

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS,
AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
OF THE
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**“Response to the 2008 Hurricane Season and the
National Disaster Housing Strategy:
Housing Citizens in a Post-Disaster Period.”**

SEPTEMBER 23, 2008

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Chairman Holmes Norton, ranking member Mica, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting FEMA to testify on our response to the 2008 Hurricane Season and the National Disaster Housing Strategy (NDHS).

In the three years since the nation was affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA has worked diligently with our State and local partners to establish stronger partnerships, a much higher level of preparedness and improved levels of coordination when assisting communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from hurricanes.

We have sent a strong message of personal preparedness, to encourage individuals to prepare themselves for disaster events, recognizing that even when the Federal, tribal, State and local governments work perfectly in sync – it is not enough. At the same time, we have continued to reform the agency and work with our partners in an effort to develop a culture of preparedness in America, such that every level of government is clearer on the roles and responsibilities it has in emergency preparedness and response and can work effectively with the private and non-profit sectors.

The change in FEMA is self evident. This is not just FEMA's view. On September 17, 2008, just four days after Hurricane Ike, Representative David Reichert, in an editorial said the following:

Today, we see much of the same devastation, heartbreak and tragedy in South Texas. But there is a key difference -- there is not a staggering loss of life, nor are there loads of television images of people begging for help, food and water. The latest hurricanes have shown the lessons learned from 2005. While there is more progress to be made, the coordination between every level of government, and regional FEMA offices has greatly improved, which helped all law enforcement officials and first responders prepare for response and recovery.

This improved level of performance did not just happen by natural evolution. It is the product of experienced leaders, the investment of resources, a renewed focus on partnerships at every level of government and with the private and non-profit sectors, and the dedicated efforts of thousands of FEMA professional men and women. It is also the product of a very clear vision for a "New FEMA" and a commitment to making FEMA the Nation's preeminent Emergency Management and Preparedness Agency. This vision contained two very important elements.

- First, it put forward a new focus on leaning further forward in order to deliver more effective assistance to States, communities and disaster victims more quickly.
- Second, it identified specific objectives to achieve the Vision, including goals to:
 - Coordinate and marshal an effective national response,
 - Speed the recovery of communities,
 - Strengthen our partnership at the Federal level, with State and local governments and the private sector; and

- Instill public confidence in the Federal government's ability to respond.

Over the past three years, that vision – driven by FEMA leadership in Washington and in every one of our regional offices – has guided our plans and our actions. We are building a New FEMA which is dedicated to delivering the support and aid necessary without bureaucratic red-tape delaying essential services. We are focusing on partnerships across Federal departments and agencies, with States and local communities, with non-governmental and volunteer agencies, with the private sector, and with individual citizens – all to ensure a more effective national response through cooperation and collaboration.,.

Earlier this year, FEMA released the National Response Framework, which provides a clear picture of the resources and assets available through the Federal government and clarifies the agencies and programs that are brought to bear in disaster response and their role in support of State and local officials. After the 2005 hurricane season, there were calls to reform FEMA, and FEMA responded, retooling our response capabilities, housing efforts, and logistics partnerships to ensure that we are able to meet the emergency needs of individuals and communities affected by disasters.

FEMA has worked with vulnerable States to identify gaps, and areas where they will most need support, recognizing that one size does not fit all and any response will be tailored to an individual State's needs. Additionally, we have developed teams that actively exercise and interface with States and local government in advance of disaster events and stand ready to be deployed to the disaster area, arriving on the ground within hours of a storm or other disaster striking. These teams provide real-time situational awareness and visibility on issues and a point of contact for State officials to communicate their need for resources to FEMA.

FEMA has improved its ability to deliver assistance. This is reflected in our alliances with logistics partners within the Federal family and with the private sector, clarified guidance to States on emergency life sustaining needs, and our strengthened ability to manage the logistics pipeline and get needed supplies and resources to a disaster site more quickly and efficiently.

Additionally, on the disaster applicant front, FEMA is focused on providing assistance in an easily accessible and coordinated manner through simple and effective delivery mechanisms. FEMA expanded its capability to register those in need of aid and to have mobile registration centers that can be on hand to help those without access to phones or computers. At the same time, we have strengthened our ability to detect and limit fraud and abuse of the assistance programs. FEMA continues to work with Federal, State, and voluntary partners to build a robust system for evacuation, sheltering and housing, including our collaboration with the American Red Cross to implement the National Shelter System. FEMA established a National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System and a National Emergency Child Locator Center to help those displaced find their loved ones. FEMA instituted a new policy to help those with pets safely evacuate a disaster area.

In striving to achieve the vision for New FEMA, we have been supported by President Bush, by Secretary Chertoff and by you and your colleagues in Congress – all of whom have seen first-hand the needs on the ground and who have provided us with additional authority, people and

fiscal resources with which we can better accomplish our mission. The return on this investment in FEMA has been to the benefit of the Nation, in terms of a more effective response to and recovery from disasters.

While this hearing draws focus only on the two most recent storms, it is important to note that beginning with the Midwest floods of May 2008, through the 2008 Hurricane Season, FEMA has responded to thirty-one major disaster declarations affecting 23 States and territories. Additionally, we have responded to nine emergency disaster declarations and provided twenty-one Fire Management Assistance declarations to States to support fire fighting activities.

