippi during Hurricane Katrina. Today's topic, "Empowering State and Local Officials Through Enhanced FEMA Regional Offices", is timely and appropriate given the predictions for a very active 2007 hurricane season.

In August of 2005, prior to Katrina, there were approximately 5,000 patients in health care facilities and another 45,000 non-institutionalized individuals with severe disabilities in the three Mississippi coastal counties. Many of them required assistance with evacuation. Katrina made landfall in Mississippi on Monday, August 29. We began requesting state and federal assistance for medical evacuation two (2) days prior to landfall. State agencies were quick to respond but their limited resources were quickly depleted. There was no federal ambulance evacuation plan in place at the time. We therefore had to rely upon our internal resources within the private sector. Private ambulances from nearby states were deployed to south Mississippi to complete the evacuation prior to Katrina's landfall. We are pleased to say there were no deaths or significant untoward effects that resulted from this massive medical evacuation effort.

Twenty-six (26) days after Katrina wreaked havoc on Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, Hurricane Rita set its sights on Texas and Louisiana. This time the federal government was ready. FEMA authorized hundreds of federally-contracted ambulances to be deployed to Houston, Texas to assist with the medical evacuation.

We are thankful to Congress for passing the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act which reorganizes the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by reconfiguring FEMA and including national preparedness functions. We agree with FEMA Administrator Paulison when he said that the new FEMA "reflects the expanded scope of FEMA's responsibilities. It supports a more nimble, flexible use of resources. And it will deliver enhanced capabilities to partners at the state and local level with emergency management and preparedness organizations and to engage the capabilities of the private sector." The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act expands FEMA's regional office structure. It provides for the creation of Regional Advisory Councils to give advice and recommendations to the Regional Administrators on emergency management issues. We totally agree with Secretary Chertoff when he stated ". . .one of the greatest lessons from Katrina that we learned is, you can't just show up and introduce yourself when the emergency is underway."

Mississippi is often recognized for its efficient post-Katrina recovery efforts. There are many reasons for this success but I believe these to be the most significant:

- We utilized the Unified Command structure
- Strong leadership from the Governor's office
- A competent state Emergency Management Agency
- Some of FEMA's best response personnel were sent to Mississippi
- And lastly, the resilience of Mississippians

I have witnessed first hand what a positive difference experienced leaders can make during disasters. FEMA appointed James Russo as the Federal Coordinating Officer for Mississippi post-Katrina. He worked hand-in-hand with the Governor and senior leaders at the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. Hopefully, empowering FEMA regional offices will allow experienced field commanders like Mr. Russo to carry out their jobs even more efficiently.

The creation of the Office of Health Affairs, led by Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jeff Runge, has also had a positive impact and we look forward to working with Dr. Runge and his team of experts.

Finally, I would like to comment on the need for additional DHS funding for emergency medical service (EMS) providers. Along with fire and police, EMS providers are one of three (3) primary first responder groups. The vast majority of EMS providers, however, lack sufficient access to federal funding and are, therefore, under-equipped and need additional training to effectively respond to a terrorist attack or natural disaster. Chairman Thompson, you may recall that in 2003 Congress asked the DHS Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) to clarify whether ambulance providers are eligible for grant funds awarded to states. ODP provided a written opinion which states ". . .in recognition that in many communities private EMS providers are the sole providers of emergency medical services, ODP determined that both public and private EMS providers are eligible for funding under the (State Homeland Security Grant Program), as long as this is consistent with the state's homeland security strategy, and the private EMS providers are components of the local or state response plans." Despite this opinion, in fiscal year 04 and fiscal year 05, DHS reported that less than four percent (4%) of first responder grant funding was awarded to EMS providers. EMS providers, however, represent one-third (1/3) of the first responder workforce and are the primary first responders for medical assistance as evidenced by the response to Hurricane Katrina. For the past two (2) years, Congress has included conference report language to the Homeland Security Appropriations Bills noting their concern over the lack of funding for EMS providers. They recommended a minimum of 10% of Homeland Security funding for

EMS providers in the House Report for both of those years. We urge you to act on those recommendations.

It would also appear that perhaps an amendment to the Stafford Act is needed to resolve EMS funding inequities. Currently, the Stafford Act makes no mention of funding eligibility for EMS providers or ambulance services. This explicit omission creates confusion for federal, state and local government officials resulting in disparity for EMS providers to receive DHS or FEMA grant funds and reimbursement for services rendered during times of disasters. Your assistance in passing a simple amendment to the Stafford Act recognizing emergency medical services as "emergency work" and ambulance providers as public safety personnel (along with fire and police) is requested.

Thank you for your time today and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. CARNEY. Mr. Ruiz for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF BRIEN RUIZ, PRESIDENT, SAINT BERNARD  
PARISH FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION**

Mr. RUIZ. Thank you, Chairman Carney, Chairman Cuellar and Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Dent and Ranking Member Mr. Rogers, and distinguished members of the committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Brien Ruiz, I serve as President of the Saint Bernard Firefighters Association. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the response and recovery experiences of the St. Bernard Parish Fire Department in aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Although Hurricane Katrina ravaged the whole Gulf Coast, it absolutely devastated St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Overnight a community of 70,000 individuals and 20,000 homes were completely covered by three to fourteen foot of water. The fire fighters across the Gulf Coast, like the local fire fighters of St. Bernard were the first to respond, performing search and rescue, providing emergency service. Even after their families and neighbors fled the communities our personnel stayed behind to do their jobs.

In the ensuing days and weeks the St. Bernard firefighters worked around the clock with no contact, and no assistance from FEMA.

We did receive support from our brothers and sisters in Louisiana and from the Urban Search and Rescue teams dispatched from Ohio, New Jersey, Georgia and Canada. Additionally, the International Association of Firefighters provided medical care and counseling to our responders. However, apart from these sources of support, for which I am personally grateful, we were largely left to fend for ourselves. Left without a steady supply of fuel, we filled our emergency response vehicles from local refineries. Left without needed supplies, we broke into hardware stores and grocery stores and obtained supplies. And post Katrina, FEMA went back on its promise to pay up-front for the 14 new apparatus to replace our destroyed vehicles, requiring the Parish to purchase \$4.3 million worth of equipment and resubmit paperwork so they could get reimbursed.

The Federal Government also has a vital role to play in supporting local emergency response. FEMA should have been an important resource for the St. Bernard fire fighters to do their job, but FEMA failed the fire fighters and the citizens of St. Bernard Parish miserably.

Of the 70,000 persons who once called St. Bernard home, only 10 to 15,000 have returned. Our friends and neighbors are now scat-

tered across the country. Our fire department struggles to protect what's left of our community, and our local government lacks sufficient funding to even begin the recovery.

Our workload has actually increased since Katrina. Today we respond to more fires, fed by a large number of abandoned homes and huge quantities of garbage. The widespread arson that occurs when some realize that setting abandoned property and garbage gets rid of the eyesore quicker than the legal channels.

Almost two years have passed since the disaster of St. Bernard Parish there has, in essence, been no recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

I realize I paint a poor picture, but the picture I paint is reflective of my perspective as a Katrina responder and an active fire fighter of St. Bernard Parish today.

