

# FEMA: PREPAREDNESS FOR THE 2009 HURRICANE SEASON

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(111-28)

## HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, AND  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON

TRANSPORTATION AND

INFRASTRUCTURE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

May 1, 2009

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**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
Washington, DC 20515

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April 27, 2009

**SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER**

**TO:** Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

**FROM:** Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Staff

**SUBJECT:** Hearing on "FEMA: Preparedness for the 2009 Hurricane Season"

**PURPOSE OF THE HEARING**

On Friday, May 1, 2009, at 10:00 a.m., in the James L. King Federal Justice Building in Miami, Florida, the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management will hold a field hearing on disaster preparedness and response in anticipation of the 2009 Atlantic hurricane season.

**BACKGROUND**

**The 2009 Hurricane Season**

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>. While hurricanes are not the most frequent disaster our nation faces, they are often the most catastrophic. The current forecast for the 2009 Atlantic hurricane season is for average hurricane activity.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, the forecast for 2009 is for 12 named storms (average is 9.6), six hurricanes (average is 5.9), and two major hurricanes (average is 2.3).<sup>2</sup> Further, there is a forecasted 82 percent chance of a named

<sup>1</sup> *Extended Range Forecast of Atlantic Season Hurricane Activity and U.S. Landfall Strike Probability for 2009* Philip, J. Klotzback and William M. Gray, Colorado State University, April 7 2009.  
<http://hurricane.atmos.colostate.edu/Forecasts/2009/april2009/apr2009.pdf> (link accessed April 23, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Id at p. 21.

storm, 63 percent chance of a hurricane, and a 32 percent chance of a major hurricane striking Florida or the east coast of the United States during the 2009 hurricane season.<sup>3</sup>

Florida faces a greater risk from hurricanes than any other state. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), since Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, Florida has received 22 major disaster declarations and eight emergency declarations under the “Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act” (Stafford Act) for hurricanes or tropical storms, which is greater than the number of declarations for any other state in the same time period.

The National Hurricane Center, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is located in Miami, Florida. The mission of the National Hurricane Center is to save lives, mitigate property loss, and improve economic efficiency by issuing the best watches, warnings, forecasts, and analyses of hazardous tropical weather and by increasing understanding of these hazards.

The consequences of a hurricane can be devastating. For example, the state of Florida has a planning scenario known as “Hurricane Ono” that includes a category 5 hurricane making landfall just north of Fort Lauderdale and moving northwest across the state. In that scenario, the predicted effects include most of South Florida under between one and four feet of water for weeks, wide spread destruction of homes, more than three million evacuees, and six million people without electricity.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Federal and Florida Emergency Management**

FEMA is responsible for the Federal Government’s activities to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards.<sup>5</sup> The primary authority for these activities is the Stafford Act.<sup>6</sup> In carrying out these activities, FEMA works closely with state and local governments who have the primary responsibility for emergency management and are always the initial responders to any disaster.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management and Miami-Dade County Emergency Management agency are both recognized as leaders in emergency management. Unfortunately, a lot of their expertise comes from experience. Since the Miami area was devastated by Hurricane Andrew in 1992, Florida has taken many steps to improve in all areas of emergency management. One example is Florida’s adoption of a state-wide building code. The requirements in Miami-Dade County are the most stringent, generally requiring buildings to withstand winds of 146 miles per hour. Schools and other facilities that could be used as shelters are required to withstand winds of 186 miles per hour. Further, Miami-Dade County has invested over \$250 million in mitigation. A large portion of this investment was from non-Federal funds.

<sup>3</sup> Id. at p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Source Florida Division of Emergency Management, <http://www.floridadisaster.org/catastrophicplanning/> (link accessed April 23, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> See 6 U.S.C. 314.

<sup>6</sup> 42 U.S.C. 5121-5207.

**American Red Cross**

In 1900, the American Red Cross received a federal charter that outlined its primary role in disaster relief and mitigation. Currently, the Red Cross organization serves as one of the primary mass suppliers of relief in federal disasters, although its role has changed recently. Under the National Response Framework, which became effective last year, FEMA has assumed the primary responsibility for “Emergency Support Function Six – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services”. The American Red Cross is a now support agency for this function. However, at the local level, the role of the Red Cross remains the same.

**PRIOR LEGISLATIVE AND OVERSIGHT ACTIVITY**

In the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure acted on the following bills related to FEMA, the Stafford Act, and disaster assistance:

- **H.R. 1746, the “Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2009”:** This legislation reauthorizes and makes improvements to FEMA’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program, including codification of the competitive aspects of the program. On April 2, 2009, the Committee ordered H.R. 1746 reported to the House.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure acted on the following bills related to FEMA, the Stafford Act, and disaster assistance:

- **H.R. 6658, the “Disaster Response, Recovery, and Mitigation Enhancement Act of 2008”:** This legislation amends the Stafford Act to improve the assistance the Federal Government provides to states, local governments, and communities after major disasters and emergencies. On July 31, 2008, the Committee ordered H.R. 6658 reported to the House.
- **H.R. 6109, the “Pre-Disaster Mitigation Act of 2008”:** This legislation reauthorized FEMA’s Pre-Disaster Mitigation program and makes improvements, including codification of the competitive aspects of the program. On June 23, 2008, the House passed H.R. 6109 by voice vote.
- **H.R. 3247, the “Hurricane Katrina and Rita Recovery Facilitation Act of 2007”:** This legislation provides additional Federal relief targeted to the recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in Louisiana and Mississippi. On October 29, 2007, the House passed H.R. 3247 by voice vote.
- **H.R. 3224, the “Dam Rehabilitation and Repair Act of 2007”:** This legislation establishes a program to provide grant assistance to states for use in rehabilitating publicly-owned dams that fail to meet minimum safety standards and pose an unacceptable risk to the public. On October 29, 2007, the House passed H.R. 3224 by a recorded vote of 263-102.



- **H.R. 1144, the “Hurricanes Katrina and Rita Federal Match Relief Act of 2007”:** This legislation provides significant relief for communities devastated by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, by raising the Federal cost share for critical disaster relief programs to 100 percent and by authorizing the cancellation of Community Disaster Loans under certain conditions like all previous Community Disaster Loans. H.R. 1144 was enacted as part of P.L. 110-28, the “U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans’ Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007”.

In the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee also collaborated with the Committee on Financial Services on H.R. 1227, the “Gulf Coast Hurricane Housing Recovery Act of 2007,” to ensure that Louisiana is allowed to use Hazard Mitigation Program funds for its Road Home program. H.R. 1227 passed the House March 21, 2007.