In every disaster event, we proactively engage and coordinate with the affected States and local jurisdictions and work hard to ensure that Federal assistance is delivered as quickly and as seamlessly as possible. As we move forward, we continue to work to fine tune our operational capabilities and incorporate feedback from all of our stakeholders to ensure that we have a strong working relationship with all States. These improvements can be seen in FEMA's response activities, acquisitions management, staffing, recovery activities, as well as our logistics management.

Response: Life Saving and Life Sustaining Measures

Immediately following a major disaster or emergency that overwhelms communities and States, FEMA coordinates and provides the core Federal disaster response capability needed to save lives, reduce suffering, and protect property.

The responses to the many disasters we have faced over the past couple of years have provided us an opportunity to implement and evaluate many of FEMA's new/enhanced operational capabilities. Upgrades to our national and regional operations centers have increased our operational capability by providing seamless connectivity with other Federal departments and agencies and State governments. This has facilitated our abilities to develop situational awareness and a common operating picture, enabling immediate decision-making. The upgrades to the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) at FEMA headquarters have given us new and improved abilities to coordinate and exchange information. For example:

- FEMA holds regular and ongoing video teleconferences (VTCs) to synchronize response efforts between Federal responders, States affected by and States supporting those affected by disasters, the Joint Field Offices (JFO), and the Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC).
- More than 30 organizations participate by video and often more than 50 participate by audio in daily, national VTCs. This includes substantial and direct involvement of DHS components and other interagency partners. For example, the U.S. Forest Service provided periodic fire weather reports during VTCs convened to respond to California wildfires. This was a first for FEMA and proved to be invaluable in supporting wildfire response efforts. Through improved coordination with our partners, facilitated by the NRCC, we have also done a better job leveraging existing capabilities and reaching faster consensus on important issues such as:

- using information from the Infrastructure Protection staff to inform critical infrastructure decisions;
- using CBP aerial imagery to assess affected areas;
- requesting transportation weight, motor carrier, fuel, and other waivers to expedite the response.

FEMA manages multiple disaster response teams and assets that can be rapidly deployed to support State and local response operations including Urban Search and Rescue (US&R), Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS), Emergency Response Teams (ERTs), and Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs). Our teams have demonstrated new and improved flexible and scalable response capabilities during the responses to multiple disasters in 2007 and 2008. Our teams have deployed to, and redeployed to, as necessary, States, incident scenes, and Joint Field Offices. In the response to Hurricane Gustav, nine US&R Task Forces were deployed to support Texas and Louisiana and eight Task Forces were deployed to support Georgia, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. For Hurricane Ike, nine Task Forces were deployed to Texas and six to Louisiana. The US&R Task Forces supported the States in critical search and rescue operations.

In accordance with the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), FEMA has developed and deployed the IMAT, the next generation of rapidly deployable interagency national and regional emergency response “strike” teams that are the first Federal presence on scene, serve as liaisons to State and local officials, and provide situational awareness and needs assessments. One National and three Regional IMATs are operational. A second National and fourth Regional Team will be launched by year’s end. FEMA is working toward having three National and ten Regional teams. The National and Regional IMATs were instrumental in providing on-scene situational awareness during recent hurricane responses. All currently existing IMATs were deployed to support the responses in Texas and Louisiana. Critical on-scene command, control, and communications support was provided by IMATs for Houma, Louisiana government officials and the Mayor of Galveston, Texas during the recent hurricanes. US&R Task Forces deployed for hurricane responses and supported Search and Rescue missions -- more than 3,000 rescues in both Louisiana and Texas.

FEMA has instituted operational planning as a core Agency competency. In 2007, 15 operational planners were hired at FEMA headquarters to provide capability to perform sophisticated operational analyses, analyze trends, and improve planning for response to ongoing and future events. We are hiring additional staff this year to meet HSPD-8, Annex 1 requirements to develop interagency plans for prevention, protection, response and recovery activities related to the National Planning Scenarios and to augment capabilities in the FEMA Regions and Area Offices. With new staff, there is now greater depth and capability to prepare operational plans and conduct crisis action planning to lead and support a national all-hazard emergency management response. In 2007 and 2008, the new Operational Planners:

- provided improved planning capability in the areas of current and future planning;
- facilitated extensive evacuation coordination/planning between the Regions and the States;
- synchronized interagency planning with the DHS Incident Management Planning Team and U.S. Northern Command;

- supported responses to the Midwest Floods by projecting population impacts and needs before the flood wave struck;
- provided current and future operational planning analyses to inform decision makers by focusing more closely on performance metrics; and
- developed and implemented innovative planning strategies to address issues such as the Regional Planning Strategy used to respond to Hurricanes Gustav and Hanna concurrently.

FEMA has also greatly improved its evacuation planning capabilities. We have completed a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex to the National Response Framework and a supporting Supplement is under review. There has been greater coordination of medical evacuation and assessment of public health and medical community plans. FEMA is more successfully coordinating medical special needs evacuation planning with DoD, HHS, and the States, as evidenced by the recent large scale medical evacuations from Louisiana and Texas. Through this coordination with our partners, more than 600 pre-arranged ambulances were available to Louisiana for Hurricane Gustav and more than 300 ambulances were made available to support Texas for the Hurricane Ike response. Special DoD aircraft were also deployed to help evacuate critically ill patients.