I understand that Congress has been studying failures in the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina and taken concrete steps to improve the response to potential future disasters. Although I have yet to experience the impact of reform, I am encouraged that they will aid in the recovery of our community and help provide a more effective Federal response to future disasters.

One of the most important FEMA reforms implemented by Congress was reestablishing and improving the FEMA Regional Offices. These offices have the potential to help to ensure better coordination between FEMA, state and local governments. It is my understanding that others in my department have spoken to FEMA officials to identify current needs, but much of this communication has proved to be too little too late.

Relationships built through the Regional Office will give FEMA an intimate understanding of particular community needs prior to any disaster and help ensure a cooperative relationship between the Agency and local responders, providing more efficient and effective response.

I am also appreciative of legislation passed by the Congress and signed into law authorizing the President to establish medical monitoring programs following disasters. Although we lack comprehensive health monitoring programs for individuals who responded to Hurricane Katrina, I personally know several responders who developed unusual medical conditions in the wake of the initial response. Future monitoring programs will permit for the treatment of potential diseases and other health conditions in responders that might not otherwise be detected.

Perhaps most importantly, I am extremely grateful the provision included in the recently enacted supplemental funding bill waiving the FEMA required 10 percent local match of disaster assistance funds to rebuild our community's infrastructure. Since the storm, fire fighters have been working from trailers and working in conditions that would be considered substandard in any community.

Although 10 percent match of funds seems small by Federal standards, setting aside this amount has been impossible given the scope of the disaster. Although vital, the needs of our community far exceed rebuilding fire houses. You can understand why this waive is so critical to our rebuilding process. This waiver will, in large part, make our recovery possible, and for that, I thank you.

Such efforts notwithstanding, there remain a number of additional reforms that I believe would further St. Bernard's recovery and assist in future disasters.

As the Committee well knows, St. Bernard Parish, like many communities across America, has traditionally struggled to balance the needs for fire service with the various other needs of the community.

Although we were lucky in many ways, even pre-Katrina, we were often forced to do with less. Hurricane Katrina, local fire fighters were immediately expected to be running calls and performing search and rescue functions, a difficult task when your fire house is not constructed to withstand a Category 5 Hurricane.

In today's post-911 world, the Federal Government relies ever more on local fire fighters to respond to both natural and man-made disasters in a way local departments were never intended to function. As the Federal Government relies more and more on local first responders, it should also take the responsibility to ensure that in a disaster local responders have the tools, resources and means to fully function.

second, I would urge the government to establish a health monitoring and treatment program for those first responders who responded to Katrina and Rita. Similar monitoring programs established for 9/11 responders have detected respiratory and other health problems among fire fighters that would not have been otherwise detected. The benefits of early detection and treatment have been well demonstrated through the 9/11 health programs. Individuals impacted by the response to Katrina would similarly benefit from the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and treatment program.

Lastly, I urge the Congress to consider reforms to lessen the burdens of the Federal bureaucracy on devastated communities. I understand that the money is not limitless, and I understand that the Nation and its citizens have many conflicting needs. But when a community is completely destroyed, as St. Bernard was, the last thing local officials should need to worry about is red tape and bureaucracy.

[The statement of Mr. Ruiz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRIEN RUIZ

Thank you Chairman Cuellar, Chairman Carney, Ranking Member Dent, Ranking Member Rogers, and distinguished members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Brien Ruiz and I serve as President of the St. Bernard Parish Fire Fighters Association. I am pleased to appear before you today to discuss the response and recovery experiences of the St. Bernard Parish Fire Department in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Although Hurricane Katrina ravaged the whole of the Gulf Coast, it absolutely devastated St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. Overnight, a community of 70,000 individuals and 29,000 homes was completely covered by three to fourteen feet of water. Like fire fighters across the Gulf Coast, the local fire fighters of St. Bernard Parish were the first to respond, performing search and rescue, providing emergency medical services, and putting out fires. Even as their families and neighbors fled the community, the vast majority of our personnel stayed behind to do their jobs.

In the ensuing days and weeks, St. Bernard fire fighters worked around the clock with no contact, and no assistance, from FEMA.

We did receive support from our brothers and sisters in Louisiana and from Urban Search and Rescue Teams dispatched from Ohio, New Jersey, Georgia, and Canada. Additionally, the International Association of Fire Fighters provided medical care and counseling to responders, and housing for our families. However, apart

from these sources of support, for which I am personally grateful, we were largely left to fend for ourselves. Left without viable fire houses, we commandeered residences to serve as command centers. Left without a steady supply of fuel, we filled our emergency response vehicles from local refineries. Left without needed supplies, we broke into hardware stores to obtain PVC pipe and generators. And post-Katrina, FEMA went back on a promise to pay up-front for 14 new apparatus to replace our destroyed vehicles, requiring the Parish to purchase \$4.3 million worth of equipment and submit paperwork to the Agency for reimbursement.

Although the initial response to Katrina, like any disaster, was properly at the local level, during the response to a catastrophic disaster, the federal government absolutely has a vital role to play in supporting local emergency response efforts. FEMA should have been an important resource for St. Bernard fire fighters to do their jobs, but FEMA failed the fire fighters and citizens of St. Bernard Parish miserably.

It is difficult for me to speak about the recovery of St. Bernard Parish, because although in some ways we have begun to rebuild our lives, our community as a whole has not been able to rebuild in any significant way. Of the 70,000 persons who once called St. Bernard home, only ten to fifteen thousand have returned. Our former neighbors are now scattered across the country, our fire department struggles to protect what is left of our community, and our local government lacks sufficient funding to even begin the recovery process.

Before the storm, the St. Bernard Parish fire department employed 118 fire fighters at ten fire houses. Today, we are fortunate to have 90 personnel on staff. While this may seem sufficient for a community with less than a quarter of its original population, our workload has actually increased since Katrina.

Today, we respond to more fires than ever before, fed by the large number of abandoned homes and huge quantities of garbage. This difficult job is significantly complicated by the widespread arson that occurs when some realize that setting abandoned properties and garbage ablaze alleviates the eyesore much more quickly than could any legal channels.

Additionally, St. Bernard boasts thirteen refineries, all of which present a significant fire and hazardous materials danger, and all thirteen of which remain in operation today.

Almost two years have passed since the disaster. But for St. Bernard Parish, there has, in essence, been no recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

I realize I paint a dour picture, but the picture I paint is reflective of my perspective as a Katrina responder and an active fire fighter in St. Bernard today.

I understand that the Congress has been studying failures in the federal response to Hurricane Katrina and taken concrete steps to improve the response to potential future disasters. Although I have yet to experience the impact of recent reforms, I am encouraged that they will aid in the recovery of our community and help provide a more effective federal response to future disasters.

One of the most important FEMA reforms implemented by the Congress was reestablishing and improving the FEMA Regional Offices. These offices have the potential to help ensure better coordination between FEMA, state and local governments and local emergency responders. To this day, I have yet to personally encounter anyone from FEMA in St. Bernard Parish. It is my understanding that others in my Department have spoken to FEMA officials to identify current needs, but much of this communication proved to be too little too late.