The Committee and Subcommittee have held numerous hearings dealing with issues related to hurricane preparedness and response:

- “Post-Katrina Disaster Response and Recovery: Evaluating FEMA’s Continuing Efforts in the Gulf Coast and Response to Recent Disasters” (February 2009)
- “FEMA’s Response to the 2008 Hurricane Season and the National Housing Strategy” (September 2008)
- “Moving Mississippi forward: Ongoing Progress and Remaining Problems” (June 2008)
- “Assuring Public Alert Systems Work” (June 2008)
- “Saving Lives And Money Through The Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program” (April 2008)
- “Readiness in the Post Katrina and Post 9.11 World: An Evaluation of the New National Response Framework” (September 2007)
- “Legislative Fixes for Lingering Problems that Hinder Katrina Recovery” (May 2007)
- “Assuring the National Guard is as Ready at Home as it is Abroad” (May 2007)
- “FEMA’s Preparedness and Response to All Hazards” (April 2007)
- “FEMA’s Emergency Food Supply System” (April 2007)
- “Post Katrina Temporary Housing: Dilemmas and Solutions” (March 2007)

**WITNESSES**

**Mr. Major P. May**  
Regional Administrator – Region IV  
Federal Emergency Management Agency

**Mr. Bill Read**  
Director  
National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration – National Hurricane Center

**Ms. Karen Hagan**  
Disaster Officer, Florida  
American Red Cross

**Mr. Ruben Almaguer**  
Deputy Director  
Florida Division of Emergency Management

**Mr. Curt Summerhoff**  
Interim Director  
Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

## HEARING ON FEMA: PREPAREDNESS FOR THE 2009 HURRICANE SEASON

Friday, May 1, 2009

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT  
*Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure*

WASHINGTON, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in the Media Room of the James L. King Federal Justice Building, 99 Northeast 4th Street, Miami, Florida, Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton [Chair of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Norton and Diaz-Balart.

Ms. NORTON. I'm pleased to call the hearing to order. We're pleased to be in sunny Miami, ahead of the hurricane season. We think, we hope before a hurricane season, and we would like to keep our advantage of the hurricane season for the coming year. But we can't do that by fiat, so we've come to Miami to see what is being done here, and what we have been doing around the country to be prepared.

We are pleased to welcome today's witnesses to this hearing concerning an important issue for both Florida, and the Nation, as we seek information on preparedness for the upcoming Atlantic Hurricane Season. My thanks to the Ranking Member, Mr. Mario Diaz-Balart for recommending this hearing, and inviting us to South Florida, a location that we have chosen for our first hearing in preparation for the hurricane season, not only because of Miami's location, but, also, because of the leadership this area of the state has had in preparedness and mitigation. Because our Subcommittee has primary jurisdiction over the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, this is our first hearing ahead of the hurricane season for the country.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1st through November 30th. The catastrophic hurricane, and the failure of the government on the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Rita, and Hurricane Katrina have captured worldwide headlines in recent years; but, unfortunately, Florida's hurricanes have also been legendary. Hurricane Andrew's devastating effects in 1992 is one example. While hurricanes are not the most frequent disasters our nation faces, they probably are the most notorious, and they are often the most catastrophic.

Louisiana and Mississippi notwithstanding, Florida faces a greater risk from hurricanes than any other state. Since Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, Florida has received 22 major disaster dec-

larations, and eight emergency declarations under the Stafford Act for hurricanes or tropical storms, a greater number of declarations than for any other state during the same period. In dollar terms, FEMA has spent about \$10 billion on these disasters and emergencies; and, of course, that does not include costs borne by state and local governments, insurance, and voluntary agencies, and certainly by local citizens, themselves.

The State of Florida and Miami-Dade County are recognized as leaders in emergency management, especially in mitigation and preparedness. Unfortunately, a great deal of this expertise comes from experience. But since the Miami area was devastated by Hurricane Andrew, Florida has taken many steps to improve in all areas of emergency management. One example is Florida's statewide building code. The requirements in Miami-Dade County are the most stringent, generally requiring buildings to withstand winds of up to 146 miles per hour. Schools and other facilities that could be used as shelters are required to withstand winds of up to 186 miles per hour.

The best way to protect citizens who face the risk of hurricanes is to help make sure their homes, schools, and other facilities so they can withstand these storms through mitigation beforehand. As we have heard in other hearings of our Subcommittee, mitigation is an investment that surely works. This week, the House passed H.R. 1746.

[The Bill H.R. 1746 appears on p. :.]

Ms. NORTON.—that Mr. Diaz-Balart and I co-sponsored to re-authorize the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program. Studies have shown that mitigation, including pre-disaster mitigation, return three to four dollars for every dollar invested in the program.

While empirical studies are useful, it is also important to show tangible results. A specific example of mitigation occurred just north of here. In 2005, FEMA provided Pre-Disaster Mitigation program funds to finance roll-down storm shelters at five fire stations in Broward County, Florida. Soon after completion of the project, Hurricane Wilma struck Florida. The retrofitted fire stations not only were not damaged, but they were able to operate effectively during and after the storm.

Mitigation can reduce the vulnerability of homes and other structures, but it is also imperative that citizens are prepared for the risks they face. Florida is a leader here, as well. As Floridians know well, citizens must take personal responsibility for preparedness for themselves, and their families, especially in the initial days after a disaster when responders have limited means, and will need to focus on the most severely impacted, and the most vulnerable. Governments and non-profits do have an important role to play in preparedness, in particular, providing citizens the information and tools they need to prepare, and often to survive. Here, culturally and linguistically-rich South Florida is presented with a challenged that government has stepped up to meet.

Floridians who faced an unusual tornado recently, are aware that when citizens prepare, they are preparing not only for hurricanes, but for all hazard, or all the risks they face. What is necessary to prepare for a hurricane is, essentially, the same as one needs to prepare for a tornado, aa power outage, or even the so-

called Swine Flu, or what we hope will never occur, a terrorist attack.

Today we are pleased to hear from government officials at the federal, state, and local levels, and from the Red Cross, all of whom play vital roles in preparing our citizens, especially the most vulnerable, for whenever disasters may strike. We thank you all for your testimony, which will help citizens prepare for upcoming hurricanes, should they occur.

I'm very pleased to ask our Ranking Member, Mr. Diaz-Balart, if he has any opening statements.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me first thank you for not only coming down here, but for your leadership.

One of the things that you will all see is that, which I guess is relatively unusual, is the fact that Joan and I work exceedingly close together. We are friends. I am not only an admirer of her leadership, and I think you'll see today that she is tough, but fair, and always on the forefront making sure that we are as prepared, as possible.