We have provided more support to the Gulf Coast regional evacuation planning effort, and in the future greater emphasis will be placed on regional evacuation planning for other parts of the country. For Hurricane Gustav, we implemented the Gulf Coast evacuation plan developed over the past two years in coordination with the State of Louisiana and evacuated more than 2 million people in 48 hours to multiple receiving States using multi-modal evacuation sources including air, train, and bus. Approximately 2,025 persons were evacuated from New Orleans to Memphis on three AMTRAK trains. Air evacuation for an additional 6,104 persons was accomplished on 56 flights from New Orleans to Ft. Smith, Arkansas; Knoxville and Nashville, Tennessee; and Louisville, Kentucky.

Another major area of improvement is in Mission Assignments. During response operations, FEMA uses the interagency "Mission Assignment" (MA) process to task and reimburse other Federal Departments and Agencies to provide essential disaster response assistance. Greater emphasis has been placed on the MA process to include development of Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs), a mechanism used to facilitate rapid response. In 2006, FEMA had a total of 44 PSMAs with 2 Federal agencies in place for support for Hurricane Season. Since then, FEMA has increased the number of PSMAs in place to 223 with 31 agencies. This support ranges from heavy-lift helicopters from DoD, to generators from the USACE, to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams from HHS, and Emergency Road Clearing Teams from the U.S. Forest Service.

Working with the States to identify the gap between State resources and needs, the 2008 GAP analysis will focus on all hazards for all States. The Gap Analysis Program was developed using a consistent, national approach to determine asset gaps at the local, State, and National levels. The initial focus in 2007 was on eight areas: debris, interim housing, sheltering, evacuation, commodity distribution, medical, and communication, and fuel in 18 hurricane-prone States.

GAP has now been expanded nationwide to address all-hazards. The 2008 All-Hazards Gap Analysis Template is being applied in all 10 FEMA Regions.

Since the Gap Analysis Program pre-identified State resource shortfalls in each hurricane-prone State, the data and insights provided by the program were critical in enabling a more effective response to this year's hurricane responses on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. It saved valuable time in responding because FEMA already knew the States' needs.

Based on the National Planning Scenarios, catastrophic planning initiatives are being implemented in Louisiana, the New Madrid Seismic Zone, Florida, and California. In Louisiana, the substantial post-Hurricane Katrina planning culminated in one of the largest mass evacuations in history (New Orleans). In Florida, while preparing for and responding to Tropical Storm Fay and Hurricane Hanna, the State implemented and used the Lake Okeechobee Plan developed in preparation for and response to a Category 5 Hurricane (CAT5) in Miami. This plan was developed as part of FEMA's Catastrophic Planning Initiative.

FEMA can now rapidly deploy telecommunications assets during disaster response to support communications operability and interoperability. We are upgrading outdated equipment and procuring tactical response vehicles and have also established Regional Emergency Communications Coordination (RECC) Work Groups in a majority of the Regions to facilitate communications planning and response capabilities. We provided direct assistance to Gulf and East Coast States in developing State and regional communications plans for hurricane season. Our MERS assets continued to provide communications support to States/locals, as well as our response teams and other interagency response teams in 2007 and 2008. For example, during Hurricane Ike, MERS:

- Provided mobile emergency communications infrastructure (IRV) to the Mayor of Galveston Island to support continuity of local of government.
- Supported maintenance and repair of communications equipment for local first responders on Galveston Island.
- Repaired a main repeater in Houston Reliance Center to maintain communications capabilities for the Texas Highway Patrol.
- Supported Texas Task Force Ike with land mobile radio communications to link the Task Force with the Interagency.
- Provided command and control support to government of Houma, Louisiana.
- Supported communications capabilities of the Louisiana State Police by providing a 700 MHz radio system.
- Supported Terrebonne Parish in Louisiana with a 800 MHz radio system tower providing communications connection for the Parish.

Disaster Staffing: Creating a Ready Workforce to Meet Disaster Needs

Recognizing that our disaster reservists are the backbone of our agency – routinely accounting for 70 to 90 percent of any disaster response and recovery effort, FEMA created the Disaster Reserve Workforce Directorate in 2008. This Directorate has primary responsibility for the development, deployment and support of a disaster workforce ready for the national, all-hazard

response needs of FEMA program managers and regional leadership. This office is led by a long-time FEMA senior executive and staffed with senior managers with leadership experience in managing other successful reserve programs.

This Division is dedicated to developing and implementing initiatives which will dramatically contribute to the overall disaster response and recovery capability of FEMA. Current initiatives of the office include assisting in the standardization, credentialing and development of uniform guidelines and policy to govern the workforce. FEMA recognizes that its disaster workforce is dedicated and self-sacrificing in its response to the nation's call for help and it is incumbent upon the Agency to provide standardization of administration and formal training that will further prepare and motivate reservists, attract more dedicated individuals to service, and provide a force with consistent and standardized training and credentialing.

The number of disaster reservists in the Disaster Reserve Workforce continues to remain steady. There are currently 3,837 reservists deployed in support of disaster response and recovery throughout the United States. On the Gulf Coast and other hurricane affected areas, there are 1,831 reservists serving in response to the tremendous need. That response includes 673 reservists in support of Hurricane Ike. Of those not presently in the field, over 1,200 have recently returned from disaster operations. As a result of a new initiative implemented by FEMA Regions and Headquarters, our daily number of available reservists for deployment is steadily increasing.