Relationships built through the Regional Offices will give FEMA an intimate understanding of a particular community's needs prior to any disaster and help ensure a cooperative relationship between the Agency and local responders, providing a more efficient and effective response.

I am also appreciative of legislation passed by the Congress and signed into law authorizing the President to establish medical monitoring programs following disasters. Although we lacked a comprehensive health monitoring program for individuals who responded to Hurricane Katrina, I personally know several responders who developed unusual medical conditions in the wake of the initial response. Future monitoring programs will permit for the treatment of potential diseases and other health conditions in responders that might not otherwise be detected.

Perhaps most importantly, I am extremely grateful for the provision included in the recently-enacted supplemental funding bill waiving the FEMA-required ten-percent local match of disaster assistance funds to rebuild our community's infrastructure. Since the storm, fire fighters have been working from trailers, purchasing our own supplies and working in conditions that would be considered substandard in any community.

Although a ten-percent match may seem small by federal standards, setting aside even this amount has been impossible given the scope of the disaster. Although

vital, the needs of our community far exceed rebuilding fire houses. Much of our vital infrastructure remains unrepaired. For example, it would cost \$52 million to rebuild each of our three sewer plants. Given that this year's budget for the entirety of St. Bernard Parish is \$38 million, you can understand why this waiver is so critical to our rebuilding process. This waiver will, in large part, make our recovery possible. And for that, I thank you.

Such efforts notwithstanding, there remain a number of additional reforms that I believe would further St. Bernard's recovery and assist in future disaster responses.

As the Committee well knows, St. Bernard Parish, like many communities across America, has traditionally struggled to balance the needs of the fire service with the various other needs of the community. And although we were lucky in many ways, even pre-Katrina, we were too often forced to do more with less. For example, pre-Katrina, our Department's fire houses were tin, ground level buildings. Now most people would realize that, in a zone often hit by hurricanes, a ground level structure made of tin could not withstand extended periods of high wind and heavy rain. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, local fire fighters were immediately expected to be running calls and performing search and rescue functions—a difficult task when your fire house is not constructed to withstand a Category 5 Hurricane.

In today's post- 9/11 world, the federal government relies ever more on local fire fighters to respond to both natural and man-made disasters in a way local departments were never intended to function. As the federal government relies more and more on local first responders, it should also take the responsibility to ensure that, in a disaster, local responders have the tools, resources and the means to fully function.

Secondly, I would urge the federal government to establish a health monitoring and treatment program for those responders who responded to Katrina. Similar monitoring programs established for 9/11 responders have detected respiratory and other health problems among fire fighters that would not have been otherwise detected. As I mentioned previously, a number of Katrina responders have unusual or unexplained symptoms in the aftermath of the response. The benefits of early detection and treatment have been well-demonstrated through the 9/11 health programs. Individuals impacted by the response to Katrina would similarly benefit from the establishment of a comprehensive monitoring and treatment program.

Lastly, I urge the Congress to consider reforms to lessen the burdens of the federal bureaucracy on devastated communities. I understand that money is not limitless, and I understand that the nation and its citizens have many conflicting needs. But when a community is completely destroyed, as was St. Bernard, the last thing local officials should need to worry is red tape and bureaucracy.

Whenever disaster strikes, no matter its scope, the professional fire fighters of St. Bernard Parish work tirelessly to do the jobs for which we were hired: to save lives and protect the public safety. Whether responding to a house fire or protecting a community of 70,000 in the wake of natural disaster, we have always made due with whatever scarce resources were available. But we cannot, and no fire fighters anywhere should be expected to do it alone.

The federal government can do so much more to help the fire service respond more effectively to future disasters. We've made some very good initial steps and I look forward to partnering with the members of this committee and this panel to build upon recent reforms and continue improving the manner by which our nation responds to large-scale emergencies.

This concludes my testimony. Thank you for your interest and attention. I am, of course, happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Ruiz. I thank all the witnesses for their testimony, and I will remind each member that he or she will have 5 minutes to question the panel, and I'll recognize myself for five minutes.

But first I'd like to remind everyone in the room to please put your cell phones or your PDA's on vibrate or silence, please. Thank you very much.

Now, I know the national response plan is in the process of being rewritten and released, and its release has been delayed. Major May, what is your involvement in the re-write?

Major May. Pretty extensive. The re-write process is really probably the largest, collaborative effort I think we've seen in the coun-

try where we actually pushed down to the local level and asked and solicited information from state and local and other partners, and globalized those requests and requirements and suggestions back up to headquarters for their consideration in incorporating it in the national plan.

Mr. CARNEY. Mr. Baughman, did you or any other state emergency managers have input in the process.

MR. Mr. Baughman. As a matter of fact I sat on the steering committee for the National Response Plan. I had to get off because of other commitments, but I was on the committee initially. And it has gone out—I was the representative for the National Emergency Management Association, so it was my job to make sure that all the other state agencies got latest information on the plan.

Mr. CARNEY. Are you satisfied with how it's coming out with the process? If not, why; if so, why?

Mr. BAUGHMAN. The jury is still out. I think that Director Paulison has made a good faith effort to include all the stakeholders. I'm not sure that all the decisions on what is going to be in the plan is in his hands. I'll just leave it at that.

Mr. CARNEY. What do you think should be in there?

Mr. BAUGHMAN. I think that there ought to be more focus on the—if you're going to have a National Response Plan it's got to be more than the Federal role. It has got to show what state and local government's role is. That's the reason it was changed from a Federal response plan to a National Response Plan, because state and local governments have a role in carrying out emergency response. And I think that those roles need to be better reflected in that plan.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you. Mr. Ruiz, Mr. Delahousey, if the worst were to happen again and the coast was struck by another major hurricane do you think FEMA is better prepared to assist local governments now.

Mr. RUIZ. I do not. I haven't seen—the first time I spoke to any FEMA personnel was today. In my department I've seen FEMA around just looking at our fire stations, but I don't think so.

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. A couple of months ago this committee had Mr. Paulison testifying in DC, I was there. At that time Mr. Paulison indicated that there would be the revisions to the National Response Plan and a Federal ambulance response plan would be in place by the beginning of hurricane season. That was last Friday. There was no plan in place. There was supposed to be and RFP issued on April 30th; that did not happen, it was delayed.

However, I am pleased to say at the close of business on Friday we were contacted by FEMA and asked if we would accompany, because we have vast resources, would be available until a formal plan could be in place. And we, of course, said, yes indeed, we would provide those types of resources.

So there are things in the works now, and we were very pleased to hear that some of the experienced FEMA leaders that assisted us after Katrina will be here again in Mississippi for this hurricane season.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you very much. I now recognize the Ranking Member from the subcommittee, the gentleman from Alabama Mr. Roger for five minutes.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to go first to Mr. Baughman and Mr. May. You heard me talk about the concern for getting water out after one of these disasters, particularly in Alabama. Do we have enough generators for these rural water systems assuming the electricity goes out.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. What we've done is we've done an assessment of all of those rural water wells. We are in the process of purchasing generators using our Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, monies from FEMA to put generators at those wells. Do we have all the requirements met, no, sir, we do not.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, that's what brought it to my attention. I understand that Georgia has adequate supply of these rural generators because the regional office is there. Mississippi now has them because of Katrina and Rita, but Alabama, particularly down on the coast, has an inadequate ratio. So I would ask you to work with the rural water association to make sure that those associations have these mobile generators that you can provide them.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. I just met with them last Monday. They have 35 generators they can bring there to assist us. I think most of the rural water wells by here in the next couple of weeks will be met. The generators in Atlanta though are FEMA generators, and until an assessment has been done, we have put our request in for 100 generators, 250 were called, so that is part of what they will forward and deploy.