I also want to thank all the witnesses here today from FEMA, the Red Cross, the National Hurricane Center, Florida Division of Emergency Management, Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management, and, also, Homeland Security. I know how much work you've all done, and you do, and I really appreciate you being here today.

I think it's fitting and timely that, as the Chairwoman says, as hurricane season approaches, that we examine hurricane preparedness here in Florida. As many, I think, recognize, the week of May 25th through 31st is recognized as National Hurricane Preparedness Week. I just this week dropped a resolution to Congress which, once again, recognizes that Preparedness Week, and also tries to remind people that this is coming, once again. And, hopefully, helps you all to make sure people listen, we've got to do all we can.

From Hurricane Andrew to more recent hurricanes, such as Charlie, Wilma, and Ivan, Florida has, unfortunately, as the Chairwoman said, seen its fair share of hurricanes and natural disasters. Now, imagine, however, a large Category 5 coming here towards Florida, and making landfall just north of Fort Lauderdale. Now, the storm then travels northwest as a Category 4, and causes a breach of the Herbert Hoover Dike at Lake Okeechobee. The hurricane then spends 36 hours over land, causing tornadoes, and more destruction, and then moves off to the Gulf of Mexico, before, once again, getting strong and making landfall on the Gulf Coast of Alabama.

This is a scenario laid out for Hurricane Ono. Is that the right name, I believe? Hurricane Ono, as a model for catastrophic disaster planning here in Florida, Madam Chairwoman. Now, such a scenario could occur. The consequences would be devastating. It would require the evacuation of three million people, most of south Florida would be under one to four feet of water for weeks, actually. And homes of about 70 percent of the population would be destroyed; and, obviously, millions would be without electricity.

This scenario is not that farfetched. In fact, Hurricane Ono is modeled after the path of the great Miami Hurricane of 1926. After

that hurricane, there were reportedly 373 deaths, and over 6,000 injuries, with 800 missing. Now, obviously, today, this is a different south Florida. There are a million more residents in the area, and much more development than there was in 1926. So a hurricane similar in strength and path would, frankly, create significantly more devastation, and probably loss of life.

This scenario is why preparedness and mitigation is critical to saving lives, and protecting property. I'm really pleased that the Florida Catastrophic Planning Initiatives, sponsored by FEMA again in 2006, and continues collaboration and collaborative workshops to identify and address gaps and challenges in the planning process.

Now, as you said, Madam Chairwoman, Floridians, unfortunately, know all too well the devastating effects of a hurricane. And, also, the importance of preparation. We all have our stories to tell about that. Florida state agencies, counties, local communities, and citizens have done, and continue to do, an extraordinary job in preparing for the disaster. We can always do better, though. Local communities have offered mutual aide and help, and assistance to one another, regardless of boundaries, or even funding.

I specifically recall running into, for example, the mayor of a city here, a small city here of Doral, Mayor Bermudez. I ran into him in a different city—in Medley helping. Medley actually had gotten devastated. He wasn't asking who is going to pay for this, or what. It was just, how can we help? I mean, you see other people. I also recall personally seeing a county commissioner in Collier County, Commissioner Colleta, going door to door before Hurricane Wilma in trailers, just telling people, guys, evacuate. This is a big one. So, again, Florida and Floridians recognize the importance of preparedness, because, unfortunately, we've experienced it first-hand.

I'm also, by the way, really pleased that Craig Fugate is now the President's Nominee to be the Administrator of FEMA. As Director of Florida's Division of Emergency Management, he has extremely—I mean, he has a lot of hands-on experience that gives him the knowledge and expertise to effectively lead FEMA. Obviously, when state and local resources are overwhelmed because of a major catastrophe or storm, and communities are trying to figure out how to recover and rebuild from a major disaster, FEMA needs to provide the resources, and the expertise that help communities get back on their feet.

Now, while FEMA's role in disaster response and recovery is critical, just as important is insuring that there is proper preparedness and mitigation. Good emergency management, as it relates to disasters like hurricanes, must happen before the incident, and not after. Preparedness before a disaster can dictate how effective the response is, and how well things go after that, as the Chairwoman was just saying. And, obviously, mitigation is a key factor in effectively preparing for disaster.

FEMA programs, such as the Pre-Disaster Mitigation program, and the Hazard Mitigation Rent programs are important elements in advancing the goals of mitigation. CBO has determined that for every dollar invested in mitigation, \$3 are saved. I believe the Chairwoman has talked about that more specifically. So, insuring that these mitigation programs are funded, and administered ap-

appropriately, can go a long way in saving taxpayers dollars. And, obviously, citizens here in Florida know the value and importance of preparing for a disaster, even though we can all do a lot better.

We understand the benefit of mitigation, and the savings realized when appropriate measures are taken to minimize the impact of disasters, like hurricanes. Part of preparedness, however, is also planning for the response and recovery. As we saw after Hurricane Katrina, you can't wait until the storm hits to have measures in place to respond, and to recover from disasters. Now, one of the biggest lessons from Katrina, learned from Katrina, was the importance of having a FEMA that is agile, quick, independent, which is why I'm one of the supporters of Chairman Oberstar's FEMA Independence Bill.

During Craig Fugate's nomination hearing last week, he pointed out the crucial issues that also housing can play in major hurricanes, such as the case similar to Hurricane Ono, which would result in the need for a half a million housing units. That's hard to conceive. That's about what we needed after Hurricane Katrina. We're still trying to resolve the housing issues in Louisiana, nearly four years after the storm. So, do we have a housing plan in place should such a storm hit here in Florida this season? We must, as Craig said, look at the worst case scenario, and identify the gaps that exist before a hurricane strikes.

The National Disaster Housing Strategy was released in January this year, and last week, FEMA issued its 2009 Disaster Housing Plan. The plan highlights a four-pronged approach to respond to housing needs following disasters. However, we must insure that specific plans for housing are in place in advance, before the hurricane season, which is, obviously, already upon us. For example, if the worst case scenario happened here in Miami, how many beds would we have available? What kind of temporary housing would be used, and who's responsible for what? I hope that the planning initiative, such as those undertaken under the Hurricane Ono example, are helping to answer these questions.

In addition, we have also learned that we must be smarter and fuller thinking with new technology to help preparing for the mitigation against disasters, such as hurricanes. I am very proud of the cutting edge research done at many of our local universities on forecasting and mitigation, along with, obviously, the Hurricane Center. FIU, for example, has done great work. It's derived critical data on building code standards and mitigation. They have this, which if we had some more time, I would love to show you. They have this wall of wind, and they actually replicate wind, and you see roofs flying off, and the windows blowing in and blowing out. It's a thing to see. Adopting reasonable building codes and using as many methods of communication as possible to warn the public of a disaster coming are just a couple of steps that we should take to further reduce risk to life and property.