To achieve a ready workforce FEMA will continue to review policies and develop ways to make all components of our workforce more equitable as they serve side by side. Additionally, we have begun the effort to develop standardized training and credentialing which will transform our force into a competent, reliable, and nimble Disaster Reserve Workforce; a national asset ready to deploy as an all-hazard response and recovery team anytime, anywhere.

Acquisition Management: Leaning Forward to Make Better Business Decisions and Partnerships

FEMA's goal is to use competitive strategies while also providing local and small businesses a competitive advantage whenever possible.

To date in FY 08, FEMA has competed approximately 81% of its procurement dollars. FEMA is proud of this accomplishment, and we will strive to uphold our commitment to competitive contracting. In addition, FEMA has awarded an estimated \$393 million to small businesses so far this FY.

Moreover, an estimated \$940 million in disaster relief funding has been placed on contract by FEMA in FY 08. An estimated \$235 million or 25% was provided under contract to small businesses throughout the nation. Please note however that the bulk of the \$235 million in disaster relief funds placed on contracts with small businesses in FY 08 (i.e., an estimated \$125 million) was in support of recovery efforts related to the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita disasters. As of September 17, 2008, FEMA has awarded approximately \$22.8 million in disaster recovery work for Hurricane Gustav to local vendors and approximately \$2 million for Hurricane Ike.

Enhanced Acquisition Capability and Capacity

FEMA's Office of Acquisition Management has grown from a staff of approximately 35 Contracting positions to approximately 235 Acquisition professionals. The office has also matured through the creation of three separate branches that support the acquisition life-cycle and provide the framework for FEMA's acquisition processes and practices. The Acquisition Operations Branch provides pre- and post-award contracting and acquisition support and includes a staff of approximately 180 Contracting Officers, Contract Specialists, Procurement Analysts, and Support Staff.

Pre-Positioned/Pre-Competed Contracts

FEMA has implemented several pre-positioned contracts in response to the need for advance planning and preparation. FEMA currently has approximately 75 pre-positioned contracts in its inventory. For Gustav, FEMA activated its ground and air ambulance evacuation services contract with American Medical Response, Inc.; its rail evacuation services contract with AMTRAK; and its pre-positioned housing inspection services contract with PaRR Inspection Services.

Following Katrina, there was increased focus surrounding FEMA's Individual Assistance-Technical Assistance Contracts (IA-TAC). Recent reports have recognized that FEMA has overcome many of the challenges identified under IA-TAC I. There are currently five IA-TACs that were competed under IA-TAC II in 2006 to support the response to and recovery from disasters. The contractors are able to bring the breadth and depth of response and recovery services disaster victims may require from FEMA, to include: Mass Care/Sheltering support; site assessments; design and development of temporary Group Housing Sites; installation of temporary housing; and general Housing operations support. Task orders are now competed within the five contracts so that the requirements, as they arise, are awarded under fair opportunity procedures. Once the housing mission in response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike are defined, the scope of any potential IA-TAC II task orders can be developed. The task orders will be for the immediate support needed to establish the housing mission. However, housing operations and long-term support, such as maintenance and deactivation of temporary housing units or group sites, will ultimately transition to local contractors for execution.

Increased Contracting Visibility in the Field

When the scale of a disaster merits increased on-site oversight of field operations, FEMA designates and deploys an Acquisition Advisor to the JFO. The purpose and role of the Acquisition Advisor is to counsel the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) on the acquisition process and regulations, and provide oversight to ensure internal controls are in place and protocols are followed to avoid fraud, waste, abuse, and unauthorized commitments. The advisor also reaches back to the Headquarters office to ensure greater coordination of effort and use of FEMA acquisition staff both from Washington, DC and in the field.

Recently, due to the increased staffing levels, FEMA was able to pre-deploy contracting professionals in advance of declared disasters events. This enabled the acquisition staff to be prepared to respond and provide immediate support to the field operations staff - while the

FEMA contracting staff at Headquarters executed against the pre-positioned contracts for other mission needs.

Enhanced Contract Oversight

FEMA has developed a robust Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR) program that tracks and monitors the skill levels of personnel trained as COTRs, enables FEMA's programs and COTRs to quickly identify personnel with the appropriate COTR skills, and provides the necessary support to the COTRs as they perform their job duties. Currently, there are 1,008 certified FEMA COTRs. FEMA is also implementing an initiative to tier the COTR certification process, which recognizes that not all COTRs are alike and that certain contracts require COTRs with higher skill levels and experience to ensure proper contract oversight.

Recovery: Leveraging the Capabilities across all Sectors of Government to Assist Individuals in Recovering

One major shift in our business philosophy is that FEMA recognizes that response and recovery efforts often operate on a continuum. While some believe that there is a clear beginning and end to the response and recovery phases of a disaster, we have come to understand that successful recovery for individuals affected by disasters requires early collaboration between State and local governments, continued planning and evaluation of housing options and needs, and leveraging of a variety of services and programs to move applicants forward in their desire for self-sufficiency and sustainability following a major disaster.

An immediate challenge following a major disaster is ensuring that the emergency mass care needs of individuals are met. Since the passage of PKEMRA and the revision of the NRF, the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services Annex has made many improvements. The Federal role in ESF #6 has been expanded, designating FEMA as the sole Primary Agency responsible for mass care and added additional authorities and responsibilities for evacuation; tracking and family relocation; pet rescue and shelter considerations; and medical and specialized accommodations for sheltering. In a large mass care operation requiring Federal support to a State, FEMA will direct and coordinate the provision of necessary support from Federal partner agencies, and others, as well as with our longstanding partner, the American Red Cross.