Mr. ROGERS. Excellent. And I talked a little bit about this with Mr. May on the bus, I'm interested in canine assets. I saw post Katrina we had a real problem with search and rescue and cadaver dogs. Recently with Enterprise where FEMA performed exceptionally well, we still didn't have these canine assets come in for search and rescue. The local rescue squads were using personal dogs for searching for cadavers. Tell me, what else do y'all use, who do you draw on? FEMA doesn't have these dogs as I understand it.

Major May. Bruce may want to comment because he set up the search and rescue program nationally and has more information.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, whoever.

Major May. Let me just say, I don't know that we actually employed the national search and rescue team at Enterprise because the local and state came.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. As a matter of fact what we did is we used several search and rescue teams. One from Dothan, one from Mobile, along with the state mortuary assistance team out of Cullman. But there is a shortage of cadaver dogs.

When I was with FEMA we actually used the search and rescue system to locate those dogs. We don't have those in the national system. What we've done though, if we needed additional cadaver dogs, those are available through the Emergency National Assistance contact, but that takes hours. So in a tornado situation you can't get them fast enough. Now, for a hurricane situation you can ask for those ahead of time and get those pre-positioned.

Mr. ROGERS. That leads me to my next question, and this is more for Mr. Baughman. When I was in the last go down down the Gulf Coast with, at that time Speaker Hastert and Ms. Pelosi, we met with Governor Riley, and one of the things he emphasized that we need is the ability for these local mayors and county commissioners

to prenegotiate contracts for debris removal and other services so that we're not getting robbed like we were in this situation. Have you seen a difference now, is FEMA working with you to allow local governments to do these kind of predisaster negotiations?

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Well, it's not FEMA, but we are working to put prenegotiated contracts in place for the southern third of the state.

Mr. ROGERS. Will FEMA pay for those.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. If those contracts are activated at the time of the disaster and they're prenegotiated, yes, FEMA will reimburse those contracts.

Mr. ROGERS. And the last thing I have to talk about is, and I can't remember which one of y'all brought it up, but it's a shortage of regional staffing. This is something we've been finding throughout Homeland Security, particularly FEMA, there is a problem with recruitment and retention. What is your regional staffing and at what level is that compared to what it should be.

Major May. Currently it's about 120 PFT's. We also have a number of PAD's and what you call core employees. That puts our numbers up to around 150 as far as people actually working. And, you know, we have a tremendous heavy workload. I think that—

Mr. ROGERS. What should it be? You've got 150, what should it be; what's the number?

Major May. I think the department and the agency is talking about increasing over the next three years by 30 percent.

Mr. ROGERS. Three years, is that fast enough?

Major May. Sir, it takes some while to absorb that many people, and also you have people that leave, so filling vacancies is sometimes a difficult thing.

Mr. ROGERS. Well, retention, is that a problem?

Major May. It can be. We've got a lot of senior staff.

Mr. ROGERS. Thank you.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, gentlemen. The Chair now recognizes the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Emergency Communications Preparedness and Response, the gentleman from Texas Mr. Henry Cuellar for five minutes.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question is to Major May. In the April 26th testimony before congress Deputy FEMA Director Johnson said that evacuations, mass shelters, temporary housing were a priority focus for FEMA. How will this recent change, that is making FEMA better than the Red Cross as the lead agency for mass care and housing affect the capacity to provide mass care and the shelter for disaster evacuees?

Major May. Well, I think that what he meant to say that we're incorporating that working very much with the Red Cross on the whole shelter issue to make sure they're in lockstep with us. We are working with, as a matter of fact, the mass evacuation with the Gulf Coast right now with the partner states of Alabama, Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi, and also close states like Kentucky, Tennessee and Arkansas and Oklahoma to putting a plan in place so that we can find shelter space outside of those affected areas.

So we're involved with the transportation of those individuals, evacuating those individuals and also providing shelter for them. We're working very closely on this now with HUD for the long-term

HUD housing issue. Those are much longer than just the shelter operations. But the focus is still to be involved with the Red Cross.

Mr. CUELLAR. All right. Let me just follow up on something. When you look at FEMA and the Red Cross and other shelter providers in the gulf states are they prepared to meet the needs of the special needs population such as those who need medications and oxygen.

Major May. That's a real challenge and that's why the relationship with this gentleman down the street here, I mean down the desk here, is awfully important for us formulating that because we may have to move people some distance to be able to provide that. But we're working with the states, the states are working with the locals to identify those gaps in medical, special medical needs shelter capability.

Alabama has identified some special shelter capabilities in some of the junior colleges because you can wrap around additional services other than just a gym floor to provide that. And so we're working very hard to identify that population, find out who needs to be transported and provide facilities for them and wrap staff around them when they get there.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. I would like to touch on that because that's not really a Red Cross issue, it's a health and medical issue, which in our state it falls under the State Health Directors purview, because we have medical staff nurses. We have 15 shelters in our state with capacity of about 2000. The most we've had in shelters from our three evacuations during Opal, Dennis and Katrina was 300. So right now we have enough capacity, but as additional evacuees come in from Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida to our state we may not. So we continue to build capacity, and I think every state continues to build capacity.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Delahousey you're next.

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. Well, the answer as to whether or not there is adequate facilities to prepare for special needs patients I can tell you, no, there are not. We don't know how many special needs patients there are out there. There is no comprehensive national registry. Here in south Mississippi we estimate 45,000. There are not 45,000 places that we can relocate those people to in this state, so it's a problem.

And the Red Cross does not provide medical care at shelters. The Red Cross does not man special needs shelters, it's left up to the state. It's a problem that's been ignored for years. We saw it surface in Hurricane Katrina. There is a greater awareness now, but we've got a long way to go before it's rectified.

Mr. CUELLAR. So, Major, what do you think we ought to be doing.

Major May. Well, we're moving, we're identifying, we're working very hard to identify that population and then try to find solutions. We're not there yet.

Mr. CUELLAR. On a scope of one to ten where are you, halfway.

Major May. As far as identifying—meeting the needs that have been identified to us, about halfway there.

Mr. CUELLAR. OK. Identifying one part.

Major May. We're asking the workers in the states to identify their population for us, and when they present that to us we try

to help them provide solutions. They're not always successful in identifying the real population exactly so.

Mr. CUELLAR. So on the first part, which is the identification, you're saying that you're about halfway. On the preparation, and I see—

Major May. I'm talking about numbers, not individual names, but estimates on what numbers would be like.