That's why I'm proposing legislation, and I will encourage states to develop and implement building codes, like the one Florida currently has in place. Again, reasonable building codes, as the Chairwoman has said, would go a long way to minimize damage to homes, businesses, and the cost to the taxpayers. Allow Chairwoman Norton and others on this Subcommittee, there is legisla-

tion that will create a framework for FEMA to move forward in developing integrated public alert and warning systems. We're still relying on old technology there. And, right now, with Facebook, and Twitter, and everything else, we've got to make sure that we're communicating as well as we can, so instead of taking advantage of new technologies, like cell phones and satellites, we've got a long way to go, because we're not doing it. So, there's, obviously, no excuse to not employ as many methods of communication as possible to warn the public of an imminent disaster. So, we're working on that, and we continue to take more steps.

A lack of effective warning can easily undermine preparedness for a disaster. The more ways in which the public can be alerted to a disaster, obviously, the better the people will react. So, the bottom line is that there are many moving parts, and many, many key issues that must be addressed to be adequately prepared for hurricane season. And we must insure that we properly plan for, and address them in a coordinated fashion. So, I look forward to hearing from all of you today. I really appreciate you being here, and I want to once again thank the Chairwoman for being here. I know what her schedule is. You all need to understand that this is a very busy person.

Madam Chairwoman, I leave you with one more thought, which is, as you stated, we always have to do better, but nobody does it better than here in Florida, because of that cooperation between state, local, and federal agencies. So I am ecstatic that you're here in particular right now, right before the hurricane season, and I look forward to the testimony. Thank you so much, Madam Chairwoman.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Diaz-Balart.

I want to begin by setting the stage by hearing directly from the national Hurricane Center, NOAA's National Hurricane Center. And I'm pleased and look forward to hear the testimony from Dr. Edward Rappaport, Executive Director.

**TESTIMONY OF MAJOR PHIL MAY, REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR, REGION IV, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY; EDWARD N. RAPPAPORT, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, NOAA NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER; RUBEN ALMAGUER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; KAREN HAGAN, DISASTER OFFICER FLORIDA, AMERICAN RED CROSS; JONATHON LORD, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ON BEHALF OF CURT SUMMERHOFF, INTERIM DIRECTOR, MIAMI-DADE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY**

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Thank you. Good morning, Madam Chairwoman, and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart. Thank you for your support of NOAA, the National Weather Service, or NWS, and our Hurricane Program. Your support enables us to make the best forecast possible, and allows us to help the people of our nation understand the potential effects of hurricanes, and the actions they can take to protect life and property. Today, I will discuss NOAA's role in forecasting, warning, and helping the public prepare for hurricanes.

The services and information provided by the NWS are built upon an infrastructure of environmental sensors, including sat-



ellites, aircraft and buoys, computer analyses and simulations, and advanced communication systems. Our staff comprises topnotch scientists and technical experts who maintain almost continuous interactions with our users. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Hurricane program.

Tropical cyclone forecasts are issued from the NWS National Hurricane Center, or NHC, every six hours, and more frequently during landfall threats. These forecasts include text messages and supporting discussions, as well as a suite of graphical products depicting our forecasts, accompanying probabilities, and the “cone of uncertainty”, as it has become known. The NHC is responsible for predicting the path and intensity of the storm, issuing costal hurricane watches and warnings, and describing broadly the weather conditions expected, including projected storm surge levels, as displayed in the handouts that you have, and the poster that we provided, as well.

NWS weather forecast offices, or WFOs, also play a critical role in the hurricane forecast and warning process. WFOs use their local expertise to refine NHC advisories, and provide specific, detailed information about the effects from the hurricane. These include more details about storm surge inundation levels, and local watches, warnings, and advisories covering their local forecast area responsibility. Local emergency managers use this information when making evacuation, and other preparedness decisions.

The NHC and WFOs disseminate their vital information through a broad range of methods, including the media, commercial weather sector, and the internet. These complementary sources enhance public awareness of the hurricane threat.

Working with and communicating our forecast information to emergency managers is essential. Recognizing the need for coordinating with a large number of federal, and state-level emergency managers when hurricanes approach land, FEMA, and the NWS established a Hurricane Liaison Team in 1996. The team is made up of federal, state, and local emergency managers, and NWS meteorologists and hydrologists who have extensive hurricane operational experience. The team is strategically activated well in advance of potential storm impact to provide the proper coordination of critical information between the NHC and the emergency management community at the federal and state levels.

In addition to storm-specific information, we work year-round with emergency managers to educate them about weather effects from hurricanes. In turn, they educate us about response issues, and their challenges. It is a constant learning process, and the key is working together to insure the public takes appropriate action.

This week, for example, NHC Director Bill Read has been at the Gulf Coast States Hurricane Conference. On Monday, he will be in Washington providing a Hurricane Basics briefing to cabinet members, and the narrative for a tabletop exercise developed with FEMA. One of our outreach activities is NOAA’s Hurricane Awareness Tour, that alternates annually between the Gulf Coast and the Atlantic Coast. The tour raises hurricane awareness among our partners, and the public. This year’s tour takes place next week beginning in New Hampshire, and ending in Key West. The NHC and WFOs also participate in national hurricane preparedness meet-

ings, and many state-level sessions, having tabletop exercises, including an annual State of Florida hurricane exercise. These drills are designed to build pre-storm expertise for emergency managers.

Coordination and communication at the local level are also critical. During the past year, for example, NWS offices across the State of Florida, in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Melbourne, Tampa, Key West, and here in Miami, gave numerous presentations, online chats, and training classes to discuss weather, and the potential effects from hurricanes and other tropical systems. These outreach efforts raise awareness, and are designed to teach people how to prepare for the storms long before they form.

Another example of the training we provide is an "Introduction to Hurricane Preparedness" course. For more than 15 years during the winter, non-hurricane season, FEMA and NOAA have coordinated to teach the course at NHC. This course has trained more than 1,000 coastal emergency managers and local decision makers since the program began.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the NHC hurricane track forecasts continue to increase in accuracy. Nevertheless, no matter how accurate our forecasts, our communities need to hear the forecasts and warnings, and then know what actions to take. In this regard, the combined preparedness, education, and communication efforts of the NWS, DHS/FEMA, state and local emergency management officials and decision makers, and the media have been key advances in safeguarding the lives and property of our citizens during the past several decades. These partnerships will remain critical in our efforts to minimize future losses caused by these forces of nature. I am happy to answer any questions that you may have for me.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Dr. Rappaport.