Our efforts and improvements in service delivery of FEMA's recovery programs on behalf of disaster victims include:

- **Housing Inspections** – Prior to declaration, housing inspectors are mobilized; they arrive in the affected areas immediately after the declaration and inspections began immediately following the disasters.
- **Fraud Controls** – The identity verification controls that FEMA has integrated into the Registration Intake process have proven quite effective. Identity verification controls place authenticated 99% of applicants at the time they registered for assistance.

- **Registration Intake** – Special Needs scenarios were added to FEMA’s registration intake script beginning in 2008. The Special Needs questions are designed to obtain information from applicants about any loss of support required for mobility, sight, hearing or taking care of themselves or members of their household as a result of the disaster. The information about applicants’ special needs is transmitted to the JFOs for appropriate follow-up.
- **National Processing Servicing Center (NPSC) Operations** – The NPSC have the capability to expand operations to support 24/7 staffing immediately a declaration.
- **Joint Housing Solutions Group and the Development of Comprehensive Housing Plan** - FEMA’s Joint Housing Solutions Group partnered with Federal, State and local governments, and voluntary agencies, to develop a comprehensive housing plan that includes identifying the most heavily impacted areas, on-the-spot registration of shelter populations, analyzing shelter and mass care operations, transitioning applicants to temporary housing, individual case management for applicants with major damage to their primary residences, identifying available rental resources, assessing and assisting special need populations, and working with local voluntary agencies to identify additional assistance resources available to residents.
- **National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRS) and the National Emergency Child Locator Center (NECLC)** – These systems are activated immediately following disaster declarations, facilitating the reunification of displaced family members. These services help local and tribal governments and law enforcement agencies track and locate children who have become separated from their parents or guardians.
- **Mass Care Deployment to State Operations Center** – In advance of disaster declarations, FEMA has deployed a mass care staff member to the State Operations Center to promote situational awareness and enhance coordination with the American Red Cross and reporting of shelter statistics. Additionally, FEMA deployed **mass care and donations management specialists** in support of State and local sheltering operations, implementation of the National Shelter System, donations management, and delivery of mass care services.
- One of the most recent initiatives in the Disaster Housing arena is the launch of the **multi-agency National Disaster Housing Task Force (NDHTF)**. As members of the NDHTF, the agencies and organizations committed to fully supporting the Unified Recovery Strategy established by the California Housing Task Force. The NDHTF quickly responded to and filled requests for resources, staff, and information; worked to de-conflict any policy, statutory or regulatory issues; and identified housing solutions to fill any gaps in available housing assistance.
- To provide technical assistance to the JFO, FEMA deployed the **FEMA Disabilities Coordinator**. The Disabilities Coordinator has been invaluable advising mass care as

well as DHOPs regarding unique issues and concerns facing those disaster victims with special needs.

- All affected States utilized the web-based volunteer and donations management application that was developed by **Aidmatrix** Foundation. This new resource tool was built to support State emergency management and FEMA's voluntary agency partners. The Aidmatrix system was very instrumental in helping the donations group acquire and disburse items.

Logistics Management: Leaning Forward to Support States' Needs for Emergency Assistance

A key element of FEMA's disaster response and recovery comes in the form of assisting States in meeting their emergency needs for commodities, services and goods.

In April, 2007, as part of the FEMA's reorganization, the Logistics Branch was elevated to Directorate level within the Agency. The Logistics Management Directorate (LMD) is FEMA's major program office responsible for policy, guidance, standards, execution and governance of logistics support, services and operations. Since that time, LMD has strengthened its business practices by enhancing its relationships with logistics partners for a more coordinated logistics response operation.

Responses to declared disasters this year, including Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, have validated the new business processes strategy. FEMA Logistics continually reached out to our partners to assist in the responses. Emergency meals have been sourced and delivered by the Defense Logistics Agency, cots and blankets sourced and delivered by the General Services Administration and water sourced and delivered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These commodities have been in addition to what is stocked in the FEMA Distribution Centers, strategically located in both the United States and U.S. Territories. The following are examples of how the coordinated logistics response operation has become more efficient and effective.

In September 2007, LMD established a Distribution Management Strategy Working Group, comprised of its Federal, private and non-governmental organizations logistics partners, to conduct a comprehensive analysis and develop a comprehensive distribution and supply chain management strategy. Partners in this group include GSA, DOD (USNORTHCOM)/DLA, HHS, USACE, USDA USFS, and Mass Care (ESF6). The Resource Management Group, a sub-working group, has been established to assist in resourcing disaster requests for Logistics supplies and services.

LMD has established mission-essential standby contracts and Inter-agency Agreements (IAAs) that provide an enhanced logistics readiness capability for contractor support such as: fleet management/driver support; vehicle maintenance contract; supplies and services IAA / General Services Administration; Transportation Services MOA/General Services Administration; National bus, rail, and ambulance evacuation support; Blue Roof Sheeting blanket purchase agreement; supplies and services IAA/Defense Logistics Agency; Asset visibility; Logistics Management Transformation Initiative (LMTI); and base camp support contract.