Mr. CUELLAR. Well, I see you shaking your head.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. It's because as was mentioned, there is no registry. We don't know what the universe is of people with special needs requires. Until that's done we don't know whether we're 10 percent, 40 percent, 80 percent towards meeting those requirements. In Alabama, what we're doing is we're simply basing it upon three evacuations in an 11 month period of time and the number of people that showed up at shelters. But again, we don't think that that's a hundred percent of the special needs shelters in the state. So that's the reason we continue to build capacity.

Major May. And that is historical data and that's what we're actually working off of now.

Mr. CUELLAR. OK. Let me just—we'll actually I'll go ahead and let the other gentlemen ask questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Cuellar. The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of Subcommittee of Emergency Communications Preparedness and Response, the gentleman from Pennsylvania Mr. Charles Dent for questions.

Mr. DENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon. For Major May, my question deals with evacuation plans and the process that you've employed there. Could you discuss your role in the development of the Gulf Coast evacuation plan?

Major May. My role in the Gulf Coast evacuation plan.

Mr. DENT. Yes, in developing of the Gulf Coast evacuation plan.

Major May. Yes, I co-chaired that responsibility with Mr. Peterson out of Denton, Texas, and I'm working very hard to provide the framework to gather the information to put that plan in place.

Mr. DENT. Now, obviously, many of the gulf states have their own evacuation plans, and how do these, their evacuation plans, dovetail with this new regional plan that builds on your efforts?

Major May. Yes. We have teams that have been meeting with Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas, and they're in the host states this week meeting with Oklahoma and Kentucky and Arkansas and Tennessee. And they're gathering GAP information, kind of like a GAP for us to determine what capabilities they have at the local level to transport people, populations, and trying to determine what Federal assets maybe be brought to the table to assist that capability being put in place.

Mr. DENT. And which Federal, State, and local agencies are currently involved with this evacuation plan process?

Major May. Well, all of the state agencies assume that the state director brings to a table are involved, and that would probably require the state director, Mr. Baughman, can tell you specific to Alabama.

But in the case of the Federal folks that are involved, the Corp of Engineers are involved, DHS is involved, DOT is involved. Those

are the primary ones that are involved, and also DMV has some visibility in it.

Mr. DENT. And when do you expect this plan to be completed?

Major May. We hope to have that in place and operational by the first of July. I'm sorry, middle of July.

Mr. DENT. Have you engaged with various potential host communities as you develop this plan?

Major May. Yes, we're doing that as we speak today. And I have also been on the phone to the various governors talking with them about participating in this.

Mr. DENT. I represent an area of eastern Pennsylvania. I worry about evacuations of New City and Philadelphia, and it's a constant concern considering them.

And, Mr. Baughman, I know your office has also been involved in developing the regional evacuation plan for the Gulf Coast. What's your assessment of this plan's development, and do you believe that sufficient progress has been made up to this point?

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Yes. Basically what we're trying to do is to make sure that when there is a multi state evacuation that when people cross state lines from Mississippi—for example, when an evacuation from Louisiana occurs many people go up Interstate 10 over to the Mississippi Gulf Coast. They pick up personnel. If the storm's moving further to the east we pick up traffic along the Mississippi Gulf Coast and they end up going up north on I-65. So we're going to be sheltering those personnel.

Well, what we need to know is when are they doing a mandatory evacuation, are they reverse lane, how many people are potentially coming our way because we have limited shelter capability.

So, yes, it is helping us because we have the capability to shelter with instate personnel 44,000. Now, we have the capacity to go up to 90,000 if, in fact, additional personnel are brought in through FEMA to help staff that additional shelter capacity. So, yes, we are working very closely with them on it.

We're working to identify what our emergency transportation requirements are, what our emergency communication requirements are.

For example, are we doing an evacuation with school buses. Do we have communication on those school buses so that we can get a check as to where that bus is in progress to a particular shelter.

And just for your interest maybe, the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, which are closer to Pennsylvania have indicated as we do this evaluation that they can shelter their populations in place in the state.

Mr. DENT. Thank you. Mr. Delahousey, on page 3 of your testimony you mentioned Mississippi is recognized for it's efficient post-Katrina recovery efforts. You identified a few reasons for that success—in particular, that you a unified command structure, strong leadership from the Governor's office, and a competent State emergency management agency. Do you believe that those three attributes were lacking in Louisiana and that this might have contributed to some of the difficulties we had in responding there?

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. There are a lot of things different statistically between Mississippi and Louisiana, and I'm hesitant to be critical of the emergency response there. I can say that from where we sat,

the emergency operation center, the local government officials cooperated with the county officials, cooperated with the state officials, cooperated with the Federal officials. And I think that contributed gravely to the cohesive approach that we had to the disaster management.

Mr. DENT. And I guess my final question would be, do you believe that all levels of government are prepared to respond to a category 3 or stronger hurricane if one were to hit the Gulf Coast region this year?

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. Well, we're better prepared than we were in 2005 I can tell you. And, now, one of the things that I have to comment on for the 1906 hurricane season there was a Federal plan in place to evacuate the 12 parishes in south Louisiana. It was not communicated, I don't think, to the people that live there, but my company was under contract to provide 300 ambulances should this same thing occur so that the people next time could get out. And those type of plans are ongoing.

And the government doesn't own ambulances, neither does MDMS, and they recognize that and they're trying to get a plan in place. It's a slow process, but it's improving.

Mr. DENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for your service.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Dent. The Chair now recognizes the chairman of the full committee, the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Bennie Thompson for questions.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I guess I need to kind of go down the line. The question is, if we have an existing plan, or a plan that's about to be rewritten, but we're not sharing the responsibilities of the plan with the stakeholders we have a problem. Mr. May, can you share with the committee what your expectations of the present plan in place, and how that is to be communicated with all the stakeholders?

Major May. I think generally speaking the stakeholders at stake, most of them, understand what's in the National Response Plan. And what's holding up the publication of the National Response Plan are really not items that would over all keep us from responding adequately, I think, to an event. By using the instant command system and using MEMS the national, I mean, national instant management system and that framework we understand responsibilities of the various levels of government under our unified command, and we would be, I think, prepared to respond to those needs at the state level. And I don't think that's an impediment at this time.

There are various client ops specifically that deal with hurricane preparedness that have been put together.

But the National Response Plan is an all hazards plan that deals with all hazards not just hurricane preparedness.

Mr. THOMPSON. I understand. But for the sake of the discussion we'll talk about hurricanes.

Major May. OK.

Mr. THOMPSON. So, how would a local county or parish official know about this plan? How would you expect that plan to be communicated all the way down to all the stakeholders.

Major May. It would be the responsibility of the state government to transmit that plan down to state and local governments.

Mr. THOMPSON. Do you require any sign off by any individual certifying that that plan has in effect been provided to those individuals.

Major May. The states have to certify that their MEMS is compliant. That they are, and part of that I think would be the transmittal of a planning document or understanding that the planning process down to the local level.

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes or no.

Major May. Would I expect the states to provide that.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, I think there is some question as to whether or not the stakeholders who are responsible for carrying out certain aspects of this plan may or may not have knowledge of it. And I'm saying are you—

Major May. There's no—

Mr. THOMPSON. Excuse me. Are you requiring them to certify that they have received the plan.

Major May. No, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, I think that would be something that would help facilitate some of the conflicts. Mr. Baughman made reference to some generators that are housed in Georgia. For the sake of the record, how many generators do you have in Georgia?