Let me ask you straight out, Dr. Rappaport, this is now the beginning of May. June 1st begins the Atlantic Hurricane Season. Forecast for us all you do for hurricanes in this region in the coming session. What can you tell us as specifically as you can what is going to happen, if you know.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Easy question.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Thank you for the question. Perhaps, to clarify, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center has the lead for the federal government in generating the annual seasonal hurricane forecast. That process now is under development and the-

Ms. NORTON. Dr. Rappaport, this is a month ahead of time. That means we could have a hurricane June 1st. Heaven knows, I'm not wishing that on Florida, or any other part of the country. I was on this Committee during the debacle of Katrina. When you say a month ahead of time we are still in preparation, or are hurricanes such that they only develop so that you cannot forecast even a month ahead of time?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. I'll answer the second question first. We are not at the stage yet where we can make forecasts a month ahead of time.

Ms. NORTON. When are forecasts developed? Do we have time. We have timed this hearing because we are pretty close to hurricane season. And if a month ahead of hurricane season we are un-

able to make any prediction about the coming hurricane season in the state that has had the largest number of hurricanes in recent memory, then I need to know what we need to do in order to make hurricane predictions sooner, or I need to know whether that is something impossible, because of the way hurricanes develop.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. I appreciate the question, and the comments.

As it turns out, hurricanes have occurred in the Atlantic hurricane basin in every month of the year. If you go back historically, you'll find a hurricane and tropical storm in every month. The traditional hurricane season, though, begins in June, because that is the time when there begins to be an increase. Typically, there are few, if any, storms or hurricanes before June. The most active period is actually August, September, and October.

One of the reasons for making final adjustments to the forecast now is to have in-hand the latest information about what is going on in the atmosphere at this time, and in the oceans, so that we can have the best forecasts possible at the start of when hurricanes actually will begin. So, at this stage, while a forecast could be made, it's likely not to be as good as one made several weeks from now, when we have the most recent information, because the atmosphere does change.

Ms. NORTON. The only reason I ask this question, Dr. Rappaport, is because of an article that appeared this week in the Wall Street Journal questioning the reliability, indeed, the utility of a seasonal hurricane forecast. You suggested that there was not sufficient historical information to make reliable predictions. That's why I'm asking you questions. I not only asked was there a prediction, but whether it's possible to make a prediction. I know science can do what it can do. I mean, maybe hurricanes don't develop such that one can predict, but the public needs to know, or how far in advance, particularly in a hurricane prone region, to expect some warnings. I ask this question because we are emphasizing to the public, it's not our responsibility alone. It's not your responsibility alone. But without good information, then it becomes nobody's responsibility.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Yes. NOAA has two components that make predictions for hurricanes. The Climate Prediction Center will provide the overall seasonal forecast within the next few weeks. However, the state of the science has not reached the point yet where they can say which areas are going to be affected. So, even if we knew accurately how many storms will occur, that's not really as important as knowing which areas are going to be affected, and when, and how strong will the storm be.

Because of that, because the science is not evolved to that point yet, we recommend that all areas in the hurricane zone prepare for a possible strike in a given year. And the best time to do that is now, and meetings and hearings, such as today's, provide visibility that's important to the hurricane risk problem. It's much better for the public to prepare now, shortly before hurricane season, than in the frantic moments when a hurricane is at their doorstep.

Ms. NORTON. Now, the hurricane zones, the places that should be preparing now are? Can you name them?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. The United States, for the contiguous United States it's from Texas all the way to Maine along the coast. We've

had hurricanes as far inland as about 150 to 200 miles. The most significant component of a hurricane is storm surge, and those are the maps that you now have in front of you. And we have several different examples of where the risk areas are.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. There's one here I think is showing the eye.

[Laughter.]

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Perhaps, just by coincidence we have some charts for the Miami area, and for the National Capitol region. And we can discuss those, if you would like.

Again, to emphasize, we don't yet have the skill to predict the numbers of storms with high accuracy, but I will say, it's my personal perspective that the seasonal forecasts, while not being as precise, perhaps, as our short-range forecasts issued by the National Hurricane Center, do tend to lean the right way each year.

Ms. NORTON. You say they have increased in accuracy. What has allowed you to increase in accuracy. After Katrina, were their findings that were directed specifically on accuracy? Although, I must say, the problem with Katrina was not the prediction. I think NOAA was right. It was the government, state, local, federal who did not step up fast enough. Could that happen again? I mean, that's why I'm making—how much ahead of time did you predict the hurricane there before that catastrophe struck.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. In 2003, the National Hurricane Center extended its forecast range from three days to five days, because of continuing improvements in our forecast accuracy. Indeed, over the last 15 years, the accuracy of our forecast tracks, or the errors, let's say, of our forecast tracks, where the storm is going to go, have been cut in half. So, in the case of Katrina, for the last 60 hours or so before landfall, the forecast indicated a landfall in southeast Louisiana, a progression up to the Mississippi coast of what would be considered a major hurricane, at least Category 3 intensity. So, the forecast for Katrina in the last two and a half days was spot-on, and did not vary.

That said, we still have a ways to go. While track forecasts continue to improve, our forecasts for intensity are much more challenging. And, in fact, that is the component of forecasting that we've highlighted for the research community as the area we need the greatest help for.

With that in mind, we're grateful to the Congress for providing \$17 million for this fiscal year for what's become known as NOAA's Hurricane Forecast Improvement Project. That project is intended to cut the errors, not only for track, but intensity, in half, by another 50 percent within 10 years. The intent there is to use those resources to enhance our computing capability, to develop better models and simulations, to get new observing platforms, and to do what's called a transition process from research into our operations of the National Hurricane Center. So, there is effort within NOAA's research arm, as well, to work on the Hurricane Forecast Improvement Project.

Ms. NORTON. I'm going to ask Mr. Diaz-Balart if he has any questions at this time.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I first have a confession to make, I almost didn't recognize him when I walked in because I've never seen him so rested. Usually, I see him at the

Hurricane Center after not sleeping for a few days, so, seriously, I almost didn't recognize you, you look so fresh and rested.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Thank you.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. In my opening remarks, I described the worst case scenario with regards to a hurricane. And I understand that that was modeled after the big one of 1926, the Great Hurricane. What do you think the probabilities are that a similar Category 5 will actually make landfall in Florida in the coming year, whenever that might be. Is that something that, is it going to happen? Is it an issue of not if, but when, or not really?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. It really is a matter of when. We do look back at the historical records as an indicator of what's to come. We can derive some statistics to take a look at what's the likelihood of getting a Category 5 hurricane. Unfortunately, for you and us, and everybody in this area, south Florida has the greatest risk. In fact, what we call the return period, how often we should expect a Category 5 hurricane in our area is every 33 years. That doesn't mean that we would be hit directly by a Category 5, but it means that one will be passing close-by, at least.