Overall, the Federal response to the recent disasters has been organized and effective considering the magnitude, timing, and proximity of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, and the requirement to assist with POD distribution in Louisiana and Texas. The Federal coordination of these events has shown an unprecedented level of collaboration and cooperation between all partners – Federal, State, local, tribal, and voluntary organizations. FEMA begins monitoring an event early on, activates affected Regions and the National Response Coordination Center, hosts daily video teleconference calls with Federal and State interagency partners, reviews and works with States in the formulation of Governors’ requests for major disaster declarations, alerts our national response teams, pre-stages resources and commodities, and deploys our housing task force; every effort FEMA makes is strategic, proactive and aimed at anticipating needs of the States and local governments before they arise. In this way, FEMA is moving forward to become the preeminent emergency management agency the American public needs and deserves.

National Disaster Housing Strategy: Cornerstone of Disaster Recovery:

One of the biggest areas for lessons learned for FEMA was in the area of disaster housing. While in the vast majority of disasters, housing needs are met through financial assistance through FEMA’s traditional programs, in a catastrophic disaster event, the needs and challenges associated with disaster housing are magnified. When severe storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, etc, impact an area, many people are forced to evacuate, businesses and homes are impacted, and communities are devastated. For the individuals affected, there are few events more traumatizing and gut-wrenching than the sudden loss of their homes. In the immediate aftermath of the event, as individuals begin the recovery process, they are faced with the loss of community, emotionally impacted, and depending on their level of preparedness, they are likely to be financially distressed. For most disaster victims, the prolonged displacement and agonizing uncertainties surrounding the rehabilitation process can exact a heavy toll, even if their homes can ultimately be repaired, as they sort through the maze of assistance available, insurance claims, and contractor decisions. Multiply such distress a hundred, thousand, or ten thousand-fold, and the compound impacts of the resulting mass displacement will rupture the continuity not only of the households directly affected, but their wider communities and regions, as well. And FEMA, along with our other Federal partners, States, and voluntary agencies go into these environments to assist residents and communities in meeting their immediate, emergency needs, including housing.

Responding to the individually unique and collectively diverse housing needs of disaster victims, while meeting the needs of the State and local government and complying with Federal law concerning the provision of disaster housing is rarely a simple process. No two disasters are exactly the same, and neither are any two disaster victims. Accordingly, FEMA routinely goes to great lengths to interview victims and qualitatively establish the requirements and preferences of every eligible disaster victim who expresses a need for housing assistance. While there are no magic formulas in the disaster housing business, FEMA and our Federal and industry partners are committed to expanding and improving our capabilities and options for delivery of temporary housing. I will briefly discuss some of those initiatives, as well as the guiding principles under

which such assistance will be delivered. However, no matter how robust the combined capabilities and forms of assistance available through the government, it bears emphasizing that governmental assistance complements, but cannot replace, the safety net that households can obtain with an appropriate insurance policy. While we recognize that maintaining adequate insurance may require difficult financial sacrifices on the part of many households; the consequences of not maintaining insurance can be far more costly and many times more dire.

EXISTING AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE DISASTER HOUSING ASSISTANCE

FEMA derives its authority to provide housing assistance to victims of a presidentially declared emergency or major disaster from Section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. Under this section, the President may provide both financial and direct (i.e., material) housing assistance to eligible disaster victims whose homes are destroyed, rendered uninhabitable, or, for individuals with disabilities, rendered inaccessible by the disaster. By law, FEMA is authorized to provide, for up to eighteen months, temporary housing to meet the immediate disaster needs of eligible applicants. This assistance is provided at no cost to the State where the disaster was declared.

FORMS OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE

We typically rely on practical housing solutions that allow disaster victims to remain in or near their pre-disaster residences, and maximize the use of existing housing stock in a community. Considerations which guide the provision of disaster housing include timeliness, cost effectiveness, and proximity to their pre-disaster residences or neighborhoods. While these considerations may sometimes conflict, resulting in some necessary compromise among them, we can never compromise on our fundamental and overriding commitment to provide safe and sanitary housing to those affected by disasters.

The aggregate housing needs arising from a small-to-moderate disaster are typically satisfied through the almost exclusive use of existing rental resources. A large or catastrophic disaster, however, can overwhelm an affected area's resources and require extensive supplementation, either by traditional forms of temporary housing, such as manufactured housing, or through new alternative forms of temporary housing. Our prioritized approach to the provision of disaster housing assistance is outlined in FEMA's 2008 Disaster Housing Plan, and summarized below. This plan, fundamentally based on the principles established in the draft National Disaster Housing Strategy (the *Strategy*), was released on July 23, 2008.

In the aftermath of a declared disaster, FEMA's initial actions will focus on supporting the affected State's efforts to ensure that all disaster victims are harbored in safe and secure shelters, with access to food and other necessary life-sustaining commodities and resources. As the situation stabilizes, FEMA will reorient its efforts, in support of and in coordination with States, to transition shelter residents back into their pre-disaster dwellings or, if those dwellings cannot be re-inhabited, temporary housing.

For most incidents, individuals are generally able to return to their homes within hours or days of the incident. However, for more serious declared disasters, where numerous dwellings have been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable for an extended period of time, additional housing

assistance will be required. FEMA's prioritized, but not necessarily sequential, approach to providing housing assistance is as follows.