Major May. There are not very many. They're in a stockpile. Most of the generator capacity the agency had is actually in Forth Worth, Texas. And I think they probably have 100 generators in Atlanta. But that's part of the national stockpile. And the generators in Texas could be brought to any place they are needed in the southeast. It just happens to be where they are today.

Mr. THOMPSON. Part of the FEMA response deals with the travel trailers immediately after a hurricane. Now that you've heard some questions about formaldehyde in trailers, do you plan to have somebody look at that before any additional travel trailers are put into an area, or just go ahead and you decide it from your standpoint.

Major May. My understanding that this is what they're doing. That's not under my responsibility, but I understand the agency has identified the fact they have the problem. They've made recommendations to individuals that are in those trailers, what they can do to ventilate formaldehyde from those trailers. They've got a monitoring system in place working with EPA, and in the construction or ordering of new trailers they're working with the manufactures to make sure those formaldehyde numbers are way down, acceptable levels.

Mr. THOMPSON. So in other words, anyone that's in one has been told that you need to either vent them or we will vent them or we will provide a monitor.

Major May. That's my understanding.

Mr. THOMPSON. So has that been an official FEMA directive, or where did that come from.

Major May. I will have to get back to you on that.

Mr. THOMPSON. All right. Can you get it back to the committee in writing on that.

Major May. Yes, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. This Gulf Coast evacuation plan, and I think Mr. Dent talked about, and I have to apologize I can't hear from that side of the table for some reason; is that plan already approved and in writing.

Major May. No, sir, it's in process. We're working now with the host states that would be receiving evacuees from outside of the area, the affected area to make sure they can shelter those people.

Mr. THOMPSON. So what's the plan now if something were to happen tomorrow.

Major May. Well, the plan would be to identify the states. The city of New Orleans has some evacuation capabilities, the state of Louisiana has some capability, and we'll be working with them to make sure if they needed to shelter those populations outside the state that we can provide assistance in them doing that. Contracts are being put in place as we speak.

Mr. THOMPSON. So there's no plan.

Major May. There is not a plan that I can tell you specifically where we're going to be taking certain individuals from, say Louisiana to a location somewhere outside of the state of Louisiana. The state of Louisiana has plans to evacuate their on populations to shelters within the state, and other states also. Alabama has an agreement with them.

Mr. THOMPSON. OK. Thank you very much.

Mr. CARNEY. I thank the Chairman. The Chair now recognizes other members with questions that they may wish to ask the witnesses. I'll begin with Ms. Sanchez, Loretta Sanchez from California.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you gentlemen for being before us. I really wanted to ask some questions with respect to insurance. I don't know if you all would really be the right witnesses to ask with respect to that. You're all shaking your heads no.

OK, let me ask an easy one to begin with then. Could you give me some indication, any of you, or all of you, about the work that the faith based groups did when they came in, what they did, how they set up, if they had contact with you or if they did it on their own? And I'm going back to the fact that I have a fire fighter, we had many fire fighters come from California to help in the Katrina situation, and one of them that talked to me at length about his stay here, which was many, many months, said he was just amazed at the faith based organizations and everything that they got done. And unfortunately he also mentioned that one of faith based organization I think was the Latter Day Saints sent a whole bunch of bags or packages all packed up and everything, then had in there, you know, courtesy of the Latter Day Saints, and they were asked to take those out and put the Red Cross's paraphernalia in there. So, can you discuss a little bit about the faith based organizations and how they handled, and what they did.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Sure, I can touch on it. There is several organizations. There is the National Organization of Voluntary Agencies active in a disaster. Each state has a chapter of that, which contain most of your faith based organizations.

Ours are coordinated by the Governor's Office of Faith Based Initiatives, which is part of our plan. And so any voluntary agency

coming into the state working on a disaster is coordinated by that office, which they work with those organizations day in and day out.

But there is national organization that takes a look at how can we maximize the utilization of those faith based organizations in a disaster? That way you don't have a Red Cross and a Salvation Army Emergency Response vehicle setting up next to one another, they're not competing, they're complimenting one another, and we're utilizing all of their assets, not just one organization. So, that's what we've done.

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. I can tell you from ESFA, which is the medical section of the disaster plan, a man that, Dr. Robert Travnicek from the local health department, and we had a lot of faith based groups that came into the area and did a lot of good work. Unfortunately they were not coordinated when they came, they did not check in; some of them did not check in through the local emergency operations center, so we had no idea where they were. We could have deployed them to probably more strategic locations had that happened. But they served a very valuable purpose.

And it is a problem also when your local health medical community is trying to get back on its feet, and local doctors are trying to see patients again. What can you do? Do you ask the for free faith based groups to leave the area so that the doctors begin practicing medicine again. There was a lot of criticism after Katrina for that, and it was a very difficult situation, but they did tremendous work in south Mississippi. The coordination of those could have been better.

Mr. RUIZ. We had three or four groups that came into—I can only speak about St. Bernard Parish, you know, the rest of the state I really can't speak of. But they came in and we took the initiative, we coordinated them, the fire department with Mericarp, and they came in, we coordinated them and they gutted houses, and they're rebuilding houses today. We've still got some groups, Catholic Charities, the Billy Graham group, the Baptists, they are down there building houses for individuals today. You know, thank God that they came down there and helped the citizens of St. Bernard.

Ms. SANCHEZ. My last question is to you, Mr. Ruiz, it's about when help is the first responders of the fire fighters and some of the others. Can you elaborate a little on what you've seen, and what you personally have, of course you haven't seen the whole school of it, but is this a large percentage we need to worry about.

Mr. RUIZ. Well, I think it could be a large percentage, Ma'am. In my department I have five guys that came down with some types of diseases that it took forever to find out what it was. One individual, I brought him with me to our state conventions and they had a doctor from John Hopkins came in, and he was describing his problems that he had. He told that they was having the same type of symptoms in post 911 up there. You know, I first started getting involved with this was because of medical reasons. I wanted to setup some type of, uh, to draw more positive, to do more research to monitor us because our Parish cannot afford it. If we use our health insurance our health insurance will sky rocket. So we hope the government will step in and start to monitor us just like

we're doing for 911. You know, four or five years down the road what type of diseases are we going to have.

You got to understand, me personally, I worked in five foot, probably four and half foot of water for the first six days of the storm; human waste, animal waste, the refinery spills, you know, so what have I absorbed working in this water for that length of time that's not going to effect me until years down the lone.

Ms. SANCHEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you. I now recognize Mr. Perlmutter, Ed Perlmutter from Colorado, for five minutes.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. May, I will start with you since you and I were having this conversation at lunch. But I really want to talk, because it was something that came up while we were on our tour, about actions that were taken locally by the school districts, by the cities, by the parishes, where they had to act because there wasn't anybody else around to act, and they did the best they could to make something good out of a terrible situation. How can we in the Federal arena assist them now that they're making claims to get repaid for some of the things they did, yet they've got to go through all sorts of appeal processes when they acted in, and you used I think the words good faith, and I thought that was right on the mark. And if you could just say a few things about that.