Now, if you expand that to include the rest of the state, you can see that we have a very significant risk of having a Category 5 hurricane again in our lifetimes. The risk does decrease as you go farther north, so, for example, the Washington, D.C. area, the likely most intense hurricane to expect there would be a Category 2, and that would be on the order of once in 100 years. That doesn't mean we have 100 years to wait. It could come this year. We could get two this year. But, on average, that's the kind of frequency that we're looking at. So, for south Florida, we're looking at a major hurricane in our vicinity roughly every 10 years or so, and a Category 5 hurricane, like Andrew, in our area three times a century, every 33 years or so.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. That's a scary proposition. You highlighted in your testimony, and you kind of mentioned about it, as well, about how you disseminate warning information, and information in general. And, as I mentioned, I plan to introduce legislation that will provide a framework for the development of an integrated public alert and warning system, hopefully, dealing with new technologies that are available, et cetera. I would love to work with you if you have any suggestions, not necessarily now, but if you have some now as to what you think are some of the elements that should be part of that system. I don't know if you have some recommendations or have any thoughts, but also continue to work with you as we go along.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. We would be pleased to work with you. As I mentioned, the major components for improving the technical part of our work, the hurricane forecasts, are computing capabilities, the computer models that we rely very heavily on, the data that goes into the research that builds up all those activities. And then making sure that those advances get their way to the Forecast Operations, both here at the National Hurricane Center, and in our Weather Forecast Offices. And we'll look forward to working with you on that.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. You also have in your testimony that FEMA and the National Weather Service, obviously, the

Hurricane Liaison Team in '96, federal, state, and local emergency managers along with other experts. Can you talk a bit more about that, and how it operates in disasters, and what planning is done by this team to prepare for a hurricane?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. In advance of a hurricane, typically, on the order of two days before, this team will be activated, which includes bringing in experts from around the country to augment our staff. And what it allows us to do is have both emergency managers, and meteorological experts on site, kind of speaking their languages to each other, and then communicating to those outside of our facility. We do that via video teleconference to the various preparedness agencies. It could be in the state, or in the federal government, through, occasionally, through the White House. These are daily briefings, but more frequent, as necessary. And it allows us to have a situational awareness where all parties are listening, and talking with the same information, at the same time. They're able to see what each other's problems are, what the issues are, and contribute, we hope, to minimizing those problems.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. A couple of more questions, Madam Chairwoman?

Ms. NORTON. Continue, sir.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Kind of going off the Chairwoman's question, she was talking about Katrina and New Orleans, how much advance notice did they have. How much time, usually, does a community have notice-wise to know that something is coming their way? Obviously, I know that the cone gets smaller and smaller, but usually what's that time frame that a community has to know, hey, the chances are this is going to hit us? What's that time?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. It could vary a little bit, but I'd like to commend you, because of the preparedness that we have in south Florida, Floridians, especially down here in south Florida, seem to be watching and knowing when there's a hurricane moving off the coast of Africa, and they've got two weeks of notice.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Oh, yes, we watch.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. As the storms approach the coast, however, our forecasts go out five days in advance, so you do get some indication that there's at least a potential risk for your area that far in advance. The information becomes more specific, and what we call hurricane watches and warnings are issued beginning roughly two days in advance. The definition of a warning, of a hurricane warning is that hurricane conditions are expected in your area within the next 24 hours, or perhaps a little bit greater than that. That's really your call to take action now. And the 24 hours was actually designed to ensure that everybody had at least 12 hours of daylight to take those actions. Those actions will vary, of course, depending on your vulnerability, and your location, and the intensity of the storm. And we depend very highly on the media to get the word out, and our colleagues in emergency management to provide the additional information to the public that interprets the meteorology so they can make their decisions.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I would imagine that there's a lot less sense of urgency as you go more north up the coast. Obviously, those areas that are expecting it have recently received damage. I'm sure in Florida— I see a storm out there, and I start getting nervous.

But I imagine that it's a lot less sense of urgency as you go up north. I don't know how you do that, because if you haven't got hit by one, you don't really take them that seriously.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Right. Fortunately, there is likely significant difference in how the public perceives a hurricane in those areas, and how the emergency management officials and our colleagues in the weather forecast offices perceive them. Yes, there are two sides to this. By living farther north where the hurricanes come less frequently, that's good news. But when it does come, you may not be as well prepared. Fortunately, the local weather forecast offices of the Weather Service, and the emergency management officials all the way up the coast are doing the same kind of preparations that we do here in south Florida. It just may not be quite as visible, but they have their plans ready, as well, should a storm approach.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. And, lastly, Madam Chairwoman. These maps are a little scary. Could you just kind of describe a little bit of what we have here?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Sure.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I guess, we should look at Category 5, which is the most-

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Okay. There are two different depictions of Category 5. Let's look at the one that has in white the various locations labeled.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. All right. Let's see. Which one is that? That would be-

Dr. RAPPAPORT. It shows Category 5, and it has Miami Beach. Yes, that would be it, two feet.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Oh, I'm sorry. That one. Okay.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. What we're showing here in the gray area is the populated region of south Florida, the metro area. The brown is also land. The kind of aqua way off to the right side is the Atlantic. And the vibrant colors in-between are indications of how deep the storm surge would get for a Category 5 hurricane that has the center taking a track across the very lower left of your page. See the little black line across the lower left, if the center of the hurricane crossed the coast down there, this is the kind of storm surge you would expect. Storm surge is worse on the right side, because that's where the winds are pushing the water ashore.

The storm surge is the increase of water being pushed ashore by the very strong winds. What you see is that the entire coastline from south of Homestead, all the way up to the top of the page will be underwater for at least some hundreds of yards. And that the depth can be, in red you see on the scale there, as much as 12 feet. Some areas, though, are much seriously effected. If you look at Key Biscayne, just offshore, it's all blue. Key Biscayne goes completely underwater by two to three, some places four feet. So, in essence, you have just the buildings sticking above the waterline.