- First, FEMA will maximize available local rental resources in the immediate area. Following the necessary inspection and verification of damages, FEMA will provide eligible homeowners up to \$28,800 for repairs to make their home habitable, or to replace a destroyed or condemned home. If a damaged home is destroyed or cannot be repaired quickly, FEMA will provide financial rental assistance to eligible disaster victims within the \$28,800 cap. This assistance, which is based on the fair market rent set by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), can be used to rent an apartment or other temporary housing while repairs are underway or while disaster victims look for permanent housing, make repairs to the home, or to assist in replacing the home. FEMA disaster assistance is not intended to return a home to its pre-disaster condition, but to make it safe and habitable following a declared disaster. FEMA will work with community groups and other government agencies to catalogue available rental property throughout the affected area, and begin providing that information to those disaster victims seeking affordable rental housing. This cataloguing will also identify information regarding the availability of fully-accessible units and units with accessible features usable by persons with a disability. If significant numbers of disaster victims have been displaced to other States, FEMA may implement the host-State housing protocol, which enables FEMA to coordinate rental assistance payments, at or based on fair market rent, directly to property owners through federal partners or a contract agent. This assistance can be provided for up to 18 months for eligible displaced persons. While this protocol is designed for use in situations where States are hosting large numbers of displaced persons from another State for an extended period of time, it may also be employed within the affected home State.
- Second, FEMA may use traditional forms of interim housing. If no apartments or other leasable properties are available at or below HUD's fair market rent within a reasonable commuting distance, temporary housing units may be needed. When requested by a State, FEMA will provide a range of options for temporary housing units, which may include mobile homes, park models, or other alternative forms of acceptable temporary housing. Once the appropriate options are determined acceptable by the State, temporary housing can be located on an eligible victim's private property, on a pre-existing commercial pad, or as a last resort on a new group site, generally provided by and approved by local officials and constructed and maintained by FEMA. In order to determine the precise housing needs and preferences of eligible disaster victims, FEMA will immediately commence pre-placement interviews to assess how long they will need interim housing assistance and identify their optimum solution. Based on the pre-placement interviews, FEMA will identify those individuals who are eligible for placement of a housing unit on their property. FEMA will also work with local officials to identify pad locations throughout the affected area and begin negotiations for lease of those pads, as well as work with local officials to identify and begin negotiations to obtain prospective sites for extended occupation. FEMA will move quickly to transport housing units into the

- Third, FEMA is prepared to employ innovative forms of improved alternative housing, and will work with States to fairly and equitably identify appropriate and eligible households. The priority for such housing will be private site applicants who wish to remain on their property while they repair their damaged homes, but whose property is too small to accommodate a mobile home or park model. The solicitation closed on August 1, and FEMA expects to award provisional contracts to multiple alternative housing manufacturers, and begin field testing their units in October 2008. Additionally, FEMA will continue to work with our partners in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to evaluate the quality and livability of those units selected and constructed under the alternative housing pilot program, and will leverage such units into our housing plans wherever appropriate.
- Fourth, in coordination with HUD and the affected State, FEMA may authorize permanent housing construction in those rare cases where the preceding forms of interim housing are unavailable, infeasible, or not cost-effective.

Our ability to effectively implement these priorities will depend, to a great extent, on the quality and nature of each State's engagement in their housing recovery. A key underpinning of the draft National Disaster Housing Strategy, also reflected in the 2008 Disaster Housing Plan, is the expectation that States will be active partners in the recovery, as well as assume a greater leadership role. To that end, when the impact of the disaster may require the development of interim housing options, both the *Strategy* and Plan strongly encourage the State to convene and lead a housing solutions task force at the joint field office to bring together State, Federal, non-governmental and private sector expertise to evaluate housing requirements, consider potential solutions and propose recommendations, some of which may require National-level concurrence or engagement. States are further encouraged to include disability organizations and advocacy groups on the task force to provide advice regarding housing requirements for those with special needs or limited English proficiency. Such task forces have been established by a number of Midwest flooding disaster States, and are already demonstrating their value, as well as yielding valuable lessons.

MOVING FORWARD – A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

FEMA recognizes the need to have a comprehensive framework in place that serves as a guide for States on available technical assistance and resources across the Federal government, voluntary agencies, and private sector; outlines roles and responsibilities of these entities; and outlines the core competencies and limitations of FEMA. The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act called for a National Disaster Housing Strategy (NDHS) and provided

FEMA with the opportunity to describe how the Nation provides housing to those affected by disasters and chart a new direction to better meet the needs of disaster victims and communities. On July 23, 2008, FEMA published the NDHS, initiating a 60-day public comment period. The comment period ended on September 22, 2008. Because this hearing was postponed, FEMA has extended the comment period an additional 7 days so that members of the public and this committee may submit comments to www.regulations.gov under Docket ID FEMA-2008-0009. We have encouraged all stakeholders to review *the Strategy* and provide comment.

In drafting *the Strategy*, FEMA convened representatives from various Federal Agencies and other housing experts to provide input. As the working group responded to mandates of PKEMRA, it became evident to senior officials at FEMA that the end product resulted in a catalogue of available resources. The collection of the specifications in PKEMRA would not have provided for the creation of a strategy as collectively they do not create a vision or an integrated set of goals. While we believe providing this information would have met the mandate of the legislation, we do not believe that it would have moved FEMA, or the Nation forward in creating a strategy that laid out future direction for the Nation's disaster housing efforts. Nor would such a compilation have clarified the roles and responsibilities of individuals, state and local governments, voluntary agencies, the private sector, and Federal government partners; or laid a foundation for clear expectations providing measurable objectives and goals that advance disaster housing for disaster victims.