Major May. Well, one of things we need to do a better job on, and we have been working with the states, is to do training with them as an applicant and what's eligible and not eligible for reimbursement. And I know the states in many cases, or Alabama does a good job, of taking this very training down to the local level and training this is training that takes place prior to the event. So, we've got to do a better job of that, making sure that people at the mayors level and school board level knows the kinds of things that are eligible for reimbursement. These prenegotiated, precontracts is good example of having something in place that increases your ability to be reimbursed in a timely and accurate way.

There are going to be cases and situations, and I've been involved with them, and I have seen other people, because you're in a hurry up, hurry up mode, and then you say the auditors come in, and a lot of times FEMA may be actually saying, yeah, this was done in an emergency situation. You need to really take a look at this. But when the auditors come in and the dust is settled and they look at it by the book, and you don't have the flexibility in a lot of cases to do that.

We do have an appeal process in place. It does give the director, and gives me, the Regional Administrator, myself and the director some leeway to maybe look at some situations and have a chance to make sure that's not over burdensome as far as the appeal process is concerned.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. I guess what, and it may be that we've got to change the law, but from the organization standpoint, especially if it's a governmental entity, a school district or a city, a town, a county, that they get a presumption in their favor, you know, of good faith, and not that they have to continually—I mean, the ordinary citizen is having a tough enough time out there. We heard from Martha Murphy as we were coming over here about her belief

that just citizens taking the bull by the horns and acting, you know, save this town from much more misery than it was going to have, than it could have had. So, I guess I'm just asking on, you know, as the Administrator for your region, I'm saying as a panel we need to take a look at presumption of good faith in terms of these appeal processes so that the folks here can get on with the rest of their lives.

Major May. I agree with you. And I always look at things, did it serve a governmental purpose, did it save lives and property, is there something that if they had not taken—did it take the burden off the Federal Government by them doing this action? So I kind of look at it from both standpoints and try to push the regulations, but when the IG is there sometimes they don't see it that way.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Changing the subject a little bit, something we haven't really talked much about; but again, on the trip over here I asked some questions about the response of the National Guard to Katrina. And what I was advised is that much of the Mississippi Guard had been deployed to Iraq at the time, all of their equipment had been basically had been deployed to Iraq at the time, and that it was difficult for them to get themselves into place when they were stretched in terms of their men and women in the service, but also their equipment. What, if anything, has been done to remedy that situation? And maybe Mr. Baughman you want to take that.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Normally FEMA is not responsible for deployment of the Guard. That's normally done by the Governor. And if the Governor needs additional help from the Guard, they do that under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

What we've done in our state is our Adjutant General has setup three joint task forces. He knows what the equipment requirement and the personnel requirement are for each one of those. If the equipment is overseas, he's now made arrangements during hurricane season to get that from other states under that compact agreement.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. But see, I think what we have is just sort of a domino effect here, because we did hear from the National Guard two weeks ago, we had a hearing. And I think I understand that under this EMAC there is a kind of a pooling process.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Yes.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. And we did, we heard testimony that the Guard as a whole was at about 38 to 40 percent of their equipment needs. We also heard that, you know, especially as this escalation in troops is taking place in Iraq, more of the Guard is being redeployed, you know, for the second and third time back to Iraq, and my question to you is, if you have another Katrina come through here and you get a Katrina/Rita, how are you going to deal with that.

Mr. BAUGHMAN. Guard assets are a problem. But again, the way we've dealt with it, and I can only talk specifically for Alabama, is our Adjutant General has made arrangements with adjacent Adjutant Generals to bring those equipments that their Guard pools, from that pool which you were talking about, to our state to reposition there ahead of time.

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CARNEY. Thank you, Mr. Perlmutter. The Chair now welcomes and recognizes Mr. Taylor from Mississippi for questions.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again, I want to thank all of my colleagues for coming here today. I would also like to note the presence of Mayor Favre of Bay St. Louis, Mayor Longo of Waveland, Mayor Skellie of Long Beach, and Mayor McDermott of Pass Christian. And with your permission, since we're not allowed to testify, I would hope the Committee would give them the normal five legislative days to submit their thoughts towards this process.

Mr. CARNEY. No objection. So ordered.

Mr. TAYLOR. I would like to point out also to the Committee and account for the heroes, one of them is over there behind that camera. His name is Al Shows, he was with Channel 13 and he was one who was there with the first responders as I was telling you as they kept retreating inland, and ended up at the Third Emergency Operations Center. Somewhere between the first and third they actually marked, they wrote on their sleeves with Marks-A-Lots in case they died. I think he was number 35.

Mr. SHOWS. 34.

Mr. TAYLOR. 34, OK. But we appreciate you being here. And again, I know I keep saying this a lot, but to give you an idea of the magnitude of what happened here, if you look overhead and see the rust stains, that's from the salt water spray. The water was about four feet deep in here and the salt water spray is what caused that. It's just the unthinkable happened, and that's what I want to keep emphasizing to the FEMA folks is, OK, the unthinkable has happened once.

I'm told on the Armed Services Committee by the Generals and the Admirals that we are due for a weapon of mass destruction attack on the United States. We know that about half of all Americans live in a coastal community, and when the unthinkable happened here our bridge going east, our bridges going west were destroyed. We were down to one lane of traffic going north and south for about the next 150 miles, and we saw how hard it was to get fuel in here for the few vehicles that could run. The local police, as I have told y'all, actually broke into the car dealerships and stole vehicles because all of their vehicles had gone underwater. One of the things that I have repeatedly asked FEMA is for a water borne strategy for getting fuel in here. As desperate as we were for fuel here, I would guarantee you a steak dinner that sitting in the harbor of Pensacola were barge loads of diesel fuel, and that with the right contacts and the right calls within 20 hours we could have had a barge load of fuel here at the Port of Bay St. Louis. We could have another one in Pass Christian and another one in Gulfport. And so instead of draining shrimp boats and draining fuel out of vehicles that had been under water as we desperately were looking for fuel.

So the question is, what has FEMA done between then and now to develop a water borne strategy for response?

The second thing I want to point out is because of the good work of CMO, Admiral Mullen, I was able to get in touch with him the day after the storm, he had the hospital ship, I'm sorry, the USS Baton off shore. They flew radios into all the hospitals that had gone under water. They told them if it gets beyond what you can

handle you call us, we will send a helicopter in to get your patient and we will take them out to the hospital and we'll take care of them.

But additionally the Navy sent the hospital ship Comfort over to Pascagoula, Mississippi. It was at the dock. I would like Mr. Delahousey to tell me as the head of American Medical Response, what were his orders from the State Department of Health as far as taking people to that ship, but I think you will find that very interesting.

The third thing is the total lack of communications. Major May, you know, we were down to one satellite phone in this county for four days, and if it wasn't for the National Guard we wouldn't have had that. What has changed since then?

And then lastly, since I still have 20,000 families in this district living in FEMA trailers, and 7,000 are from Purvis, Mississippi, and I just had a town meeting up there where a lot of the neighbors adjoining that were pretty upset. Why is it that two years after the storm, we're still renting property to house those 7,000 trailers when the Nation owns 100,000 acres within 10 miles of there at Camp Shelby. And why are we paying to rent property through FEMA when we could be sticking those trailers—and I have brought this to you superior's attention, and I have not been satisfied with the answer. So I'm going to ask the question again, and I'm going to keep asking the question, why are you wasting money?

