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FIFTY YEARS SINCE THE GREAT ALASKA EARTHQUAKE: THE ROLE OF FIRST RESPONDERS IN CATASTROPHIC DISASTER PLANNING

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

FIELD HEARING IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

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APRIL 4, 2014

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT,
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BEGICH

Chairman BEGICH. Good afternoon, let me go ahead and call the meeting to order. I want to welcome you all here. This is the Subcommittee of Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations and the District of Columbia. Obviously, we are not going to be talking about the District of Columbia today.

Most of our witnesses today are Alaskans, but I want to welcome to our State for his first time Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Craig Fugate. We really thank you for being here. He has had already a quick whirlwind tour of Alaska.

We have taken him out to the Valley and saw some activity out there, met with some tribal community leaders and after today, he will literally be on a plane in a few hours to Washington State for the disaster that they are experiencing there with the mud slides. So we thank him for taking his time out here. We know it is a long trip from Washington to be here and his job requires him to travel quite a bit. So thank you very much for being here.

We are meeting here today just a week after communities around Alaska marked the solemn anniversary of "The Great Alaska Earthquake". It has been 50 years since the 9.2 magnitude quake centered 75 miles east of Anchorage and rocked our State. The quake also triggered tsunamis inundating our coastal villages.

Happening only a few years after Alaska became a State, our entire focus on how to respond to and recover from disasters has been shaped by the earthquake. The lessons we learned have had a big impact on how our State has developed and how we continue to plan for disasters.

In 1964, Alaska was a young State with a population of about 225,000. Since then, we have more than tripled our number and

our economy has grown significantly and the State's tremendous and critical resources like oil and gas, as well as our military strategic location.

I can remember, I was only two during the earthquake, but it was stories afterwards, because for the younger students here, in those days, we did not have DVDs, digital cameras. We had slide shows. So we had slides and some of the folks that are my age might we remember this you would get a carousel of slides and you would show them and all of your trips and I remember growing up seeing the earthquake.

In our house, I lived in east Anchorage, and the only thing that broke: we had these three swinging lights that went back and forth and smacked into each other and that's only because we were on gravel soil, but I saw these incredible photos of Turnagain Arm and what happened in Valdez, which I know we will hear something about here and what Valdez is doing on preparedness, but it is an amazing—I can still remember Penney's, for those that go downtown at all, the Penney's side that faces the garage that faces the store had just peeled right off. The side of the Penney's store just peeled right off like a piece of paper coming off of it because the earthquake was damaging, but it was incredible to see that and where we look back now, the impressive growth over the last 50 years, an achievement related to all Alaskans, that should be proud of, but it does raise the stakes of disaster much higher, because we have more to protect and more to be prepared for.

With additional important infrastructure and assets, there's additional stress on local and State capacity to assess our vulnerabilities and plan to respond to disasters. First responders, the police, fire fighters and medical personnel, who are essential to any successful response are vital assets.

They have worked hard over the years to plan and equip themselves to respond to many potential threats to our State and one of the best ways, the local, State and tribal and Federal first responders can test their capabilities they have built over the years without a real-world catastrophic disaster is by participating in exercises. In addition, the role of an educated engaged public has been critical in successful disaster response.

Later today, we will hear about schools, what schools are planning for disasters, as well as discuss the recent responses to flooding in Galena and in the incident in Valdez with regard to the avalanche.

This past week, the State, Federal, tribal and local emergency management officials came together during a recent Alaska Shield exercise, which recreated the massive 1964 earthquake. Preventing loss of life is the most important goal, but we must also make sure families and communities have the resources they need to recover.

Failure to provide those resources has the potential for devastating long-term effects on the economic, cultural and social fabric of our State. Our communities faced this very issue last spring when flooding along the Yukon forced citizens to evacuate hundreds of miles away to Fairbanks.

Assuring that all families who wanted to return to their homes were able to was not just an effort to keep the community intact,

it was an effort to assure jobs were not lost, schools were not empty and homes were not abandoned.

Alaskans are tough and independent people, but we know the strength of our communities is the most important asset, both before and after a disaster. Assistance from external organizations may arrive in communities in the Lower 48 within a matter of hours after a disaster. Alaska's vast geography and the transportation challenges mean that many Alaskans must be prepared to cope for days without significant Federal assistance.

This reality means smart planning. Involving all members of the community is essential. Our communities do not have the room for error that those in the Lower 48 may have and I am glad that our witnesses for today's hearing represent the diverse collection of these communities.

Response leaders, State emergency management leaders, tribal organizations, local fire officials, emergency medical services (EMS) professionals and school administrators all play a critical role in community preparedness. They are all looked to and relied upon to support swift response and recovery efforts. I thank each of you for your hard work you have already done to prepare our communities and to respond to past disasters.

While predicting catastrophic disasters like earthquakes is nearly impossible, planning for the aftermath must continue to be a priority for all members of a first responder community.

I am encouraged by the work our emergency response officials are currently doing and I look forward to examining the FEMA uses and the lessons learned from Alaska's Shield to support this planning from the Federal level.

I hope the exercise and Administrator Fugate's trip have highlighted the economic, transportation, communication and cultural realities that make Alaska the great State that it is. I will continue to urge FEMA to recognize the unique needs that may not fit neatly into existing policy boxes and to increase its adaptability to States like ours.

Just as we did after the 1964 earthquake, Alaska will keep moving forward. We will keep learning, keep improving and we will emerge better prepared to plan for and respond to any disasters that may occur in our great State.

So let me go ahead and again recognize our panels. We have two panels. The way this will work today, and we thank you very much again to all the panels that are participating. I will ask the first panel over here to each give their testimony. I will do a few questions and then I will ask the second panel to do their testimony, ask a few questions and then, the way I have done these before is there may be a little crisscross; I may hear something over here that I want to ask this panel or vice versa.

It is a formal field hearing, but I try to keep it a little more relaxed in the sense of how we are trying to do this because I think it is an opportunity for all of us to learn and improve, especially around the issues of catastrophic disaster planning.

So let me now start with Administrator Craig Fugate, who's the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Administrator.

TESTIMONY OF CRAIG FUGATE,[1] ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. FUGATE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and the other thing we normally do at these hearings is that we have these long written testimony. So I will formally ask Mr. Chairman to accept my written testimony and we will not read that verbatim.

Chairman BEGICH. Without objection.

Mr. FUGATE. Alaska may be one of the youngest States, but you joined a particular form of government, is how some people describe it, and I am pretty sure, Senator, if I go to most any Governor, to any senator and talk about their State, there's always something unique about their State that you have to factor in. And for those of you that didn't really pay too much attention in your civics class, what's unique about the United States is we are just that, we are not a national government.

We are a Federal Government, where our constitution said those powers not reserved to the Federal Government belong to the States and the people and part of that is the ability and responsibility and the authority that is arised from each State's constitution by how they govern themselves in disasters and where those emergency powers come from and each State based it upon their history, their needs and in some cases, their history of dealing with disasters.

So when people look to Washington, DC. sometimes for one-size fits all answers to problems, that's not how our government's established. It has to recognize that each State is unique; each State is different and that our Federal form of government recognized that, that it could not be just a national government where all decisions can be made in D.C.

We are a representative government where we elect our senators and our representatives to help govern, but this is also the basis of our disaster model. The Federal Government's not in charge. A lot of times, the national media, when there's a disaster, you see FEMA and people think, "Well, FEMA's in charge." We are not in charge. The Governor and the State constitution and those authorities vested in local officials, they are the ones managing that response. They are the ones that are leading it.

Our job at the Federal Government is to support that. We do not come in to take over. Our job is to support, but we also have to be cautious and recognize that you, as taxpayers, expect this to be a shared responsibility, a responsibility that locals and States also share, including funding for.

So we also try to make sure that we support, but not supplant local and State responsibilities, and the more complex the disaster, the lines get blurred. So we have also learned that we can not wait until it is so bad and overwhelms a State before the Federal Government gets ready or begins to prepare.

We work together as one team, but we have to understand, our job at the Federal level is not that we are going to come in and take over. Well, first of all, we would not even know what to do when we got here in many cases.

[1] The prepared statement of Mr. Fugate appears in the Appendix on page 29.

Our job is to come in and support the Governor and their team and work with the local officials, and this can be very expensive. Your Senator is part of one of the more substantial changes to how we fund disasters. Previously, we had to go get additional funds every time there's a disaster because we barely had enough money to operate. This could disrupt previous disasters, and it meant that there could be delays in response waiting for money to come in.

Congress has taken a different approach over the last couple of years and they have fully funded what many people you talk about disaster response, there's a fund. It is the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF). It is very unique in that it is funded, not only for disasters we have, but it is also the funding for the disasters that occur every day in this country and to make sure we have enough funds to respond to that no-notice earthquake, that catastrophic event.

That funding allowed us to respond to Hurricane Sandy 2 years ago without having to shut down every other disaster we were working on and it gave Congress time to deliberate and find additional funds for the full recovery, but it is that shared responsibility that as a Nation, we come together to support States in disasters.

Our primary mechanism for doing that are those funds which the Senator has been part of; is ensuring that those funds are there. But our job at FEMA is to coordinate on behalf of the Governor's request, the Federal resources and Federal support that they need to respond to, but also recover from disasters.

So those people that think that somehow FEMA's in charge and FEMA does everything, we only do it as part of a team and we do it through support of the Governor's team to the local officials. Sir.

Chairman BEGICH. Thank you very much. Let me now introduce John Madden, Director of Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Alaska Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, but also, John, you just finished and did your term just end, is that right?

Mr. MADDEN. Yes, it did.

Chairman BEGICH. It's the National Chair of all the emergency managers.

Mr. MADDEN. There are people within my position in every State.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. MADDEN. And it's the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), of which I just finished a year as their President.

Chairman BEGICH. And let me just say, before you do your testimony to the group here, and just in general, you have been to my committee in D.C. more than once and other opportunities, not only representing Alaska, but on the national end, and for Alaska to have a national representative is just a real plus. So thank you for your work you have done there and thank you for kind of—I know you represent the national net, but I always knew when you were there, we are going to be talking about Alaska issues, so thank you for kind of having dual hats at those meetings I had.

Mr. MADDEN. Well, thank you, sir. It is very widely known within the Nation that if you can get something to work in Alaska, you can get it to work anywhere.

Chairman BEGICH. There we go. That is the motto, if you can do it in Alaska, you can do it anywhere.

TESTIMONY OF JOHN W. MADDEN,[1] DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. MADDEN. And that's why it Is a good opportunity for us to address this topic; not only of the first responder, but the second responder and then jobs I call the sustaining responder and probably the restoring responder.

This nation and my State has a proud history and the heritage of our citizens stepping forward and being organized for swift response with the hazards we face, but through the years, we have learned some very hard lessons. If we wait to respond, then our people suffer and our priority and our property is laid waste, but this approach for the good of the Nation is fading away and new approaches are coming forward to prepare for the inevitable and even the unpredictable events that come before us.

The traditional perceptions of first responder are the fire fighter, the police officer, the emergency medical provider, but our society and economy are becoming increasingly more complex. So we must add others to that; the electrical linemen, the transportation providers, the logisticians and others, as well as our community leaders, but even with this expanded enterprise, we cannot meet the extreme needs of the public just by the acts of heroic individuals, nor can we isolate or have random acts of response that cannot serve the greater needs.

First responders do not stand alone. So we believe in this State that our system supporting them could not be. We need the systems to support the first responder through training, equipment, sustainment, planning and exercises. For an example, we in Alaska have formed several task forces in peacetime that we anticipate needing and using in the disaster in which will enhance the first responder.

Medical and health, housing and shelter, energy, transportation; these standing forces study the likely consequences and try to solve the problems before they come about and as you said in your opening remarks, sir, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1964 earthquake, we just finished the largest, most complex exercise our State has—or ever designed, the Alaska Shield and in this exercise, we recreated the geology of 1964, but we placed it in today's built environment, today's technology, today's supply lines. And we tested our plans, and stressed our partnerships, and challenged our assumptions.

We rigorously tested the concept of the dual status commander where a general officer of the Alaska National Guard is empowered by both the Governor and the President to command Guard and active duty troops, and their missions they received during this exercise far exceeded the capabilities of either one or the other and could only be done jointly.

So with this definition and the role of the first responder, it must expand to include those who lead our communities in our State. In this exercise, Governor Parnell was a first responder when within

[1] The prepared statement of Mr. Madden appears in the Appendix on page 38.

minutes of the event, he gave me clear direction and set the priorities for the State.

Major General Katkus, the Adjutant General, was a first responder when he coordinated the integration of all the active components with the Secretary of Defense. My operations team members were first responders when they deployed across the State to serve at the side of mayors and city managers and giving them counsel and support.

Brigadier General Wenke, the dual status commander, was a first responder as he shaped the readiness and effectiveness of all of the uniformed forces within our State. The members of the FEMA Alaska area office were first responders, as they supported the State in the early hours as the vanguard of the Nation rising up to support the State.

Lieutenant General Handy of the Alaskan Command and Major General Shields were the first responders when we worked to create better methods on the fly to integrate our missions.