Making this more complicated and severe is that on top of that are the waves, and the waves are what really have the power and the momentum to damage buildings. On the immediate coast, we talked about water levels as high as 10, 12 feet, but you could look and see that other areas in Miami and south also flood, particularly going up the Miami River, and then spilling across to Miami International Airport, which would also be partly to all under-

water. Coral Gables, historic Coral Gables, would have as much as 10 feet of water. And down south, where we had problems with Andrew, which was a much smaller storm. I should say this was a large storm, so it spreads the effect further north than Andrew, but the same kind of effect we saw with Andrew, deep water.

The other issue here I'd like to point out is, in the areas that are not quite as highly populated south of Homestead, look how far the water moves inland, more than 10 miles. So, we have an immediate risk at the coast for water levels on the order of 8, 10 feet, and even higher, offshore some of the islands, including part of Miami Beach will go underwater, and to the south, the water will spread as much as 10 miles inland. So, this is a very serious risk. We're fortunate that we don't get this very often, but we know that we will have another storm like this some day in the future.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. And, Madam Chairwoman, I hope nobody takes this personally, but I hope I don't see you a lot this season.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. I understand.

[Laughter.]

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Has there ever been a storm like this in memory. I'm talking about a Category 5.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. There have been three Category 5 hurricanes to hit the United States. One was Andrew in 1992, one was Camille in the Mississippi Gulf Coast in 1969, and the other was the Labor Day Keys Storm, 1935. Fortunately, none of the Category 5 hurricanes that made landfall have been large, but that will happen. And the 1926 Miami Hurricane, which affected so much of Florida, and which would be the most devastating in terms of damage, dollars lost, if it came ashore now on the order of—the projections are \$200 billion losses. That hurricane was a large Category 4 hurricane, so on a similar track to what is showing here, maybe a little bit north of this.

Ms. NORTON. This doesn't have anything to do with dikes or anything else. It essentially says there's nothing you can do except be underwater.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. You can prepare for the worst of the conditions.

Ms. NORTON. It may matter to planners of buildings only.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Well, as I'm sure you know and will hear, there are plans to move people out of harm's way, and we rely on our colleagues in the emergency management community to do that.

Ms. NORTON. In the emergency management community, the great debate is how much the dikes and the like—but there's nothing here between south Miami and the Port except the kind of preparedness you are doing.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. If I may comment just briefly on Katrina. There was a great loss in Katrina in Louisiana in the New Orleans area. But apart from that, which was caused, to some degree, by the levy system, or failure there. There was still on the order of 200 deaths along the coast in Mississippi. That's the kind of threat we're dealing with here. So, even if we didn't have the problem in New Orleans, we would have had a major loss, unfortunately, from Katrina, so there's still much to do in the way of outreach and education.



And that's why we spend so much of our off-season focusing on that.

Ms. NORTON. Did you have much effect from Katrina over here?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. We did. Katrina did come ashore here first as a Category One hurricane.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. I remember Katrina. I was out of power, I think it was—I don't know if it was Katrina. I think it was Katrina. I think I was out of power for two weeks.

Dr. RAPPAPORT. Yes. There were problems here in south Florida, but, fortunately, nothing like what they experienced in the Gulf Coast.

Ms. NORTON. A final question about climate change. Has what you now understand—what we all now understand about climate change on the one hand. What relationship, if any, does that have to the development of hurricanes, and has there been any change in the development of hurricanes that you can attribute to climate change?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. The relationship between climate change, or global warming and hurricanes is still a matter of open debate among the scientists. There are recent publications in the scientific literature, which suggest that the relationship is relatively small, that warming of the atmosphere and the oceans will make minimal difference in the number of storms, but could increase their frequency a little.

Again, though there are views -

Ms. NORTON. Their frequency, but not their effect?

Dr. RAPPAPORT. No. The frequency, I'm sorry. The frequency would not change much, but their intensity, I'm sorry, could increase a little. I appreciate the chance to clarify.

There is still ongoing research, and NOAA is sponsoring some of that as part of our responsibility for dealing with the environment. And we would think that this will be an ongoing issue for some time to come.

Ms. NORTON. All right. The relationship between melting of ice caps and what happens with climate is very impressive to hear. And this research could not be more important, because here we could have an effect on climate change in the short run—the kind of warming that science has now categorically established in the longer term, whatever that turns out to be. We have a responsibility. Thank you very much, Dr. Rappaport, for your opening testimony before this hearing. It's very important for us to be able to go further and hear from the other witnesses. And we're going to ask the other witnesses if they will come forward at this time. And we're going to ask to hear from the Federal witness first. Then from Florida, then Miami-Dade, and then the Red Cross with this. I'm going to ask the witnesses to the greatest extent that they can, to summarize their testimony in five minutes—because we do want to hear your testimony, but bear in mind that we'd like to have summaries of your testimony. Your testimony, and I will indicate that all your testimony will be received for the full record. It's very valuable for us to have the full testimony for the record because we use this testimony in our own policy, and especially our own legislative changes.

Let me begin with the Regional Administrator, I suppose that would be with you. Introduce Major May.

Mr. MAY. Thank you very much, Chairwoman Holmes Norton, and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart. It's good to be here today.

You already covered in some of the opening comments and statements some of the many things we're involved with, not in Region IV, with all of our states, but also the State of Florida, specifically, some of the planning. I'd kind of like to go back over some of that now in more detail.

I serve as the FEMA Regional Administrator for the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. In this role, I oversee FEMA's All-Hazard efforts in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee. I have six coastal states. As a primary representative and coordinator for the disaster-prone region, I oversee the planning, development, implementation, execution of all FEMA Region IV programs and initiatives. My goals has to been to make sure that FEMA Region IV has a robust infrastructure, and all appropriate resources in terms of people, operational systems, planning, assessment tools, training exercises and equipment are in place.

Region IV has been preparing for the 2009 hurricane season. We're building our operational capabilities more effectively with response to recovery, amplifying our stance on hurricane readiness. And I'd like to provide more of that information now.

FEMA Region IV administrators have been charged to be more active and engaged in this state. We work more than ever before. As a result of PKEMRA, our own initiatives, we're working to improve our regional communications, performing gap analysis with each state, undertaking multi-state evacuation planning efforts, and supporting regional exercises. Among the lessons learned after the 2005 hurricane season, none have been taken more seriously than the breakdown of the inter-agency and intra-agency communications. Over the past four years, we've taken major steps to make sure this breakdown does not happen again.

Critical information is shared and problems are solved among our states and federal partners in the Regional Response Coordination Centers, known as the RRCC.