Lastly, I would like to note that we heard from Mr. Mike Lipski from Congressman Pickering's office with us. And we have Mr. Scott Walker from Senator Lott's office with us, and I want to thank them for being here.

But those are the questions, in any particular order. Mr. Delahousey, why don't you start after seeing the trouble of bringing in the hospital ship Comfort to a place that had lost its hospital, what were your instructions as far as bringing people to that hospital that needed medical care?

Mr. DELAHOUSEY. We've never had a level one trauma center in south Mississippi. We may never, in my lifetime anyway. We did for about a month period after Katrina, and it was in the form of the USS Comfort docked at Pascagoula. We were so pleased to hear that that resource was there, and I was shocked to receive a phone call indicating that we should not take patients to the USS Comfort, and I questioned why and I was told because it was not a state approved resource. That did not come from MEMA, but from the Department of Health, said it was not a state approved resource. And I said, well, I think there is a higher authority that authorized it to come here. You know, perhaps the Commander in Chief or somebody, but we could not take advantage of it. And they were relegated to giving tetanus shots and doing other things. They sent their crews out to man the hospitals. The hospitals wanted to decompress and put their patients on board so they could get a break, and they stayed here for several weeks and then weighed anchor and went to New Orleans instead.

Mr. TAYLOR. So again, the point I'm trying to make is, the sort of thing that we ought to be doing during good times is having agreements in place between FEMA, between the United States

welfare, between the states to where that doesn't happen again. I mean, seeing them literally turn that ship around, brought it up to Mississippi on very short notice, and that resource was not used. The doctors on the ship, and the medics on the ship were so frustrated with the situation that they literally grabbed their medical packs and walked into town. Again, they didn't have any vehicles with them, and just set up shop.

Major May, again, if you look behind you about a quarter of mile you will see a jetty, and at the end of that jetty are some large posts, and up until the opening of that bridge our Nation was good enough to provide ferry service to make up for the fact that the bridge was gone. I have asked the city and the county and the region, which is traditionally owners of that property, if they would allow that to remain rather than being torn up like in the original contract. And the reason for that is I'm convinced it's going to happen again, and we need a place where they can either bring in LKA's, amphibious, from the ships, or for more importantly fuel. I have got to tell you people were taking it out of their shrimp boats, they were taking it out of vehicles that had been under water. What is the plan now? I mean, do you have a list of the fleeting operations, and have agreements with those people, because we always know it's the east side of the storm that gets clobbered; it's the west side of the storm that traditionally is OK. And so there is always going to be an east side and a west side along the Gulf Coast. Do you have agreements in place, now that it's two years after the storm, to bring in fuel by barge so that we don't have to fight 180 miles of downed power lines and downed trees next time?

Major May. I'm going to have to get back with you on specifics, but that contract with FEMA does have a fuel contract in place. Whether or not it has a sea facet to that I do not know, but I'll get that to you in writing.

Mr. TAYLOR. OK.

Major May. Second, you mentioned the housing issues, clearly FEMA's soft under belly, long term housing really has never been something FEMA had the depth of experience to be able to do. FEMA now is partnering with HUD to get them involved to look at some long term solutions.

FEMA also lead a housing initiative with the states, various states, Katrina states. Mississippi competed for that and there is some money available to put some Katrina type cottages, we call them, together, and the state is working to establish those sites for those.

But I don't have any good information to give you about how we can do this quickly. It's going to take some time.

Mr. TAYLOR. Again, I want to ask specifically the question, why are we renting land in Purvis, 10 miles from where the Nation owns Camp Shelby. That just strikes me as insane. I could see having to do things on the fly right after the storm. That was 21 months ago, and I think you're wasting my Nations money, and I will continue to write Mr. Chertoff about this, Mr. Paulison about this, and I'm going to keep raising the question until this gets corrected.

The last thing is, I told some of the members of the Committee, but Mike and Charlie came a little bit late. I really want to com-

mend Mayor Favre and Mayor Longo. I didn't get down to Bay St. Louis until the day after the storm. By the time I did so from the at application EOC that I pointed out to you, and they had allowed police sanctioned looting of the Wal-Mart, of the Winn Dixie and the Sav-A-Center. They actually found a stove in the street and the guy was clever enough to hook it up to a propane tank and was cooking for the emergency responders, and that's how we fed the City for the first three or four days.

Now, Mr. May, I just complimented my Mayor on some heads up responses to a tragedy that no one could have imagined. But I do want to remind you that when Michael Brown came before the Homeland Security Committee last year he made a statement that really got my ire. He said, "You are supposed to have three days worth of food. We ought to have at least three days of food." Well, as you have seen if you drive up and down the street, there are a lot of people that had a weeks worth of food in their freezer. The only problem is they don't have the foggiest idea where their freezer is the next day because their house is gone. And we as a Nation have to be in a position to respond to situations like that. Now, these guys made a heads up call. In a community where everybody knows each other and therefore was kind of self policing, but that's not going to happen in New York City. That's not going to happen in Los Angeles. So, I would really encourage you as a Nation, we've got to be able to respond quicker than three days.

The other point I want to make is you've now seen this is a fairly large, not very sparsely populated county. 30 miles, we are out there about 30 miles. Your local FEMA guy insisted on one point of delivery for food in a county that 90 percent of it had gone under water. So no one has got a vehicle. The one's that do have vehicles don't have fuel. And his answer for that, his excuse for that was, well, until the National Guard shows up I'm not going to do it because there will be riots.

Number one, he wasn't aware that the Mississippi Guard was in Iraq. I had to walk him through that.

But the second part is, he was just totally insensitive to the fact that there were neither vehicles nor fuel. And we ended up razzooking a couple of vehicles from the National Guard delivering fuel. But that's got to be a part of your plan, because the worst is going to happen, and whether it's Los Angeles, New York City, because of man made terror or a natural disaster somewhere in coastal America. Your game plan has got to be better because it's life and death. And what happened with Katrina is water under the bridge. Don't you know there's an expression in the country, the dog bites me the first time it's the dog's fault. That same dog bites me the second time, it's my fault.

I sure hope your agency has learned from some of these challenges, and learned from some of the mistakes, and I would love to hear your response to that, because those were things that I saw with my eyes that if these local guys had not made such good, quick, by the seat of their pants calls, a lot of people would have died.

Major May. The last the thing you mentioned, which is the distribution of commodities, we're working, we'll be working with the state, or worked with the state, on points of distribution, and they

will be working with the counties to determine where those points of distribution should be in the county so you could get those commodities out and we will be responding to where those points of distribution have been identified by county and state officials.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, thank all of you again for coming to south Mississippi.

Mr. CARNEY. I thank Mr. Taylor for his invitation and for the witness's testimony. I want to thank the audience for being attentive and paying attention, it helps us.

Members of the Subcommittees may have additional questions for the witnesses, and we will submit them in writing and we would expect an expedient response.

Hearing no further business, the subcommittees stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, the subcommittee was adjourned.]