We strive toward the day when every Alaskan and every American when asked their role in an emergency will answer with pride, "I am a first responder," and that they contribute through learning CPR and first aid, building an emergency kit, a commitment to help their neighbors when they cannot help themselves and the first responder. Whether in the biggest of our cities or the most remote of our wilderness and all the variations in between, must be ready to respond with the needed swiftness and effectiveness to make a difference in life and death. And we, the leaders of the Nation and our States and our tribes and our local governments, must work together to ensure our efforts to prepare and our actions to alleviate suffering are second to none.

Chairman BEGICH. Thank you very much, John. I have a few questions. I will say also something else just for the audience's knowledge, usually the way these hearings work, too, usually the—I am here, all these panels are there with your back to them. We have done something different when we do them here in Alaska. I like to have this format so people see the conversation, rather than seeing the backs of heads all the time. So that's the way we like to do it here.

Let me, first, Administrator Fugate, if I can ask you just a couple—we had a conversation just before we came out here with the tribal community and talked about some of their issues, but can you—I know we have talked about this. We did not elaborate too much, but can you tell me how it is working now with the new language with regard to tribes who are now able to directly ask, and just kind of—I know you have done a couple, but what have been those problematic areas that you think you have to kind of still plow through as you are working through these disasters with tribes doing direct requests from them?

Mr. FUGATE. Well, what the Senator is referring to is with the amendments of the Stafford Act, which is the authorizing language of the disaster programs, it changed the definition of federally recognized tribes from political subdivisions of the State to having the ability to be recognized as sovereign governments with the United States, and it is not a small change.

What it does is allows tribal governments whose sovereignty is not underneath the State. It is separate. It is a recognition through Federal law that they are separate governments and that they have certain rights under the Stafford Act to request disaster declarations.

So when the law was passed, we did not have any structures for tribes to operate under, except for the State structure. So what happened, Senator, the first declarations that came through in—and I think there was a lot of information going out through a lot of the National Congress of American Indians and other Associations that the law had passed.

Tribes came in and we made a decision of whether postponing accepting applications until we have draft rules. We just used the rules as written. So they came in just like a State would come in. They had to meet their per capita thresholds. They had to have hazard mitigation plans.

Chairman BEGICH. Their match requirements——

Mr. FUGATE. Their match requirements, all their certifications and what we found by and large is what we thought we would see was for larger tribal governments, this was something they were anticipating, prepared to do, but we also recognized that this is a very high threshold for many smaller tribes and so we are in the process of now developing draft rules of how can we provide more flexibility, but recognize that it is still a shared responsibility.

There's still cost-share requirements. There's still the requirements to have mitigation plans and the things that States are held to, because again, this is shared responsibility between the tribal government and the Federal Government and we are responding to disasters, but the most important thing is we want to make it optional.

We know that in some cases, States do provide cost-share. That may not be there if they come separate from the State and again, this had to apply across all of the tribes, not just those here in Alaska. So it was inherently flexible self-determination, but it does recognize their sovereignty.

Chairman BEGICH. Let me ask you, if I can, a couple more things. We have had some disasters, most recently the Galena flooding that occurred, and there was a couple of things that came, at least when I was out there, but also heard from people a couple of things; logistics, personnel on the FEMA end and here's the two kinds of broad examples.

On the personnel end, sometimes not fully understanding kind of the Alaska way of life and the culture and I think we heard actually in a meeting earlier that Victor laid out kind of, just because the group is quiet does not mean they are accepting, it is more of a listening process. So that's the first point, and then I will ask the question to both of these, and then the other one was how to get resources out to some of these remote areas and remote or not; I mean even here in the urban areas like Anchorage or Fairbanks, or Juneau or Kenai, or so forth, the logistics in winter months can radically change in how you can move things.

Can you give me a sense of what you have done internally? For first, the personnel part of it, how they become more aware of the local environment they are entering into and two, then on the logis-

tics, how to compensate or deal with some of these unique logistics issues and I mean, I was just having a conversation with someone just literally as we were walking out of the last meeting and we had to get to three villages or not we, but FEMA had to get to three villages and their response was, "Well, we have to take a commercial flight." Of course, that's not happening all in one day. That's what they wanted to do in one day, and yet, the Borough said, "We'll loan you our plane." It's a government-owned plane, but they could not take it because it was considered—I do not know what it was considered, gift or something, but I mean, I just went through this experience up in Wainwright where I could not get the plane from Barrow to come get me. So I had to take a charter all the way from Wainwright to Anchorage, which is not a cheap operation, but I would have been 2 days stuck out there.

So can you, again, the logistics part on both resources and/or that example I just gave you up north, and then the other is personnel and how they become more—what are you doing to make them more aware of the surroundings and the individuals that are working with them, I mean as——

Mr. FUGATE. Well, we do have——

Chairman BEGICH. Does that make sense, those questions?

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, sir.

Chairman BEGICH. OK.

Mr. FUGATE. Again, Alaska does have a very small footprint, but we have permanent staff up here, a very small office.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. Most States do not have that. Part of the regional office in Seattle was to work with the States and building that competency, but because of the size and geography of Alaska, it is still a challenge. So we are looking particularly with tribal, we are working with a region now on additional staff tied to all the disasters we have here, and as you saw in our budget, we are doing a pretty significant shift internally in our budget across the Nation to provide more permanent staff in the tribal, but to be honest with you, sir, sometimes the message gets confused between being good stewards of the public's tax dollars and understanding you are in a different environment.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. So things that people get conditioned into of driving down our overhead becomes counterproductive if you do not know when you have to adjust, because in many cases, it would be cheaper for us in that situation just to charter aircraft and move our teams around versus doing commercial, but because in the Lower 48, you would not think of doing that——

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. You tend to get locked into being cost effective driving decisions, particularly if we are just dealing with a recovery event where there's not immediate life threat/life savings. So it is changing that mind set and a lot of time, headquarters is looking at something and looking at cost going, "Well, this doesn't make sense," and the people in the field are going, "Well, it makes perfect sense if you know what we are doing with it." So it is trying to make sure that we are good stewards of the money. We just don't want to spend money, but also making sure that in the oper-

ational environment that we are in, we may have costs that are going to be higher.

Chairman BEGICH. Is there——

Mr. FUGATE. It is just you have to make sure that you understand that going in, versus we are looking at this as, how do I maintain lower costs? Well, it is not going to save you much more money because you are not going to get things done.

Chairman BEGICH. Yes, let me give you an example in this—if this makes sense and then maybe a question off of this, but for example, to go from Barrow to Anchorage, we had seven people, it would have been about $5,000 commercial flight. We were trapped in Wainwright. It could have been 2 days. We anticipated afterwards we did learn it would have been 2 days we would have been stuck up there, doing that same flight out of Wainwright for the seven of us, it was $16,000.

Mr. FUGATE. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH. So when you present that back in headquarters, they look at that and they go, "Are you kidding me?"

Mr. FUGATE. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH. Wait for the commercial flight.

Mr. FUGATE. Right.

Chairman BEGICH. And the problem is, how do you quantify that 2 days?

Mr. FUGATE. It goes back to the mission.

Chairman BEGICH. Is that the——

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, that's part of the challenge, is getting people that understand that when we are in a disaster response, we need to be doing things expeditiously, particularly if we have things we need to get going to get to a point of stabilization.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. I mean, I would be kind of reluctant if we were merely in the process now, projects are working and——

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. We are just doing the inspections, but if we are still in a response phase, it is——

Chairman BEGICH. Then you have to measure those——

Mr. FUGATE. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH [continuing.] On time, because time is value——

Mr. FUGATE. Yes, in your committee and in the whole committee you sit on, one of the things you look at is effectiveness and efficiency of fraud, waste and abuse.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. So you have one mind set day-to-day where you are trying to minimize the cost to the taxpayers of how you are doing business and then when you get into a disaster, in many cases, you do not throw caution to the wind, but you have to shift gears.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. But so much of your day-to-day is written on the day-to-day reducing that cost that you sometimes get that mismatch. So what we try to do is make sure we are doing a better job of giving that authority to our Federal coordinating officers that until we are stabilized, we are going to have to do things that would not be financially, the most efficient way to do something,

but the outcome is what needs to drive that, not just the cost of that travel.

Chairman BEGICH. Is it helpful, and I will end on this question with you, Administrator, and that is, is it helpful—I know Congress knows no administrator likes to hear what I am about to say, but I think maybe as a rule, I think we do not do enough of and that's we do not do enough oversight and maybe usually we respond, something bad happens and then we kind of jump on everybody because one item did not work and then we are going to yell at everybody, but what I have tried to do, at least in the two subcommittees I Chair, is have this process of review and oversight and more of a, let's have more of this aired, rather than—is that a role maybe this committee could take in the sense that as—to help educate folks on these unique cost issues?

I mean, I was in one meeting, as you know, and I think Shaun Donovan or who got beat up by one of my Members, I think it was Secretary Donovan, on a purchase, and you know, when you are in the moment of a disaster, you are trying to manage time. Sometimes money becomes secondary. Time is more valuable, especially in a winter climate where you could have disaster and it is 30 below by the evening, you have lost 4 hours. You could literally have created a second disaster.

Not that I would subject more Members to oversight or——

Mr. FUGATE. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH. Or the poor staff here to do things like that, but is that a better—I mean, how do we get this better—explanation out there than the——

Mr. FUGATE. Senator, we are always going to have the got-you moments of things when people look at it and go, "How could they possibly have done that? What were they thinking," but you are absolutely right on speed. I came up with this down in Florida when I realized that speed was paramount stabilization and basically, you can have it cost effective, you can have it accurate or you can have it fast. Pick one.

That in responding to this earthquake scenario, if we waited for the State's typical assessments in requesting resources, things would not have been in the pipeline fast enough.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. And in some cases, you are going to be flying things here that would normally come in by ship, and that cost of that air traffic will in some cases exceed the actual price of the produce retail.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. But the fact is——

Chairman BEGICH. Galena was an example, some of the freight costs were——

Mr. FUGATE. Yes. You are having to make these decisions based upon what is it taking to stabilize the incident. Now once you get stabilized and the ports are back up and the conex containers are coming in, you stop flying stuff.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. But when people look at, "Well, what did that bottle of water cost you," and this is what they gave me in Florida. They said, "Well, that bottle of water in Florida in the 2004 hurricanes

cost you $10. That's insane. You could have gone to the store and bought it." I'm like, "You don't understand. There were no stores to buy that water from."

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. We had a community that was cutoff.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. FUGATE. The roads were wiped out, a quarter of a million people in high heat, no water. We were flying it by Chinooks. There was no other way to get the water there, but I think as the oversight, being able to ask those questions, get those responses, so that we are held accountable, but people understand that in disaster response, sometimes you are going to do expensive extraordinary things to stabilize a situation, understanding that the normal order of business, the normal order of procurement, the normal safeguards, can actually be counterproductive and so you have to have that balance.

We need to be responsible to the taxpayer not to waste, but we are also dealing with a situation where precision is not necessarily going to happen. If you wait for all the information, it may be too late.

Chairman BEGICH. Right or it creates a second disaster.

Mr. FUGATE. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH. Yes. Thank you very much. John, thank you, as always, and I am curious, you just had the pretty significant training exercise. If you could pinpoint, one, two, three, what where those things that you said, "Wow, here's where we better get some focus on," knowing that you took an incident from 1964, but transplanted it in current times and then used the logistics chain of today, what were those two or three things that you could say, "This is where we better get some focus on, because we have not done enough or there needs to be significant improvement based on an earthquake disaster?"

Mr. MADDEN. Senator, I designed the exercise so that we would—it was an exercise of discovery more than anything else and in the first 3 days, while our local communities, and there were a dozen or more that had a truly challenging exercise, we needed to discover the areas in which our excellence at the small and medium disasters well served the catastrophic or did not, and we found that while we have excellent records on the Yukon floods and the Kuskokwim River floods and the sea storms, none of those reached the complexity of the catastrophic, so I wanted to—and then in the middle of it, reconfigure, and what we did was put into place some of our thinking over the last 2 years of we are smart enough in peacetime to gather people together with the right skills and abilities and authorities to solve most of the problems, the big ones on health, on transportation, on public safety, on search and rescue, and when we put those into place during this exercise, we found that was a good investment.

The same people we work with in peacetime, we work with in the event and that's a little bit different, because it is not easy for a State to maintain those types of groups through peacetime.

We also found that by having the State being the functional area in which our Federal partners fall in on, there would not be that confusion about logistics. We would have our Alaskan experts

alongside of FEMA's logistical experts and we would start solving problems, but the key was the participation in the problem-solving, rather than waiting for a mission assignment, rather than finding things at the end of the process where there could be an impediment or a problem. Let's get those impediments and problems at the beginning and that's one we had not done into realistic and rigorous standards, and we did that.

The other one we found was that we had a little stumble for a few hours on the dual status command process about how the Governor requested it and the Secretary of Defense approves it, but then all the mechanics of how to get the full weight of thousands of troops under this dual status command.