While *the Strategy* has been criticized by some for the annexes that were not provided in the initial release, we believe we have made measurable progress in our efforts. As a foundation, *the Strategy* has furthered FEMA's disaster housing initiatives. With this *Strategy* as the foundation and with the National Disaster Housing Task Force described below as the engine, we believe the specifications enumerated in PKEMRA will be realized.

The draft *Strategy* is one of the most significant documents prepared by FEMA and released under the umbrella of the National Response Framework. *The Strategy* describes how the Nation currently provides housing to those affected by disaster. More importantly, it charts a new direction towards where our disaster housing efforts must focus if we, as a Nation, are to better understand and meet the emergent disaster housing needs of disaster victims and communities.

The *Strategy* captures lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and subsequent disasters, embraces the larger issues of disaster victims beyond simply providing a structure; seeks innovative and creative housing options; elevates issues of safety, security and access to those with disabilities; strongly emphasizes the value of planning; and differentiates the catastrophe above all other disasters. For the first time in any single document, all forms of housing are addressed and the suggestion that housing issues merit full time attention *before* disasters is promulgated.

There are three attributes of *the Strategy* that distinguish its purpose:

- First – *The Strategy* is the essential precursor to an operational plan, but is intentionally not a plan itself. As a strategy, it captures the challenges of disaster housing, clarifies roles and responsibilities, establishes key principles and sets a course for new directions and pragmatic solutions in sheltering, interim housing and permanent housing. As a strategy, it describes a

national vision and strategic goals, key building blocks for plans, policies and procedures. Its purpose is to frame the housing issue, engage in collaborative discussion, and ensure that every subsequent action taken contributes to strengthening disaster housing capabilities in every jurisdiction.

- Second, *the Strategy* is imbued with the imperative that disaster housing solutions be defined and achieved collaboratively with State leadership. Addressing the challenges of disaster housing should not originate or be driven at the Federal level. Rather, we must provide support to our State and local partners, set the pace, and actively engage and gain commitment from individuals, communities, other Federal partners, NGOs and the private sector.
- Third, *the Strategy* establishes a standing National Disaster Housing Task Force charged to aggressively implement *the Strategy*. This Task Force will reside within FEMA and be staffed primarily by FEMA full-time employees.

While some have implied that FEMA is “passing the buck,” reassigning duties, handing off or outsourcing the problem, that is far from the truth. Although states, territories, and tribal governments have the primary responsibility for the health and welfare of the people in their jurisdiction, FEMA will continue to own *the Strategy*, retain responsibility, lead the charge and reach out to representatives of state and local governments, people with disabilities, NGOs, the private sector, individuals and other constituents to implement *the Strategy* and achieve its purpose.

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The *Strategy* draws on best practices and lessons learned to identify actions that must be taken to improve disaster housing assistance, an effort that involves renewing our focus on planning, building baseline capabilities, and providing a broader range of flexible disaster housing options. It describes key principles; responsibilities and roles; and current practices across sheltering, interim housing, and permanent housing. The *Strategy* recognizes that disaster housing is more than simply providing a structure; it must address human needs and make the connection to community-based services. The *Strategy* also discusses future directions for how we as a Nation can work together to achieve the goals within the *Strategy*. Future direction includes reviewing best practices and innovations to establish baseline capabilities and core competencies, validate roles and responsibilities, and improve the range, quality, and timeliness of disaster housing services provided by communities, states, and the Federal Government. The *Strategy* also moves toward State-managed, federally supported interim housing programs and calls for a broader range of interim housing options to meet diverse needs.

As required by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, *the Strategy* was provided to the FEMA National Advisory Committee and the National Council on Disabilities as well as all pertinent Federal departments and agencies for their review and comment. We continue to be actively engaged to seek comment and suggestions such that, later in the fall, we can release the final *Strategy* and embark on deliberate course to achieve the vision and goals outlined in *the Strategy*.

FEMA acknowledges the fact that *the Strategy* was not submitted in a timely manner and takes responsibility for the delay. However, I believe that if FEMA had simply “met the mail,” we would no doubt be here today discussing the need for revisions to provide exactly what we did deliver in the end – a well thought out, focused, living piece of public policy that is flexible enough to be used in all hazards. We have benefitted from lessons learned and the *Strategy* reflects those lessons. We could not have produced this document one year ago. I trust that the value of having a workable document that provides the opportunity for our stakeholders to provide input has overshadowed the delay in delivery. For the first time in a single document, all of the elements of disaster housing have been described and outlined in terms of challenges and new directions. To date, FEMA has received over 20 public comments and are in the process of adjudicating those comments. Once this has been accomplished, we believe our State and local partners, Federal partners, the NGOs, the private sector, and all of those with an equity in disaster housing need will roll up their sleeves and do the work necessary to develop plans and, more importantly, the capabilities to implement effective disaster housing plans, for all hazards, for disasters from small to catastrophic, to meet the full and broader needs of disaster victims. FEMA recognizes those challenges, and is ready to provide the leadership to accomplish those objectives.

Our efforts to work with our public and private partners to improve our capability and capacity to deliver housing assistance continue. We remain determined to better posture our Nation to respond to the housing challenges now and those of the future, no matter their scope or scale. And, while disasters always present unanticipated challenges and obstacles, we know we will be measured by how quickly and surely we resolve them. FEMA has come a long way, but is by no means complacent, and fully recognizes that we, along with our partners, must continually strive to address the challenges presented.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am prepared to respond to your questions.