It turned out very good, but we had underestimated their ability to form rapidly and we did not have the right parts of the scenario. So late Saturday night, using my own understanding of it, I injected a few things that could only be solved through a joint National Guard and active duty and they formed in very well, but I also worked it out so that no mission in this entire exercise was the responsibility of one group.

Every single mission was joint, Federal and State, State and local, private sector and public sector, volunteers and other nongovernmentals, requiring it to be tested vigorously on how do we work together in peacetime.

Chairman BEGICH. Because you saw some of those modifications, are those things now that are systematically going to be implemented, so you do not have to—like you mentioned the couple of hours of bumps there, but systematically that you will be able to look back and say, "OK, this is what we are going to change so we do not have that 2, 3-hour delay," or I should not say delay, but the bumps that you had there? Is that a systematic change you think you can do?

Mr. MADDEN. It is systematic and——

Chairman BEGICH. It sets into play now?

Mr. MADDEN. Within our uniformed partners, both Guard and active duty, we met for hours yesterday to make sure that we captured every one of those things that we need to then institutionalize. The other things of our relationship with private sector, our use of the volunteer organizations, our problem-solving enterprises, those task forces, we put those into place in the last 2 years and have been using them very effectively on our predictable disasters and this exercise was the one in which we wanted to turn up the heat and really try them out.

We found a few things there about how much we can solve in peacetime and how much is going to be relied upon the event.

Chairman BEGICH. Got you.

Mr. MADDEN. So that problem-solving and the ability to adapt—the biggest discovery I think we had across all of the people participating is that realization that a plan cannot and does not make a decision, a leader does, and to have the plan, such that has guidelines and that the plan is a point of adaptation and I think many times throughout the Nation, we have exercises in which the disaster is moved over to fit the plan——

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. MADDEN [continuing.] Rather than the plan adapting over——

Chairman BEGICH. So you have more situational awareness?

Mr. MADDEN. Yes, sir, and then when we had 300 people: 100 from the State, 200 from our Federal partners all together in the Egan Center with their joint field office. It was heartening as to how rapidly that group changed over to this approach of problem-solving leading to decisions, leading to the missions and the missions were far more coordinated. We will be taking our discoveries and refining them so that we can make it last.

Chairman BEGICH. More systematic then?

Mr. MADDEN. Yes, sir.

Chairman BEGICH. Let me ask you one last question because I want to move to the other panel and give time, but this is one that actually came up in the last meeting, and for the folks that are here who talked to me about pets, this is one that's interesting. I became more and more aware of it as I have been chairing this committee, but also just in my work when I was Mayor.

In that planning, and I think there's a fair statement that would be made, that we saw it in Hurricane Katrina and others where people will not leave their homes without their pets and they create a bigger problem, and then here in Alaska, it has dual issues, pets, but also dogs can be transportation issues in the smaller villages in the wintertime.

So how do one of the concerns we have heard is there's not enough effort by the State to recognize that as a part of the broader picture or making sure there's an organization ready to be able to be pulled locally or within the region. This is kind of a new issue for me, so I am just going to put it on the table and I do not know if you have a response, but I would love to get your thoughts and maybe now or into the future on this.

Mr. MADDEN. There were two components of this, Senator, and one is on the local and several of our jurisdictions that participated in the Alaska Shield did have pets as part of their sheltering function and in——

Chairman BEGICH. Pets with families or pets separated?

Mr. MADDEN. Pets adjacent to.

Chairman BEGICH. OK.

Mr. MADDEN. And I think Cordova had several of their high school students be part of that response to aid in the shelter and also aid with the pets just immediately outside. In a larger sense, within the joint field office, we had the professional assistance from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that has a primary Federal role to supporting this.

We ran missions of how do we obtain the right number of cases and dog cages and food as part of those problem-solving, and the reason we gave this such an emphasis, sir, is that in the "Life" magazine from April 1964, it had a full page picture of a gentleman, one of our elders with his big dog in his lap asleep because the dog was too frightened from the earthquake.

Chairman BEGICH. Right.

Mr. MADDEN. The dog's name was Beauty and the headline what the man said was; "All I have now is my Beauty. I have nothing else to live for." That's what I show to all the people so they can

get it—it is not the numbers. It is the humans and where there's humans, there are the animals.

We found that we needed to pick up the pace and be able to do things earlier, which is part of the reason why we exercise.

Chairman BEGICH. Very good. Thank you very much. I thank both of you for this first panel. Let me move to the second panel and I will start with George Keeney, Fire Chief of the Valdez Fire Department and again, I thank all four of you for being here and thanks for—we will pass that microphone as it goes, but I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Is that mic on? Make sure. Is it green?

Mr. KEENEY. It's green.

Chairman BEGICH. OK, you are good.

Mr. KEENEY. Can you guys hear me?

Chairman BEGICH. For some reason, get ready, we might swap mics here in a second.

Chairman BEGICH. Is that good?

Mr. KEENEY. How about if I go closer?

Chairman BEGICH. There we go.

TESTIMONY OF GEORGE KEENEY,[1] FIRE CHIEF AND EMERGENCY MANAGER FOR THE CITY OF VALDEZ

Mr. KEENEY. I'm George Keeney. I am the Fire Chief and Emergency Manager for the city of Valdez. The question on first responders in my definition is everyone. In my community, I rely on everybody to respond, no matter what age.

You do not have to be a medic or a fireman or anybody, in a sense, you have to be part of a family or part of the community and that's what we pull in. Part of this, though, is the training of those folks.

Believe it or not, in Valdez, I am well known for my disasters, especially with Alaska Shield. It seems like we planned for Alaska Shield—I have lots of disasters before that hits, practicing for the exercise.

Chairman BEGICH. Your real-life practice?

Mr. KEENEY. It is real-life. The one thing, though, is we teach our youth and we start out from elementary school—we have backpacks for their drills, for their evacuation. We have a web page where they can go on there. They can fill out information about their families and so forth. So we teach our youth.

You folks in the crowd right here, I am glad to see the youth are here because you are the ones that actually are the responders that I want to make sure I train. I can train us older folks and hopefully, they will learn, but you guys are the ones that I want to really teach and that's what we do.

We try and hit everybody from elementary all the way through high school. I run an Explorer Post and in that is in my fire department, and those young adults are actually taught to be CERT instructed or CERT trained and then also, they're usually taught emergency trauma tech (ETT), and what they do then is, since they volunteer for me, I use them the best I can.

[1] The prepared statement of Mr. Keeney appears in the Appendix on page 42.

I have them go to all the games and stuff, and standby. So that gets their skill level real good and my daughter's a real good athlete and she's actually one of my ETTs, so she might be playing or doing something, somebody falls down and gets hurt, she will automatically go into that role of an emergency trauma tech. She will take care of that person. So my youth actually take care of us old folks, because it is usually us that fall down and get hurt.

The other thing is we try and teach as much first aid and CPR in our classes as we can. I teach probably 100 to 150 people a year first aid classes myself. I teach all kinds of EMS. I am an EMS instructor. Through Mary Carlson and her crew over there, she makes sure I do it right, but anyway, what we do is we teach as much into our public and then as they all know, once I do my roster, my roster then becomes part of my emergency plans, because now I have your name and your phone number and your email address and I can get you at any time. So I use those folks.

Drills and stuff, we use as much in drills as we can on an annual basis. If we have an exercise, whether it is an oil spill, whether it is a plane crash, I will moulage, fix them up so they look real bad and then I will have all the responders, I will even pull in boy scouts and girl scout teams to actually go in there and take care of their kids or their—actually adults and—I use those kids in my drills.

The one thing I have found that those kids love to be the victims. Well, believe it or not, as victims, you learn a lot about your care and you learn, what they are doing to you and you can see that, and so the youth that we use, I use them as my volunteers. I will throw them out there in all the exercises and they will see that too.

This last Alaska Shield, like you brought up, we have thrown about 300 people at different locations into all kinds of disastrous stuff. I have even thrown people in the water in this drill and actually, it is cold. We had the Coast Guard responding to those folks and they did a fantastic job, along with a State Trooper vessel that we had out there and the State Parks and actually, I used one of my State Park rangers, because he is a good medic, I put him in a dry suit and moulaged him up and threw him up. I said, "You are one of the casualties." So they had to take care of him ,too. So he got to see the whole thing.

The one good thing out of all of these exercises, the more we do it, the more muscle retention you have as to exactly what you are doing and then that skill stays in the brain, and what is neat is seeing those exercises work in our community. It works in a true emergency or disaster.

We have had quite a few accidents lately in our community where this last big one was a 50-person mass casualty. We had a school bus full of cross-country skiers and the chaperones run into the back of a semi-truck. We set up an alternate care site at the elementary school. We had teachers, parents coming in there, responding to that incident just like they would on any time I ask for help.

We also had medics and Explorers at the alternate care site. We were able to use those folks to actually take care of the young kids and adults, and then get them to the hospital as we needed to or as we could and yes, the critical ones went right there, but that

type of training, as we work it through the whole process, we teach our youth and our residents in the community. They see that too and what is neat about Valdez is they pull in on all these exercises and we have more and more want to play.

We just finished up Alaska Shield this last week and then we ended up having a first aid class taught by the National Guard crew and believe it or not, I had 40 people and the residents there that wanted to take that class, too, a 2-day course. That's how involved they are in our community.

You, as the youth, and—you need to push it that the youth need to learn about what hazards they have in their community and be able to respond to it. As an emergency manager, I love teaching all the aspects of emergency management and in that, I push all the education to the kids.

The one thing that I know our FEMA Director said that, they are there to help the State and guess what, the State helps the city, but it is the residents in that city, it is their problem. It is their emergency. They control it. They respond to it. We, as the city or local government, yes, we are there to help too, and we are going to do it. It is all of our city organization, it is our accident. It is our emergency. It is our disaster and we respond to it.

We ask the State—and what's fantastic about this State is I have some folks over here too, I know these folks by their first name. I do not have to say, I can say Mr. Madden because I usually call him Mr. Madden anyway, but I could actually go up to him and say, "John, I need your help," and I can call him 24 hours a day and he would respond or his team. Mike and Brian and the rest of them over here, they would actually respond. So it is that firsthand knowledge that has gotten through the exercises, and what we have learned and how we have learned it to where we can actually call them up.

I can call these folks up 24 hours a day and even in damalanche, which is not a nasty name. It was an avalanche that created a dam in Keystone Canyon. Believe it or not, my city manager and the police chief and I were sitting in an office and we were discussing it and quickly he said, "I need to talk to an expert. I have to talk to an expert about this avalanche, because I do not know if I want to take and shut down this subdivision and set up a shelter." He says, "What do I do?" I said, "Well, let's talk to the expert."

So I called Cary over there at the SEOC, just called their 800 number and said, "I need to talk to Cary down there in the SEOC." I said, "I need an expert." Within about 2 minutes, he had someone in from River Watch, one of the professors, and she was able to get on there and believe it or not, with technology, she said, "Hold on a second, I am looking at something," and then pretty quick she said, "I am looking at your site there. Yes, you guys got a problem and it is a big one," and then at that time, she was able to tell us within a couple of minutes what her opinion was about that disaster. Well, that technology did that and also the fact that we had the State SEOC that was set up to where they can respond to our emergency within seconds and actually take care of our situation, and provide that technical expert to where we can turn around and tell the people in that subdivision, "You have to move out, folks. You need to voluntarily move out."

We had 885 million gallons of water behind that dam. That's what the low river gave us. So Alaska Shield, we were testing tsunamis and I was ready to test a tsunami in Keystone Canyon. So it was a little bit scary.

That inter-relationship has to stay. The inter-relationship with health and social services, I do the same thing with Mary Carlson and her crew. It is a one name type thing. I can call her or any of her crew. I know them personally because all these exercises we do. It helps the community, but it takes those in the community to be able to respond.

So when, as a planner, as an emergency manager, I love teaching this. I will respond to everything that we have in our community, but the one thing is I definitely have to have that back up and that's what we use.

Chairman BEGICH. Thank you very much for that. Let me go ahead and go to Victor Joseph, who's the new President and Chairman of Tanana Chiefs. It is very good to have you here. Thank you very much, Victor, for being here.

TESTIMONY OF VICTOR JOSEPH,[1] PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMAN, TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

Mr. JOSEPH. Thank you, Senator Begich. Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC), serves 42 tribes throughout the Interior of Alaska. The comments and descriptions I will be discussing today are written to highlight TCC's work in emergency response, problems experienced and some ideas for solutions to move forward.

TCC has taken an active role in disaster response since the break-up floods in 2009, when it appeared that quick action was needed to protect health and safety and again in 2013.

TCC prepares every spring for breakup flooding. Our preparations include making a list of medically fragile patients in each community, coordinating with the State Department of Homeland Security, Red Cross and others, working with the airlines to prepare for evacuation charters, purchasing supplies and keeping staff and others informed.

TCC has made significant efforts over the years to encourage and assist emergency planning at the local level in TCC villages. During the disaster response, TCC seeks to do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of community members throughout the TCC villages.

TCC has provided the following responses during disasters; evacuate medically fragile village residents, charter flights to evacuate village populations at large, purchase and deliver emergency supplies, shelter evacuees, act as a vendor for the State of Alaska, provide health care and assist in setting up emergency supplies and treatment services.

In a recovery stage, TCC engages in the recovery process, although not to the degree that we engage as in the response. The main task TCC takes during our recoveries are: helping communities with project worksheets and reimbursements, assist tribes with recovering public buildings and facilities, such as, clinics, water treatment plants, wastewater facilities and landfills.

[1] The prepared statement of Mr. Joseph appears in the Appendix on page 44.

The problems that we see in planning and preparedness, the most significant problem in the area, is creating effective plans in each community and a lack of training at the local level.

Planning and preparedness solutions that we see is provide training for local employees that can lead the planning effort and ensure the plan is exercised annually.

Response problems, the biggest problems with the response effort has been coordination. Once again, I would be looking at the Galena flood as I am talking about this. The lack of coordination and the number of parties involved in the Galena evacuation was very confusing. There were airplanes showing up at the airport full of evacuees and nobody knew who was coming or going, and it happened very haphazardly and people were put throughout the State of Alaska.

Part of that confusion was when we were ready to send charters, the State of Alaska was not prepared at that time to authorize the flights.

In summary, the lack of communications during the Galena evacuation proved very difficult. Confusion during the evacuations, State policy conducting rescues, not evacuations led to the slow response, slow emergency evacuations and a lot of confusion.

Response solutions are improve the State policy on authorizing an evacuation, and locate facilities and purchase supplies ahead of time.

Recovery problems, TCC does not normally interact with FEMA until the recovery stage of the disaster. Once the recovery begins, many problems become apparent. The dual State FEMA damage assessment is a problem for home owners and tribal governments. It appeared to add delays and seemed duplicative and unnecessary to people trying to rebuild their homes.

Some of the policy that FEMA applies is not consistent throughout. There were several procurement issues that also led throughout this process and established a lot of concerns about getting things that may be a little more appropriate for the area.

Over the past several disasters, TCC has developed a good working relationship with the State of Alaska Department of Homeland Security and I really appreciate that. It has meant a lot to our region, but it—and FEMA's communication with the local government, individuals and regional problems, that is some of the concerns and we would like to see how we can establish better relations there.

So our solutions for recovery are combine:, the dual damage assessment process, to expedite that, develop a checklist or flowcharts to make the process of seek and assistance from FEMA easier to understand, improve communication with the tribal governments, potentially include regional 8(a) profit corporations in the process and ensure that information is getting to the affected individually timely.

I would like to see that FEMA and TCC establish a relationship similar that we have established with the Department of Homeland Security to expedite the process. In my report that I submitted, there's Appendix A, Senator Begich, and that's from the city of Galena, the tribe and the comments that they offered. Thank you very much.

Chairman BEGICH. Fantastic. Thank you very much and just for the record, not only testimony, but the submitted information also is all part of the official record. So I want to make sure and I got a good packet from you. So I thank you for that, Victor.

Let me move to the next panelist, Dr. Koehler, Chair of the Rural Committee on National Association Emergency Medical Service Physicians. Doctor.

TESTIMONY OF DANITA KOEHLER,[1] MD, CHAIR RURAL COMMITTEE, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES PHYSICIANS

Dr. KOEHLER. Thank you for holding out, everybody. I Am going to switch up a little bit with your permission, Senator?

Chairman BEGICH. Sure.

Dr. KOEHLER. Because what has been said, George and I are both field people. So I have two challenges. First, to the people in the audience, some of the new leaders in disaster management, the challenge is to get involved now in your volunteer local agencies, EMS, ambulance services is the common name. We need your help. We're in a crisis in recruitment and retention of volunteers.

As George will tell you, there is nothing more gratifying that saving a life. Come join us, and with that, if the gentleman that I met, who is in search and rescue, could you stand up, please?

What I am saying is dedicated to him and 49 plus other search and rescue organizations in this State, 49 that are composed of volunteers. EMS in this State is also largely a volunteer system. These are selfless, dedicated volunteers who are out there at 2 in the morning, 40-below, responding when you call 911.

We have taught the public to call 911, sir, and they do anytime day or night. We need your help. There's just a few of us. Most of us have been doing this for 30-some odd years. It is a wonderful career and the next generation of EMS is preparing for career progression that includes disaster management interweaving, lots of opportunity.

The second challenge is to the Federal disaster preparedness and your Senate Subcommittee. I apologize, some of this will be boring. Emergency medical services providers are the initial health care providers at the scene of disaster.

They are often the first to recognize the nature of disaster and can immediately evaluate the situation and determine the need for resources. Response is provided by various levels. In our State, we have a unique program called Emergency Trauma Technician Training and you all can get that at the high school level and you should.

Everyone in this audience needs to be proficient at hands-only CPR. You can save a life. It is the most gratifying thing you will do.

It is important to understand, sir, that EMS providers may be the first to apply crisis standards of care. The dispatch and field providers are integral partners in local, State, tribal and territorial efforts related to development and implementation of crisis standards of care planning.

[1] The prepared statement of Ms. Koehler appears in the Appendix on page 50.

In crisis standards of care, the goal is not necessarily to save everyone. That's a hard thing to get your head around. It is rather about saving as many lives as possible with the resources that are available. Prehospital EMS is the only safety net of access to emergency care on a day-to-day basis for everyone in this audience, and for all who are listening in, but in fact, during a disaster, Senator, EMS is the gatekeeper of protection to a nation's health care infrastructure.

EMS is responsible for approximately 1 percent of the country's health care cost, but such a small train drives approximately 40 percent of our overall health care expenditures. While our daily mission is to triage, treat and transport patients to the right medical facility the first time, in a case of a biochemical attack, ambulance crews must recognize and ensure only decontaminated patients arrive at the door of an emergency department. Failure to do so will result in cross-contamination and an infrastructure crisis from hospital closures. In Alaska, there's 24 hospitals. In Fairbanks, there's one. In many of our regions, there's one.

EMS matters and it needs to be, this is according to the feds, it needs to be at the table of every policy conference, and needs to be targeted with specific funding and a lead Federal agency.

There are eight major sources of funding for EMS, again, thank you for your patience with me, one, Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention. This is primarily for public health departments to build a capacity for infectious disease emergencies.

A young person in the audience that talked to me about vaccinations, CDC operates this area. Eighty percent of State EMS offices have no or occasional involvement in this grant program.

The second of eight EMS potential funding areas, Pandemic Flu Supplemental funding. More than half of State EMS offices reported no or occasional involvement in this grant program. Third, Emergency Management preparedness grants. Eighty-five percent of State EMS offices have no or rare involvement or were not eligible for these funds.

Fourth, Public Health and Human Block grants, although all State EMS offices were eligible for funding, 65 percent reported no involvement in this grant. Fifth, Hospital Preparedness Program, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, more than half of State EMS offices have no or occasional involvement or were not eligible to participate in this grant.

No. 6 of eight, Department of Homeland Security grants, 62 percent of State EMS offices have no or occasional involvement in this grant program. No. 7 and eight are important for you in Alaska in the rural areas, Urban Areas Security Initiative, ⅔ of State EMS offices have no or occasional involvement in this grant.

No. 8, Metropolitan Medical Response System, nearly ¾ of all State EMS offices had no or occasional involvement in the Medical Response System for metropolitan areas.

For rural and remote areas, for tribal areas, where is the equivalent of Urban Area Security Initiative? Where is the equivalent of Metropolitan Medical Response System? So as to not sound doom and gloom, Mary Carlson, will you stand up?

Mary Carlson is your Chief of Emergency Programs in the State of Alaska and truly a dedicated selfless serving person who is a

mentor, a friend. Thank you for the work you do, Mary, and thank you for these lessons learned from the Capstone Alaska Shield 2014.

The information gained at the local, State and Federal level from Federal partners from Alaska Shield could not have been replicated without full scale play. So thank you, our Federal partners. Forward patient movement from the disaster to casualty collection points, alternative care sites, and disaster air medical staging facilities are complex actions involving multiple agencies, and they are only understood when practiced.

For you young people, wouldn't that be fun to play in next time? We learned, for example, that even using every available transport asset equipped for litters, ambulances, an ambulance bus, a dual use fill vehicle that we could transport a maximum of 24 patients, when the receiving medical treatment facility could have handled 50.

Bariatric and special needs patients will require special transportation knowledge during disaster, as equipment and care requirements are different and affect maximum throughput for patient evacuation.

For example, a bariatric patient will be required to lay flat on a military medical transport during the flight with current arrangements for standard transport of a medically unstable patient. The litters are available, but this limits the total number of patients transported in a single flight.

The ability of EMS providers and hospital personnel to be aware of these fine distinctions in the triage and resource allocation are critical to the success of the overall mission, and what about children? We also learned there are minimal military resources available with specific pediatric capabilities and those require deployment time.

Specific funding and training for critical pediatric stabilization and transport must be strengthened in order to respond effectively. This is not just in Alaska. This is throughout the country.

In the small port town of Valdez, my friend George, and further up north toward Glennallen, we clearly illuminated the crisis in volunteer EMS systems that struggled to sustain daily operations, and do not, I repeat, do not have the ability to surge the uniformly throughout this Nation, not just Alaska, are the forgotten heroes of first responders.

I recommend a concerted effort by all States to access the true value of their volunteer EMS systems, Mr. Madden, and transform the next generation of EMS to be supported by volunteer labor, but not solely reliant on it. You will not miss us until we are gone.

Some of the best practice and most interesting things, sir, for your Subcommittee are this; Alaska was the first State to stand up and operate a State-owned former Federal medical station now known as the Alaska Medical Station.

The purpose of alternate medical treatment sites are to decompress hospitals and allow access to care for those patients less seriously injured or ill. In this exercise, local EMS providers worked side-by-side with military medics, as well as volunteer nurses, physicians, support staff and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. This is another opportunity for you all to volunteer.

What we learned is that while the roles of basic responders are clear, anything beyond basic life support demonstrated a lack of interoperability between military and civilian licensed EMS, nursing and medical providers. Support in a catastrophic event and during recovery will be hampered if States are not part of the proposed interstate compact for licensure of EMS personnel. To not bore the audience, more information is in the written part of my testimony.

I will say this one thing that is not in that extra information in support of my tribal partner, the interstate compact for licensure of EMS personnel is exactly what we need, but for the places in this country that are impoverished, for those places in this country that are tribal reservations, that are off-road where there are so few volunteer EMS providers, this interstate compact, before it is fully vetted, must ask these people what will work for them. It is one gap that we need to address.

A second and last—thank you for your time and patience with me. A second best practice that I think your Subcommittee members from the rural States need to know about; the frontier extended stay clinic model is a best practice for rural States.

Alaska's frontier extended stay model of 24/7 emergency care on a day-to-day basis, as well as in disasters, is a best practice model of disaster preparedness for rural and remote areas of our Nation. These federally qualified health centers are located in communities in Alaska where hospitals are not easily accessed and are designed to address the needs of seriously ill or injured patients who cannot be transferred quickly.

This matters even to you in Anchorage and Fairbanks and other urban centers in this country. These few clinics that are positioned in the areas where you go to travel, to recreate.

They have the ability to initially provide life-saving emergency care, monitor and observe patients for up to 48 hours. Why this is important to preparedness on the Federal side, sir, is that during the very time that hospitals are in most need of decompressing from receiving patients, these frontier extended rural clinics have the ability to stabilize, treat, monitor and observe patients during that first 48 hours.

It is a little known pilot project which was started in 2003 and again, important for Members of your Subcommittee from Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota.

Chairman BEGICH. Doctor, can I have you summarize your comments?

Dr. KOEHLER. Thank you for the opportunity. How's that?

Chairman BEGICH. That's pretty good. Thank you. I know you had more testimony and additional information in your written, I thank you. We are right at the time, but I want to—very important to have the last speaker, Mike Abbott, Assistant Superintendent of Anchorage School District, so you go ahead with your testimony.

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL K. ABBOTT,[1] ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, ANCHORAGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mr. ABBOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, on behalf of the Superintendent, the Anchorage School Board, the students and the staff here, let me welcome you to South Anchorage High School. This is one of our newer buildings. It is a great school. The wolverines of south Anchorage are nationally acclaimed for many academic, as well extracurricular activities, and I know they are very proud that the Subcommittee is with them here today.

I will be very brief, Mr. Chairman. We have presented written comments that we are more than happy to respond to questions about at any time of the Subcommittee's desire. The school district is—I believe sets a national standard for preparation and preparedness for disaster response, both at the school level, our annual emergency action planning efforts, as well as our community support efforts, I believe are among the best in the Nation.

Our partnerships, especially with the Municipality of Anchorage and also with the State and our Federal partners, our partners with the Department of Defense (DOD), as you know, the JBER operation has a large percentage of Anchorage's population, as well as a number of Anchorage School District facilities on the installation.

We work with all of those folks closely and I believe we are well prepared in the event of an emergency here in Anchorage and we take that responsibility very seriously. I think if you spoke with any building principal, you would find that their No. 1 priority is to make sure that their students and staff are safe, whether that's on a regular school day or in the event of an emergency.

The planning, preparation, drills and exercises that they participate on at their buildings, as well as the district systematically, I think put us in the excellent position to be successful.

On any given day, perhaps even earlier today, approximately 10 percent of the population of the State of Alaska is in an Anchorage School District facility. As a result, we have a very significant working responsibility to be prepared in the event of an earthquake or a wildfire or any number of other types of emergencies that might call on our students and our staff to equip themselves well, both for their personal protection, as well as to offer support for the rest of the community and Anchorage. In our partnerships with the rest of the community, we feel that we have invested both time and resources in that preparation effort and Senator, with that, I will close my comments this afternoon and make sure we are available for any questions there might be.

Chairman BEGICH. Fantastic, I know we are over time, but I will ask just a couple of quick questions, but first, I will start with you, Mr. Abbott, thank you very much. Thanks for the tour of the facility outside. We got to see one of the 22——

Mr. ABBOTT. Twenty-two.

Chairman BEGICH. Twenty-two locations that you have designated. What happens, how is the school district prepared knowing—let's say there is a disaster that occurs, let's say it is here or let's say it is any one of the schools, but you know you have par-

[1] The prepared statement of Mr. Abbott appears in the Appendix on page 54.

ents and community members who might be working or living in Girdwood, Mat-Su, wherever else. How does that work with managing those kids and making sure the parents have that information as quickly as possible?

This is one of those common kinds of questions. We had an incident in Washington, DC. My son goes to school there during the school year and then back here, obviously, during the summer and the school was on a shutdown, and how that communication worked, it was very efficient and no matter where we were, I was actually traveling and I was able to get a text message very quickly on what the status was. How does it work in the school district here and how do you deal with parents who do not live in the Anchorage Bowl?

Mr. ABBOTT. You bet. The school is prepared to provide immediate shelter and support for the entire student population and the staff, as well. So if there was an emergency, the initial priority of the building would be to ensure the safety and security of the students and staff that were on the site at the time of the event.

Immediately thereafter, once that has been secured, once the facility and the people have been made as safe as possible, then we begin to try to communicate with parents and families. If the normal communication tools that are available to us normally are available, we will use those and we have a variety of systems that allow us to use telephonic and digital communication to reach folks.

We also take advantage of the media, as well. We encourage families to, if they can, to come and get their kids and in a situation like a secondary school, like a high school like this, many of our students might well decide to discharge themselves and make their own way back and there's a procedure where we are able to determine whether the students are in a position to do that or not, and we follow that procedure.

For dealing with elementary school age kids, obviously, we are not going to release them, unless there's an appropriate adult. We insist on getting the best possible emergency contact information. That's why it is very important that you not only make sure that parents themselves are listed, but any other adults that might be in a position to support your family in the event of an emergency are also listed as school contacts, because we want to make sure that if someone comes to the school and says, "Hey, I should take John home with me. I live next door." We want to make sure that we are in a position to help make a good decision as to whether that's the appropriate option for Johnnie.

If there are children that ca not get home for whatever reason, we have plans in place to make sure that we concentrate, if you will, the kids from a variety of buildings that might not be available to—or might not be able to get home. We concentrate them and we are prepared to take care of them for as long as necessary, days, weeks, whatever's appropriate and with that, of course, the whole community would be involved in the response at that point, and would be supporting the district in making sure that those kids were well-taken care of.

Chairman BEGICH. Thank you very much. I am going to ask two last questions, and I know the Administrator has to catch a plane. So I am going to be very quick here because I know many of you

and Doctor, I am going to probably not ask you one, because you gave me so many ideas I have written down here, but also, I know your testimony is very strong in the sense of some of your recommendations.

I know also, Victor, you had some good recommendations. So I want to ask you—one statement that you made, I want to make sure I understand what you do. Is it right that as TCC, you do an annual assessment of those that may need special care to be transported out in case of emergency? What I was not sure I caught that 100 percent. I want to make sure I understand that, and that leads to my question for the Chief I am going to ask next, so——

Mr. JOSEPH. OK.

Chairman BEGICH. Did I hear that right or——

Mr. JOSEPH. Almost.

Chairman BEGICH. OK.

Mr. JOSEPH. What we do is as we are following the report and as it is breaking up or if a community's endangered, we start looking immediately at those ones that are medically frail.

Chairman BEGICH. So they are at—when that community's becoming potentially at risk, you do a quick inventory of what individuals may——

Mr. JOSEPH. Yes, but we consistently have that information onhand so it does not take us very long to bring it up through our electric health records.

Chairman BEGICH. Got you. OK, that's what I think that's a great idea. I think that's fantastic. For the Chief, you had mentioned, and I thought it was interesting, you had talked about all these resources from volunteers and people you are training and so forth.

Can you at any given time say, "OK," because Valdez is one of those communities that could be isolated, right? We have seen that, right?

Mr. KEENEY. Yes.

Chairman BEGICH. So do you know at any given time within your community, here's an inventory of people who have had certain training or, "Gees, we know maybe they were a physician, but they're retired, but they are in this practice," so you could call on them or, someone, like I would use Donny Olson as an example up north. He's an attorney. He's a doctor. He's a pilot. Two of those are good in emergencies. I will leave you to try what the third one—I can say that, but I mean, right, so you kind of can, I know if I am with Donny, I am feeling pretty good, but tell me, do you have that kind of inventory or is that something that—I mean, I was thinking that's a great idea of all the people you are training——

Mr. KEENEY. Yes, the medical corps actually does have that same process. In Valdez, what we do is I have a list of those folks that have been retired, have any medical training, all my first aid/CPR classes, all those rosters. What's amazing, too, is just like the bus crash, I sent out word that I needed a few more medics, and within, I would say 30 minutes, I had 45 medics right there at my gym and they were ready to respond and yes, we had some that had not been in the service right away or active, but yet, they were quickly

pulled in. We do have a list and also the hospital has a list of those that are in the area.

Chairman BEGICH. That you can tap into?

Mr. KEENEY. That we can tap right into and then Mary Carlson and her group, they are working on credentialing and so forth. That's the one big issue. If I have the City Manager or the Mayor declare a disaster, then there's some other forms that we can pull credentialed people in on and so we even have that option, too.

Chairman BEGICH. Let me end on this with a comment for the Doctor. You mentioned quite a few things and they were very good, frontier hospitals are something I aggressively support for all the reasons you said, 24/7, it is a fantastic program. I think some of the urban centers do not understand the value of those, and it is something we are constantly working to educate, but not for today, but I would like to get going to have my team followup with you on the eight grants or eight funding sources, I should say, and some of your data points, because I would be very interested in what we can do functionally within our role of how to increase that capacity of engagement, because I think that's a good point.

I'm a believer in EMS. I have been saved by EMS. I remember the Spirit of Youth organization, which I will be at an event tomorrow night. Many years ago, we presented an award to a group of young women under the age of 18 that had already become EMS or gone down that path of being trained.

It's incredible. You know what I'm talking about? I can not remember the group. They had a name and it was very catchy name, but very powerful of what they can do. So I want to make sure my team follows up with you, if that's OK, because I think you had some really interesting data points that are worthwhile for us to figure out what can we do to create that engagement, if that's OK.

Well, first, let me say, again, to the witnesses, to our guests and always our regular guest, kind of like a talk show host, John, you are always here, thank you for being here and thank you for the information. This has given my Committee more information that we can use to help craft policies that we hope will be improving and can improve emergency response, may they be in catastrophic or otherwise, and so we thank the panels for being here, and to staff, do I need to do anything technically here? OK, the record will be open for 15 days for other questions or additional information that may be desired by other Committee Members, and we do thank everyone for being here and again, thank you to the panelists that were here today.

At this time, the meeting is adjourned.

A P P E N D I X

STATEMENT

OF

CRAIG FUGATE
ADMINISTRATOR

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE
THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
U.S. SENATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

"THE ROLE OF FIRST RESPONDERS IN CATASTROPHIC DISASTER PLANNING"

Submitted
By

Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20472

April 4, 2014

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss FEMA's catastrophic planning efforts as a whole and in the state of Alaska.

FEMA has helped communities in Alaska build, sustain and improve their capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate hazards that threaten its people.

The men and women of FEMA Region X, as well as FEMA leadership in Washington, D.C., are dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Alaska using the programs and authorities provided to us by Congress and the President. FEMA is aware of the unique challenges on the ground in Alaska and works to develop solutions and find flexibility within its authorities to meet the needs of state and local governments, Alaskan Native Villages and citizens.

FEMA plans for catastrophic events in order to be ready for a worst case scenario. This worst case scenario would require the engagement of the whole community to achieve a successful response to a given event and ultimately allows us to be in the best position to aid survivors should an event occur.

Before I discuss the specific programs applicable to the topic of this hearing, I would also like to acknowledge that the success of our programs and operations is dependent on strong professional partnerships with state, local, tribal and federal agencies and counterparts. Thanks to the leadership of Major General Thomas H. Katkus, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and Mr. John Madden, Director of the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, we have forged a partnership that ensures successful emergency management for Alaskan communities and citizens. FEMA greatly appreciates their leadership, professionalism and dedication.

The Agency is actively engaged in catastrophic planning for incidents ranging in scope from state, to regional, to national scales. Through our catastrophic planning initiatives we are building partnerships that will help optimize collaboration on the most effective actions to assist Alaska – whether the focus is on recovery from recent floods, or in the unfortunate event of a large-scale catastrophe.

As part of its ongoing efforts and stated strategic priority to posture and build capability for catastrophic disasters, FEMA continues to develop the National Preparedness System (NPS) and leverage the expertise and resources of partners across the whole community.

Building on National Preparedness Efforts

FEMA's planning efforts are centered on our preparedness policy and doctrine, which leads to coordinated catastrophic planning that relies on a shared understanding of threats, hazards, capabilities, processes, and ultimately, the value of being prepared.

The Administration remains committed to strengthening the security and resilience of the United States through systematic preparation for the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the nation, and we continue to become more secure and better prepared to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the full range of threats and hazards the nation faces. We plan, organize, equip, train, and exercise better, resulting in improved national preparedness and resilience.

Much of this progress has come from leadership at the state, local, and tribal levels, fueled by FEMA's grant programs. Over the past ten years, DHS has provided state, local, tribal, and territorial governments with more than $37.6 billion in grant funding. As a nation we have built and enhanced capabilities by acquiring needed equipment, funding training opportunities, developing preparedness and response plans, and conducted exercises that help build relationships across city, county, and state lines. Although federal funds represent just a fraction of what has been spent on homeland security across the Nation, these funds and the development of capabilities they have made possible, have helped change the culture of preparedness in the United States.

In March 2011, President Obama signed Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) on National Preparedness, which describes the nation's approach to national preparedness. PPD-8 aims to strengthen the security and resilience of the United States through the systematic preparation for the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation, including acts of terrorism, cyber incidents, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters. PPD-8 defines five mission areas – prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery – as part of a continuum of interrelated activities and requires the development of a series of policy and planning documents to explain and guide the nation's efforts in helping to ensure and enhance national preparedness.

PPD-8 created the NPS, a cohesive approach that allows us to use the tools at our disposal in the most effective manner and in a way that allows us to monitor and report on our progress. This system allows us to understand how well prepared we are by setting a goal, establishing baseline capabilities, setting common and comparable terminology, measuring capability gaps, and assessing our progress toward filling them.

The NPS includes a set of coordinated National Planning Frameworks, one for each mission area, collaboratively developed to describe how the whole community works together to deliver the core capabilities needed to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. The Frameworks document the roles and shared responsibilities in national preparedness, recognizing the value of partnerships and working together.

Each Framework:

- Summarizes roles and responsibilities across the whole community;
- Defines each mission area's core capabilities, along with key examples of critical tasks;
- Defines coordinating structures – either new or existing – that enable the whole community to work together to deliver the core capabilities;
- Describes the relationships to the other mission areas;
- Identifies relevant information to help with operational planning;
- Provides information that state, local, tribal, and territorial governments can use to revise their operational plans; and
- Uses concepts from existing preparedness efforts and doctrine, such as the National Incident Management System.

The Frameworks also affect whole community preparedness reporting and assessments. For example, the Frameworks can assist whole community partners as they complete the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment process. The critical tasks described in the Frameworks will help whole community partners understand the activities, which help to deliver capabilities to the established targets, as well as the resources needed to conduct activities and achieve the targets.

The environment in which we operate grows ever more complex and unpredictable. The Frameworks are living documents, and will be regularly reviewed to evaluate consistency with existing and new doctrine, policies, evolving conditions, emerging risks, and the experience gained from their use.

Plans and Annexes

FEMA has facilitated the development of incident-specific annexes to its all-hazard plans at the Regional level as well as annexes to the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operations Plans where necessary to address tasks and critical considerations for unique or catastrophic situations that would not otherwise be addressed in an all hazard plan. The FEMA catastrophic planning program has successfully facilitated the completion of an array of annexes to address the major threats of hurricane zones, earthquake faults, and cities presenting high risk targets for an improvised nuclear device or bioterrorism. Annexes are also developed to address the unique risks of certain geographic areas such as Alaska, Hawaii and the Caribbean islands.

Understanding the Unique Needs of Alaska

FEMA's commitment to Alaska and to understanding the unique environment there has never been stronger. FEMA recognizes that Alaska faces unique operating challenges, including limited infrastructure in a large and remote geographical area with increasing economic activity; logistical challenges due to extreme weather and a changing climate. Since 2009, there have been nine presidentially declared disasters in Alaska. In each, FEMA response and recovery efforts

were dedicated to helping local communities, and the resilient, self-sufficient people who are a part of them, get back on their feet.

The Agency is aware of the challenges on the ground in remote Alaska and works to develop creative solutions to meet the needs of state and local governments, Alaskan Native Villages and citizens. FEMA works to understand the needs of these communities' and their challenges through partnerships with them, by hiring locals and through the establishment of an Alaska area office in Anchorage.

FEMA Deputy Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery Elizabeth Zimmerman has traveled to Alaska multiple times in recent years. In 2009, she examined the unique recovery challenges first-hand after spring floods and ice jams damaged homes and infrastructure in remote villages along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. She traveled to Eagle, the village hit hardest by the disaster, and met with community and tribal leaders, residents and volunteers who were building and repairing houses. Former Deputy Administrator Richard Serino, Deputy Administrator for Protection and National Preparedness Timothy Manning and Associate Administrator for the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration David Miller have also been in Alaska in recent years.

FEMA is always on the ground in Alaska, having established the Region X Alaska Area Office in 2007 as required by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. This office serves as a forward field office for pre-disaster preparedness and planning, as well as a staging and work area for preliminary damage assessment teams. Having a local office allows FEMA officials to develop a deeper knowledge of Alaska and its demands, as well as to develop real relationships with state, local, and Alaskan native officials who they work with closely on a day-to-day basis.

To ensure FEMA leverages the local perspective that are so critical in Alaska, FEMA also hires locally for positions such as applicant service program specialists, writing and resource specialists and administrative assistants.

FEMA also conducts joint exercises from the area office, including Alaska's recent "Alaska Shield" exercise. FEMA catastrophic planning and exercise efforts are based upon analysis and products developed jointly between FEMA Region X and the State, making these plans stronger as a result of this combined effort.

Catastrophic Planning in Alaska

The assessment of risks in Region X highlighted the need to more fully investigate the challenges and requirements for response operations in Alaska and to tailor the federal interagency response concepts to address its unique challenges. Through FEMA's Catastrophic Planning program, Region X led an interagency effort in 2013 in conjunction with the State of Alaska to develop an Alaska Response Annex to the Region X All Hazard Plan. The Senior

Leadership Steering Committee for the plan included the State Adjutant General and the State Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, along with several other federal representatives.

The worst-case planning scenario used for the Alaska Response Annex is a replication of the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake, with present day conditions. The magnitude 9.2 earthquake would occur without notice in winter during the workday, 70 miles east of Anchorage, causing four minutes of shaking followed by ground failure, rockslides, avalanches, seiches, tsunamis and significant aftershocks. The impact area would include the Municipality of Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kodiak Island Borough, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and communities in the Prince William Sound unincorporated area such as Cordova, Valdez, and Whittier. Landslide-induced tsunamis would impact coastal communities within minutes of the earthquake. The tectonic-induced tsunami would make landfall within 20 to 45 minutes, depending on the location.

Given the State's distance from the location of federal and private sector distribution centers, as well as the limited means of transportation into the state under an earthquake scenario, great care must be taken early in the response to prioritize and synchronize life-saving and life-sustaining resources. Therefore, FEMA foresees the need to establish Incident Support Bases within the lower 48 states, using all available modes of transportation, while making resources available in the priority order and magnitude required by the state based on its ability to receive and manage those resources. Forward Staging Areas would be strategically placed in Alaska in a manner that enables a distribution of resources throughout the state's diverse communities and landscapes.

To compound the immediate effects of a catastrophic earthquake, the environment in Alaska presents particular challenges, including:

- Limited in-state production of food and other basic commodities
- Nearly all of the in-state response capabilities, as well as responders, are in the impact area
- No rail connection with the lower 48 states
- Few roads leading into Anchorage, which is 360 miles from the next closest metropolitan area of Fairbanks
- Limited medical care capabilities with no Level 1 Trauma Centers

These are a few of the many critical considerations that will drive federal support requirements.

Further, environmental characteristics will require a coordinated focus on infrastructure assessment, as well as the repair and restoration for natural gas pipelines and facilities, petroleum pipelines, including the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, potable water facilities and systems, electric power facilities and systems, roads, rail lines, airports and ports of entry. Federal strategies to support and reinforce state and private sector infrastructure assessment and repair

teams will also have to be executed in an environment that allows for a very compressed timeline for construction.

FEMA and its partners also take into account the unique attributes of the environment in Alaska when planning the response to a catastrophic event. Alaska is different from other states in many ways, and these differences drive response requirements. For instance, Alaska has the largest land area and the lowest population density of any state. There are five distinct regions with extreme variations in climate, terrain and local economies. Most parts of the state are inaccessible by road. Limited ground routes connect Alaska with the contiguous United States (the lower 48), all of which cross international borders. Alaska also has 229 federally-recognized tribes, more than any other state.

Region X has engaged directly and indirectly with a wide range of members of the Alaskan emergency management community. For instance, its planning efforts have been conducted with, and socialized at, many venues to include the State Emergency Response Commission, the Local Emergency Planning Committee Association, the state Preparedness Week events (widely attended by tribal emergency management representatives), the Regional Interagency Steering Committee, the Alaska Federal Executives Association, the Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection and the state emergency management task force meetings.

The Region X Alaska Response Annex is drafted and will be validated and revised based on the lessons learned during the recent Alaska Shield Exercise. This exercise was conducted as a centerpiece for the nation's larger Capstone 2014 event.

Exercises, including Capstone 2014

The Alaska Shield Exercise was the centerpiece of the 2014 National Exercise Program Capstone Exercise, which served as the culminating event in the biennial National Exercise Program Cycle. The exercise provided an opportunity to examine the collective ability of the nation to coordinate and implement risk assessments, core capabilities and plans across all mission areas.

Not only did the event afford FEMA the opportunity to validate its draft plan for an Alaskan response, it allowed us to assess the collective federal response and recovery mission's capability to manage extreme logistical and environmental risks, as well as to effectively coordinate assistance for simultaneous disasters across multiple regions.

FEMA also tested several unique requirements during the exercise, including transporting teams and resources via military aircraft, as well as the level of cold-weather preparedness of responders.

The scale of the event and the preceding planning reflects a major federal preparedness investment in support of the State. To ensure it was structured in a manner that supported the

State, the State Director for Homeland Security and Emergency Management helped facilitate a National Table Top Exercise in Washington, D.C. This table top served to educate headquarters program officials on the State's unique requirements.

FEMA will use the lessons learned from these exercises to further improve the planning process and its support to Alaska. Changes will undeniably need to be made to the Region X Alaska Response Annex in conjunction with the State, which is the purpose of a validation exercise.

Ready, Training and Community Involvement

FEMA reaches out to local communities in Alaska through its *Ready.gov* program, a national public service advertising campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The goal of the campaign is to get the public involved and ultimately to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation.

The Agency has developed brochures, posters, and radio public service announcements to assist local and tribal efforts to help the public prepare for emergencies, including creating information that speaks to specific tribal and local area issues and concerns.

FEMA also offers training courses for state and tribal representatives, including elected leaders, emergency planners, first responders, school administrators and others who play a role in emergency management response.

PPD-8 called for a nationwide campaign to build and sustain national preparedness, including a public engagement campaign that encourages the public to take the necessary action to be prepared for the risks within their community. To address the President's challenge, FEMA and the federal family created America's PrepareAthon!, a nationwide, community-based campaign to increase emergency preparedness and resilience at the grassroots level. The goal of America's PrepareAthon! is to build a more resilient nation by increasing the number of people who understand the disasters that could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

The first America's PrepareAthon! National Day of Action is April 30, 2014 and it will focus on preparing organizations and individuals for tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding and wild fires. America's PrepareAthon! community events and activities will be held across the country to encourage individuals to discuss, practice and train for relevant hazards, including in Alaska.

Conclusion

FEMA is actively engaged in catastrophic planning through national, regional and state planning partnerships that facilitate collaboration on the most effective response actions to assist Alaska in its recovery after a catastrophic event.

Because of the great responsibility FEMA has to support citizens, states, first responders and survivors, it is committed to learning from each disaster and evolving our plans and processes to meet local needs and better serve survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our catastrophic planning efforts and I look forward to your questions.

MR. JOHN W. MADDEN

DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

ON BEHALF OF
THE STATE OF ALASKA

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS. AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

U.S. SENATE

April 4, 2014

"The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning"

Introduction

Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to address a topic of continuing and critical value for my state of Alaska. This nation has a proud history and heritage of our citizens organizing for swift response to the hazards we face. In 1733 Benjamin Franklin described the Philadelphia volunteer firefighters. "Soon after it [a fire] is seen and cry'd out, the Place is crowded by active Men of different Ages, Professions and Titles who, as of one Mind and Rank, apply themselves with all Vigilance and Resolution according to their Abilities, to the hard Work of conquering the increasing fire."

But through the years we have learned hard lessons. If all we do is wait to respond, our people suffer and our property is laid waste. It is a distressing truth for pilots that the Federal Aviation Regulations are written in blood. Sadly we have too often waited for a disaster to spur us to develop better plans, procedures, and processes.

But this approach is fading away and new approaches are emerging to better prepare for the inevitable and the unpredictable events that nature, technology, and humans can throw at us.

Changing Roles of First Responders

The traditional perceptions of first responders begin with the police officer, the firefighter, and the emergency medical provider. In our increasingly complex society and economy, other professions now join that distinguished group. Electrical linemen, transportation providers, logisticians, volunteers, communications providers, those working in convention centers or other public buildings are now part of the broader definition of first responder. Also, it is often true that the first person on scene is a neighbor of passerby.

Support Systems for First Responders

The effectiveness of the first responder begins with the commitment and skills of the individual. But we cannot meet the extreme needs of the public just by the acts of heroic individuals acting on their own. Neither will random acts of response serve the greater needs of a catastrophic disaster.

For years, we have studied the disasters within our nation and in others. We found many similarities in the actions of the opening hours and days to bring together people with the skills and authorities to solve problems and to take coordinated action.

Here in Alaska, we formed several task forces in peacetime that we anticipate needing and using in the disaster: housing and sheltering, medical care and health needs, energy, transportation, disaster search and rescue, public safety. Rather than waiting to form these groups in the chaos and confusion of the early hours and days, these standing task forces study the likely consequences and work to solve the likely problems. They also work to understand and address the interdependencies between these mission areas. In the disaster, they then can focus on any issues that could not have been anticipated.

Investing in These Systems

Our federal partners in the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have made good progress in improving how we define risk and how we invest

in reducing that risk. Several states, including Alaska, are working to add more relevance to measuring risk and better integration of our investments to draw those risks. We seek to make investments that address the complexity of the disaster rather than the components. We believe that an investment in law enforcement should complement other investments in citizen preparedness. Investments in medical preparedness should align with those in search and rescue.

First responders do not stand alone and neither should our efforts to support them.

Alaska Shield

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Good Friday earthquake of 1964, the State of Alaska recently completed the Alaska Shield exercise. In this very complex exercise we recreated the geology of the 1964 earthquake but in today's built environment and our reliance on technology. We tested our plans, our partnerships, and our assumptions. It will be many weeks before we will complete our analysis but I believe we validated our new concepts on problem solving, on decision making, and measuring the effectiveness of our actions

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA)

In the Alaska Shield exercise, we rigorously tested the concept of the dual status commander where a general officer of the Alaska National Guard is empowered by both the governor and the president to command Guard and active duty troops.

In our exercise, our uniformed troops worked alongside civilians from local, state, and federal agencies, as well as private sector and non-governmental organizations. They performed missions of great import and complexity with great success. These missions far exceeded the capabilities of any single entity and demanded the unity of effort and command that only the coordination through the dual status command could achieve.

When facing the complexities of a catastrophe, we need not make matters worse by rigidly adhering to organizational structures designed for purposes other than swift, coordinated action within our borders to alleviate the suffering of our own people. The Alaska Shield demonstrated the means and methods to advance the dual status commander concept to a highly effective enterprise to augment the civilian first responders.

Conclusion

The role and responsibility of the first responder is vital to the safety or our community and the wellbeing of our citizens. I have related how the definition has expanded to include others who provide the essential services we depend upon.

There is a story of a janitor at Cape Canaveral during the Apollo. When asked about his job he replied that he worked to put a man on the moon and his contribution was keeping clean the buildings and offices of the engineers.

We strive towards the time when every Alaskan and every American will answer that their role in an emergency is, "I am a first responder." And they contribute through training in CPR, building an emergency kit, commitment to help neighbors when they cannot help themselves, their ability to

care for the family so the husband, the wife, the son or daughter can perform the vital duty of the firefighter, the lineman, the nurse or the volunteer.

In January 2012, the states, through their partnership of the National Emergency Management Association, proposed a new approach to prepare for the needs of the nation during any disaster. We are very pleased that the administration has embraced many of the precepts of that proposal. The states put forward a fundamental value that bears on the purpose of this hearing. We stated that we as a nation must: "Build and sustain a skilled cadre across the nation that is well organized, rigorously trained, vigorously exercised, properly equipped, prepared for all hazards, focused on core capabilities, and resourced for both the most serious and most likely threats and hazards."

In this complex world we face extreme risks from endless and evolving hazards. The first responder – in the biggest of cities, the most remote of our wilderness, and all the variations in between – must be ready to respond with the needed swiftness and effectiveness to make the difference in life and death. We, the leaders of our nation, our states, and our local governments, must work together to ensure our efforts to prepare and our actions to alleviate suffering are second to none.

Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the District of Columbia Friday, April 4
South Anchorage High School
13400 Elmore Rd,
Anchorage, Alaska.

Testimony: George Raymond Keeney

"The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning"

As the Fire Chief and Emergency Manager for the City of Valdez my goal is to prepare our community to respond to any disaster, natural or manmade.

Our community has and will respond to disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, oil spills, volcanic fall out, wind storms and avalanches. Each time our local agencies have worked together to respond to and recover from the catastrophic events. Alongside the local agencies we have relied on our state and federal partners to assist in our response and recovery.

When responding to any event it is best to know your capabilities and the capabilities of the agencies you work with, both locally and state wide. During the past fourteen years in Valdez I have responded to emergencies that involved local, state and federal assets. Having an ongoing working relationship with the state has made it easy to request and utilize their resources.

The Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (ADHS&EM) provides training, public education and exercises that help prepare communities to respond and recover from emergencies. The division has a staff of professionals that assist with most every request that I have asked of them.

The ADHS&EM is able to respond to most disasters in our state twenty four hours a day. The support they provide a community is nonstop. The ability for a community to call the State Emergency Operations Center at any time and get quick response is very valuable.

Our community recently needed to talk to a hydrologist when an avalanche came down and blocked the Lowe River and Richardson Highway; they quickly responded with a specialist via teleconference to provide a professional assessment. Throughout the two weeks of that event the State EOC conducted teleconferences for our incident management team (IMT) enabling them to speak to all agencies involved and to get answers to our questions. This allowed our IMT to respond to our residents and inform the public in a timely manner.

The Alaska Shield 2014 exercise has also just been completed and involved local, state and federal partners. This exercise allowed us to test our relationships with outside agencies in response to a natural disaster. We had over five hundred personnel that participated in this exercise which strengthened these relationships. With each of these multi - governmental agency exercises we learn more about what each agency can bring to the table in a crisis.

P.O. BOX 307 · VALDEZ, ALASKA 99686
TELEPHONE (907) 835-4313 · FAX (907) 835-2992

With any emergency, it is always the responsibility of local government to take the lead in responding to their event. The state and federal government should be responsible to assist that local entity, if requested; but it is ultimately owned and managed by that local government. Therefore anything that can strengthen this understanding and the cooperative relationships between all agencies should really be encouraged.

Testimony:

George R Keeney

George R Keeney
Fire Chief/Emergency Manager
City of Valdez

PO Box 307
Valdez, Alaska 99686-0307

907-834-3467 office
907-831-1367 cell

Tanana Chiefs Conference white paper on 2013 breakup flood issues

2 April 2014

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Comments for FEMA hearing on 4/4/14 – Tanana Chiefs Conference

Intro
TCC has taken an especially active role in disaster response since the breakup floods of 2009 when it appeared that quick action was needed to protect health and safety. During breakup of 2013, major flooding threatened Fort Yukon and devastated Galena from ice jam flooding on the Yukon River. Other villages also flooded to a lesser extent in 2013.

Preparedness
TCC prepares every spring for breakup flooding. A number of staff from different departments are organized into an emergency response team that fills the TCC ICS structure and takes on additional duties during preparation and response. TCC has been better prepared every year, thanks to hard work from the staff, and experience has been gained in several disaster events. TCC preparation includes:

- Making lists of medically fragile patients in each village that may need evacuation in a disaster event
- Coordinating with the State DHS, Red Cross and others (This is a major part of TCC's work in disaster preparation and response)
- Working with the airlines to prepare for evacuation charters
- Purchasing supplies (such as PPE and MREs)
- Keeping staff and management informed through daily internal sitreps created from NOAA products, local reports, and other credible information. This is an important step in our preparedness for breakup flooding.

TCC has made a significant effort over the years to encourage and assist emergency planning at the local level in TCC villages. Several conferences have been organized by TCC for village leaders; the most recent was in the fall of 2013. That conference was well attended, and every tribe went home with the beginnings of a SCERP plan (the State of AK Small Community Emergency Response Plan).

Response
During a disaster response, TCC seeks to do what is necessary to protect the health and safety of village residents in TCC region. TCC has provided the following response during disasters:

- Evacuate medically fragile village residents
- Charter flights to evacuate a village population at large
- Purchase and deliver emergency supplies to villages (MREs, water, radios, etc.)
- Shelter evacuees in the TCC Willow House hotel
- Feed evacuees
- Meet evacuees at the airport and drive them to TCC or Red Cross Shelters, or another residence in town
- Act as a vendor for the State of AK with chartering flights, hotel rooms, etc.
- Coordinate, Coordinate, Coordinate. During the 2013 floods TCC held a daily planning meeting with TCC staff, Red Cross, AK DHS, BIA, and the VOAD. By all accounts, this meeting improved the response of all participating agencies.
- Provide information on our website, Facebook page, and directly to tribal governments
- Setup a dedicated phone extension so that the TCC incident commander can be reached on the company's 1 800 line at any time by village leaders or State staff
- Provide security (VPSOs)
- Provide for health care services in temporary clinic setting to include; staffing, supplies, equipment, pharmaceuticals, behavioral health and patient referrals.

- Assist in setting up emergency drinking water treatment systems
- Provide small electrical generators
- Provide radios and satellite phones
- Provide 4 wheelers for transportation of key personnel
- Obtain approval from AK DHS whenever possible for expenditures, simplifying reimbursements.

A few examples from 2013 include chartering flights for evacuations from Fort Yukon, Galena, Stevens Village and Hughes; multiple TCC staff met evacuees at the airport anytime day or night and provided ground transportation within Fairbanks

Things that went well in 2013 were the river watch flights and the State incident management teams on the ground in Galena.

Recovery
TCC is engaged in the recovery process, although not to the degree that we are engaged in the response. During recovery, TCC continues to coordinate with the State and FEMA and seeks reimbursement for expenditures during the response. This has gone more smoothly every year since it was begun in 2009. Reimbursements requests are submitted in a timelier manner, and payments are made sooner, although there is still room for improvement. The main tasks TCC takes on during recovery are:

- Seek reimbursements for response expenditures
- Provide maps of lots and realty information, including valuations
- Help tribes w/ project worksheets and reimbursements
- Assist tribes with recovering public buildings and facilities
    - Clinics
    - Water treatment plants
    - Wastewater facilities
    - Landfills

Problems:

Planning/preparedness problems:
The most significant problem and barrier to creating effective plans at the village level is a lack of resources for planning work on the village level. While the SCERP is available from the state, there is still a lack of paid staff at the local level who can lead the SCERP or other planning efforts. If there is a VPSO they can help lead the effort, especially in preparedness, but they do not have the time to do a plan. Also, not every village has a VPSO.

Planning/preparedness solution:

- Provide funding for a local employee that can lead the planning effort.
- Ensure the plan is exercised annually. A VPSO or outside state resource may be the best to assist in organizing plan exercises.

Response problems:
The biggest problem with response efforts has been coordination. Even though coordination has greatly improved with TCC's efforts over the past few years, it was difficult in 2013 due to the number of private

citizens and 3rd party aid agencies that participated without coordinating with the state or other responders.

The lack of coordination and number of parties involved made the Galena evacuation very confusing. There were airplanes showing up at the airport full of evacuees that no one knew were coming; evacuees ended up in Fairbanks, other villages, and Anchorage in a very haphazard manner. TCC was ready to charter airliners to get residents out before the airport flooded; however, the State was not willing to authorize those flights because the airport hadn't flooded yet. Much of the confusion could have been prevented if the state had authorized an evacuation sooner.

In summary:

- Lack of communications during the Galena evacuation proved difficult. Some radios were available, cell phones worked for a time, but better communication from the tribe and city to the State, TCC, and FEMA is greatly needed.
- Confusion during evacuations
- Lack of coordination between multiple different responders that didn't contact State or TCC
- Speed of response by state is slow
- State policy for conducting rescues, not evacuations, leads to slow response, slow emergency evacuations, and confusion
- A staging area in Fairbanks is needed for supplies, donations, and to help coordinate items shipped to villages

Response Solutions:

- Improve the state policy on authorizing evacuations to allow for evacuations when there is no good shelter in the community, and the airport is in imminent danger of flooding. This will allow for a faster, better coordinated evacuation
- Locate a facility and purchase supplies such as MREs that are needed in the first day or two of a response and keep them on hand. We are aware that the state has emergency drinking water treatment units, but for the first couple days of a flood, it is much easier to use bottled water.

Recovery Problems:

TCC doesn't normally interact much with FEMA until the recovery stage of a disaster. Once the recovery begins, many problems become apparent:

- The dual State and FEMA damage assessment is a problem for homeowners and tribal governments. It appears to add delays and seems duplicative and unnecessary to people trying to rebuild their homes in a very short building season
- The process for homeowners, tribal governments, and non-profits to seek aid or reimbursements is confusing and cumbersome.
- The FEMA policy of refusing to supply aid for rebuilding in some flood prone areas, but not in others seems to be inconsistently applied. For example, why was old town Galena not approved for rebuilding, but the old clinic in Circle was refurbished on its current site after having flooded several times in previous years?
- There were procurement issues with FEMA and the temporary winter housing for volunteers and rebuilding staff. Doyon, the 8a Native Corporation for the region was not included. It is likely that they could have provided better housing for less cost.

Comments for FEMA hearing on 4/4/14 – Tanana Chiefs Conference

- The process of mitigation funding is not clear, and projects that seem to make a lot of sense are not funded. As an example, building up the road in Circle would prevent parts of the community from being isolated and would allow them to drive themselves to safety if an evacuation was needed.
- It is not clear if TCC will be required to purchase flood insurance for some clinic equipment in clinics located in flood zones.
- The application of FEMA policy to the aid TCC is seeking for village clinics seems to keep changing or changes from one village to another, making it difficult for TCC to expedite necessary paperwork.
- FEMA policy makes it nearly impossible to seek reimbursement for staff time worked on disasters. The amount of documentation required is not feasible.
- Over the past several disasters, TCC has developed a good working relationship with the State of AK DHS & EM. TCC needs that kind of relationship with FEMA for effective recovery.
- Temporary clinic facilities that FEMA has used in the past, (Eagle) were inappropriate for the location, and FEMA did not listen to local input.
- Reimbursements are difficult because the invoice and proof of payment are required. Often, the costs are sometimes too great for TCC to front the money, so encumbered POs should be acceptable for use in seeking reimbursement
- FEMA needs to improve communication with local governments, individuals, and regional non-profits.

Recovery Solutions:

- Combine the dual damage assessment process. FEMA could use the state assessment, or at least combine forms or other elements to make it faster.
- Develop checklists or flow charts to make the process of seeking assistance from FEMA easier to understand for individuals, tribal governments, and the regional native non-profits
- Improve communication with tribal governments and TCC.
- Include the regional 8a for profit corporations like Doyon in the process
- Improve FEMA process for ordering building supplies and rebuilding homes/structures in villages
- Designate FEMA liaisons to improve communication
- Ensure that information is getting to affected individuals
- Clearly define criteria and expectations between FEMA and TCC before a disaster in order to facilitate more efficient coordination and recovery.

Conclusion

The comments and descriptions in this paper are not exhaustive and are written to highlight TCC's work in emergency response, problems experienced, and some ideas for solutions to move forward. TCC staff are available to explain in more detail if needed.

Appendix A – comments from Galena, Louden Tribal Council

Evaluate the roles of first responders:
Coordinated Planning - there was no coordinated planning between the State, Federal and Local governments. The City had a plan but communications were down in that no one knew who held what responsibility. In the future the Tribe needs to be involved in the planning for spring breakup. Also trainings need to be held in community so residents will know what to do and where to go. The State and Federal governments should if possible provide training needed to protect the communities.

Poor Planning. The evacuation happened so fast that there was not a good record of who left and who stayed. Better planning/training needs to be done in this area so that there is a better accounting for where people are and who is assigned to do what.

Communication Difficulties - State first responders arrived when the water receded. They started working and communications were better. Communications did not greatly improve until we could drive cars and get to meetings to find out what was happening. If we remember correctly State responders were in the town before the disaster declaration was declared and communications were with the city only.

Need Better preparation. Training needs to be provided to the community to know what to do. More information needs to be provided from the State and Federal governments as to what they actually can and cannot do. As a local region we should have our own training. There are people in our area who have lived on the river all their lives and know the river. Their expertise must be called upon to teach how to survive. Bringing people from the outside is not going to work.

In the future:

1. Communications need improvement in all areas. There needs to an alternate form of communication other than the phone
2. Boats need to be on standby with life jackets
3. Need to have someone in charge taking names of people getting into boats going to evacuation areas and getting onto planes leaving and where they are going
4. State and Federal Governments need to keep the Tribe involved
5. State should not have to wait for the Federal Government to catch up - time is lost and property is damaged during the delays. In future planning efforts stop using the one size fits all. Living in rural Alaska is not like living in rural lower 48 communities. What works there does not work here. Plans and trainings need to be rural Alaska specific.

Role of tribal governments and Regional Corporations in the development of first responder capabilities in Alaska: First allow tribal governments and regional corporations at seat at the table in the development of our regional plans. We know what is in our area and what is not. TCC's response to the need of our community was exceptional. They were there to make sure people found housing that had nowhere to go. They were there with funding so that tribal members and non-tribal members could meet immediate needs. Coordination was done with the City of Fairbanks to provide a wide range of other services to individuals displaced by the flood. Many residents of Galena would not have been able to check on their homes and see what was needed if TCC had not made travel possible. The actions and services provided by TCC took a great deal of stress off the people going through this trauma. State Disaster funding should be made available to Regional Corporations/Organizations to meet immediate needs.

Louden Tribal Council a federally recognized tribe was not provided the same level of courtesy afforded to the City of Galena. The City was the major player. All the meetings we attended were briefings of what was already done and what was planned. The Tribe was not involved in any of the planning meetings. We should be afforded the same level of communications, as the city cannot make decisions or develop work plans for the tribal holdings.

Prepared and Submitted by Jenny Pelkola, 1st Chief Louden Tribal Council and March Runner, Tribal Administrator

Fifty Years Since the Great Alaska Earthquake: The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning

Roles, Responsibilities Of Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical services (EMS) responders, are the initial health care providers at the scene of disaster. EMS personnel are often the first to recognize the nature of a disaster and can immediately evaluate the situation and determine the need for resources, including medical resources. The chain of survival starts with *notification* to emergency medical dispatchers. *Response* is provided by various levels of first responders to include emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and EMS physicians such as this speaker.

It is important to understand that EMS providers may be the *first* to apply crisis standards of care (CSC). We, the dispatch and field providers are integral partners in local, state, tribal and territorial efforts related to the development and implementation of coordinated preparedness and CSC planning. In the case of a disaster in which emergency health care personnel, medical and transport equipment, and hospital beds are scarce, local EMS personnel will be forced to modify their care from conventional to crisis care. This means moving from the usual standards of care, in which the goal is to save everyone, to Crisis Standards of Care, in which as many lives as possible are saved with the resources that are available. Resource shortages include staff, supplies, and equipment, lack of fuel or medicines, limited mutual aid or disruption of coordination and communication functions. Prehospital EMS is not only the *safety net of access to emergency care* on a day-day basis for every one in this audience and for all who are listening in, but in fact during a disaster *EMS is a gatekeeper* of protection to our nation's healthcare infrastructure. EMS is responsible for approximately 1% of the total country's healthcare costs, but such a "small train" drives approximately 40% of our overall healthcare expenditures. While our daily mission is to triage, treat and transport patients to the right medical treatment facility the first time, in the case of a biochemical attack, ambulance crews must recognize and ensure only decontaminated patients arrive at the door of an emergency department. Failure to do so will result in cross-contamination and an infrastructure crisis from hospital closures.

Fifty Years Since the Great Alaska Earthquake: The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning

EMS Integration into Disaster Planning-
Lessons Learned from the Capstone Alaska Shield 2014 Exercise

The information gained at the local and state level from federal partners during Alaska Shield could not have been replicated without full-scale play. Forward patient movement from the disaster to casualty collection points, alternate care sites, and disaster aeromedical staging facilities are complex actions involving multiple agencies and are only *understood when practiced.*

We learned for example, that even using every available transportation asset equipped for litters (ambulances, an ambulance bus, and a dual-use vehicle, that we could transport a maximum of 24 patients, when the receiving medical treatment facility could have handled between 35-50 patients.

Bariatric and Special Needs patients will require special transportation knowledge during a disaster as the equipment and care requirements are different and affect maximum throughput for patient evacuation. For example a bariatric patient will be required to lay flat on a military medical transport during the flight with the current arrangements for standard transport of a medically unstable patient. The litters are available but this limits the total number of patients transported on a single flight. The ability for EMS providers and hospital personnel to be aware of these fine distinctions in the triage and resource allocation/destination decision are crucial to the success of the overall mission.

We also learned there are minimal military resources available with specific pediatric capabilities and those require deployment time. Specific funding and training for critical pediatric stabilization and transport must be strengthened in order to respond effectively.

In the small port town of Valdez we clearly illuminated the crisis in *volunteer EMS systems* that struggle to sustain daily operations and do not, I repeat, *do not have the ability to surge.* They uniformly thorough out this nation are the forgotten heroes of EMS. I recommend a concerted effort by all states to access the true value of their volunteer EMS systems, and transform the next generation of EMS to be supported by volunteer labor, but is not exclusively reliant on volunteer labor to provide an essential public service. You wont miss us, until we are gone.

Fifty Years Since the Great Alaska Earthquake: The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning

EMS Integration with Frontier Extended Stay Clinics

Senator Begich, Alaska was the first state to stand up and operate a state-owned former Federal Medical Station, now known as the Alaska Medical Station. The purpose of alternate medical treatment sites are to decompress hospitals and allow access to care for those patients less seriously injured or ill. In this exercise local EMS providers worked side-by-side with military medics, as well as volunteer nurses, physicians, support staff, and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. What we learned is that while the roles of a basic responders are clear, anything beyond basic life support demonstrated a lack of interoperability between military and civilian licensed EMS, nursing and medical providers. Support in a catastrophic event and during recovery will be hampered if states are not a part of the proposed Interstate Compact for Licensure of EMS Personnel. [i]

Finally Senator Begich, Alaska's *Frontier Extended-Stay Clinic* Model of 24/7 emergency care on a day-to-day basis as well as in disasters is a best practice model of disaster preparedness for rural and remote areas of our nation. These federally qualified health centers are located in communities in Alaska where the hospitals are not easily accessed and are designed to address the needs of seriously ill or injured patients who, due to adverse weather conditions or other reasons, such as in times of disasters, like the 1964 Earthquake where patients cannot be transferred quickly. These clinics have the ability to monitor and observe patients for up to 48 hours. This not only decompresses the hospitals from receiving rural patients at a time when they are most stressed in the first 48 hours but also is an essential support to rural EMS systems which are dependent on volunteer EMS providers and do not have surge capacity. It is a little known pilot project started in 2003 and is important for the members of your subcommittee who live in rural states to know about.[ii]

Thank you for this opportunity to come from rural Alaska and speak on behalf of the EMS community.

Respectfully submitted,

Danita Koehler, MD
Chair, Rural Committee National Association of EMS Physicians

Fifty Years Since the Great Alaska Earthquake: The Role of First Responders in Catastrophic Disaster Planning

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[i] The Interstate Compact on the Licensure of EMS Personnel (NASEMSO) Stated Goals:

- Invest all member states with the authority to hold EMS personnel accountable through the mutual recognition of member state licenses;
- Facilitate the exchange of information between member states regarding EMS personnel licensure, adverse action and significant investigatory information ;
- Promote compliance with the laws governing EMS personnel practice in each member state;
- Increase public access to EMS personnel;
- Enhance the states' ability to protect the public's health and safety, especially patient safety;
- Encourage the cooperation of member states in the areas of EMS personnel licensure and Regulation;

Support licensing of military members who are separating from an active duty tour, veterans and their spouses.

Testimony of the Anchorage School District for the
Subcommittee on Emergency Management, Intergovernmental Relations,
& the District of Columbia
Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee
United States Senate

Michael K. Abbott
Chief Operating Officer
April 4, 2014

The Anchorage School District appreciates the opportunity to report to the Committee on its emergency planning and preparedness. The District takes this mission very seriously and has dedicated significant time and resources to make sure that the students and staff under our care are as well prepared as possible in the event of an emergency. I believe Anchorage is a national leader in this field.

Our planning and preparedness efforts are closely coordinated with the local and state emergency preparedness agencies. The District's plans are incorporated into the Municipality's plans. On a regular school day as much as 20% of the area population could be inside a district facility so close coordination is essential.

Our efforts begin at the school level. The District operates almost 100 schools. Each is required to develop an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) every year. According to Alaska State Statute 14.33.100, Required School Crisis Response Planning, notice of each school's completed plan must be posted at each school. The updated plan must be available for inspection by employees and the public.

The plans are designed to provide a framework for protecting students, staff and school facilities, as well as to describe the responsibilities of staff members for a wide range of emergency and disaster situations that may occur. In the event of a widespread emergency such as an earthquake, it is recognized that available government resources will be overtaxed and may be unable to respond to all requests for assistance. These plans assume that that the school must be self-sufficient for a time and may be required to provide shelter to the immediate community. The contents of these plans are passed on as district guidelines but at the time of the crisis, common sense combined with the facts as they are known must prevail.

There are three levels of emergencies as viewed by the district: a localized emergency which school district personnel can handle by following the procedures in their own emergency plans such as a power outage or minor earthquake; a moderate to severe emergency, somewhat beyond the school district response capability, which may require mutual aid assistance from the fire department and/or police department such as a fire, severe earthquake with injuries and/or structural damage; and a major disaster, clearly beyond the response capability of school district personnel, where large amounts of mutual aid assistance will be required, recovery time will be extensive and the response time from major supportive agencies may be seriously delayed and/or impaired.

These plans meet the requirements of the following laws, regulations and mandates: 1999 MOA/ASD Memorandum of Understanding, Bomb Threats; Anchorage Municipal Code, 23.45.405, Emergency Evacuation Drills; Alaska Statute 14.03.140, Emergency Drills; Alaska Stature 14.331100, Required School Crisis Response Planning; Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations 1910.38, Emergency Action Plans; 2000 International Fire Code Section 405, Emergency Evacuation Drills; Anchorage School Board Policy 395, Safety Drills and Crisis Plans.

The plans will be initiated by the principal or designee when conditions exist which warrant its execution. It will be implemented by all staff at the school until they are released.

The plan contains many components. Among these are the following: annual plan update, hazard assessment, site survey, orientation training, drills, evacuation routes, staging areas, parent communication responsibility, supplies and equipment, and emergency evacuation kits.

The plans specifically recognize nineteen foreseen emergencies and instructions on how to assist persons with disabilities. Detailed response checklists for each are covered. The principal or designee will be responsible for determining the type of emergency and the course of action.

Until or unless relieved the principal or designee has the authority to direct all necessary actions to bring the emergency under control. The principal or designee accomplishes this mission by assembling and commanding a School Incident Command Team. This team carries out the principal's directives and help the principal oversee the work of several emergency response units composed of pre-designated school employees. Other teams will be a communications team, a first aid team, a search and rescue team, a student release team and a crisis intervention team.

Schools and other departments prepare for emergencies by conducting drills throughout the year. All schools practice evacuation in case the building itself becomes unsafe and the occupants must leave, duck-cover-hold drills to safeguard lives while an earthquake is occurring, lockdown drills to limit the danger of an armed intruder or criminal if they gain access to the building, stay-put drills to prevent external events such as storms, dangerous animals and criminals from entering a building and finally we annually prepare for sheltering-in-place to protect students and staff from nuclear or volcanic fall-out, chemical releases and other significant airborne disasters.

In addition to this school based planning and preparedness, the District supports the overall community response. The District's primary mission, beyond the care and support for students and staff is the establishment of community shelters. We have equipped 22 facilities (eight high schools, eight middle schools and six elementary schools) as emergency shelters, as well as, three shelter support sites. The decision on which shelters will be activated in an emergency is one that is made by the municipality of Anchorage emergency operations center and the District at the time of the emergency based on the type of emergency, any damages to the shelter buildings and the ability to access the shelter to keep it supplied and keep the occupants safe during the disaster and into the following recovery period.

The shelters have been established in coordination with the Municipality and are placed at key locations around the area. Shelter sites have been established with a combination of supplemental electric generation and alternate fuel heating systems to provide the greatest possible flexibility for shelter operations in the event of a loss of utility service.

Each shelter is also provided with a pre-positioned supply of materials necessary to initialize a shelter operation at that site. Usually located in steel connexes, the supplies are checked annually to ensure their availability and functionality. School staffs are prepared to assist in the early phases of shelter operations. Long-term shelter operations are the responsibility of the Municipality.

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