Communicating during an event with various responders on the ground is always a challenge. We recently had an experience in Kentucky with the ice storms, which allowed us to exercise with great success our FEMA Strike Force, known as Mobile Emergency Response System, or MERS. MERS allows us to provide communication links rapidly in disaster stricken areas. Continued communications has been improved through the Regional Advisory Council, known as the RAC. The RAC is a regionally focused version of the National Advisory Council. Both elements were established from the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The RAC provides valuable advice, recommendations on regional emergency management issues, and has helped facilitate to further enhance our national and regional planning efforts.

We use a formalized analysis process known as the Gap Analysis program. The Gap is helping us to identify the shortfalls in all of our hurricane prone states. It was validated during the 2008 sea-

son when the commodity numbers that we agreed upon pre-season were accessible during the event. Some of the improvements we have made based on Gap findings in the area are in fuel planning and logistics. The regional fuel planning effort has been derived from a scenario driven to catastrophic planning development over the last two years for the State of Florida.

We have worked closely with Florida Emergency Management in identifying the needs, and coming to solutions. The inter-agency agreements with the Defense Energy Supply Center is structured to support FEMA's request, and will supply an identified supply of fuel within 72 hours.

Logistics. Over the last year, FEMA Region IV has greatly improved logistics capabilities. Commodities are now staged near disasters in National Logistics Staging Centers, where they can be distributed to locations specified identified for the state and the impacted areas. I'd also like to mention that Florida is one of the most prepared states in terms of their logistics program. Efforts will simply augment and enhance their very advanced state capacity here in the State of Florida.

Some of the other efforts we have here in the State of Florida, we have a joint warehouse in Orlando. We have completed state-specific logistics schedules for commodity distributions in sync with the state plan that's described under the Florida Catastrophic Planning effort, and Gap data collection. We are using GIS mapping capability to lay out the state staging area sites, and we're hosting a conference call among Florida and its sister states within our region, which offer a perform forum for logistics-specific discussions, planning, and sharing of best practices.

Our Mass Evacuation Transportation Planning effort goal is to have updated state evacuation plans with a focus this year on the Atlantic coast, specifically, South Carolina and Georgia. To make this effort work, we coordinate with several key players, such as Amtrak, and also private ambulance services and bus contractors to make this happen.

In 2008, the focus was the Gulf State region, and we are confident that the evacuation plans are functional and effective for the 2009 season.

To further strengthen our partnerships, FEMA is actively engaged with state governments in joint exercises to prepare for the 2009 season. In late May, Region IV, in partnership with the State of Florida, is preparing for the Hurricane Suiter tabletop exercise. Hurricane Suiter is a state and federal collaborative exercise to test selected systems and procedures prior to hurricane season. The exercise will provide FEMA and Region IV with an opportunity to test new methodologies, and approaches developed from the Florida Catastrophic Hurricane Planning process.

In conclusion, I believe we've made real progress in strengthening our relationships with our federal, state, and local counterparts. Ultimately, as our Acting Director, Nancy Ward, has stated, "If we do not plan together, train together, and develop policies and procedures together from the start, we, as an emergency management community, will never be as effective as we should be. It's that simple." I look forward to taking your questions. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. May. Now, I think our next witness then would be Mr. Ruben Almaguer. Is that right pronunciation?

Mr. ALMAGUER. That is correct, Madam Chair.

Ms. NORTON. Deputy Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management.

Mr. ALMAGUER. Thank you, Madam Chair, Congressmen. My name is Ruben Almaguer, Deputy Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management. I've served in this capacity for about two and a half years, appointed by the governor of Florida, Charlie Christ. I've had the blessing to serve under Craig Fugate, as well as a former administrator of FEMA, Dave Paulison, who is my fire chief. I previously served as a Division Chief and a Paramedic for Miami-Dade County here in south Florida for the last 20 something years, and so I've experienced first-hand, as a firefighter paramedic Hurricane Andrew hitting south Florida. I'd like to just briefly share with you this simple question, is Florida prepared today? Is Florida better prepared than we were in 2004-2005 hurricane season? I'm going to focus on a couple of things that are unique to our state.

First of all, it comes down to people. States need to be focused at not only the state, the federal level, and the local level, that you've got to have the necessary people to do the job to respond to these disasters, and remind everybody that the aggressive approach that Congress has taken in the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act to make sure professional standards and emergency management for the FEMA Administrator of the State of Florida, from my state's perspective, as well as the local, are hiring the best and brightest, and making sure people are qualified and trained to do their job.

Second of all, one of the unique things that we learned that we did not have in place that Mr. May mentioned was commodities. Really, most states in this country still today have focused on when disaster strikes, we get contractors in place. We get resources that we purchase, and that means you're a day late and a dollar short. So, Florida, through the leadership of this governor, as well as the legislature, has put dollars on the table through a state statute that forces that the Division of Emergency Management has a 200,000 square foot logistical resource center pre-stage in Orlando with over \$16 million of commodities in place that we own, that we manage, and we will distribute for disaster. That gives us the ability to get in front of these events, and push out water, and food, tarps, and key resources that will affect the survivor of these disasters within hours of the event, and even before the event. That way it will allow us, the contractors, as well as the federal system, to come behind us, three, couple of days later and bring those resources. But, generally speaking, if you're relying on contractors and contracts, you're very late in responding to a disaster.

Second of all, there's technology. And Congress, you actually talked about the ability to get effective communications out to residents of these communities. But, also, the technology to receive the information. So, being located in Tallahassee, Florida, one of the things we've realized that you've got to be on the ground. For as much as we have significant enough technology in an emergency

operation center, and expanded that to have unified command with FEMA, we want to make sure this governor and the Director of Emergency Management are on the ground at the disaster site to see the impacts of this event, so we can effectively respond to those counties who will request assistance from the state.

One key thing that Florida has done, and has taken the lead from FEMA, establishing a full-time disability coordinator. Many times, people with disabilities are forgotten. People with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, hearing impaired, visually impaired, and so we have a full-time person who works for the Director, who his job every single day, and this is a gentleman, Chip Wilson, who, unfortunately, is wheelchair-bound, his job every day is to remind me and this state that there's people out there with disabilities. On the average, potentially 20 percent of the population has some sort of disability. Are they being reached in the proper way being prepared? How are we responding to them, as well as how can they get through the recovery efforts of these disasters?

I will also emphasize that we can have all the people, and all the resources in place, but if you don't practice, you'll never play well. And that being said, as already mentioned here, and I won't go into detail, but Florida will conduct the largest scale hurricane exercise in its history the last two days in May, and the first two days in June. We will replicate the great Miami Hurricane of 1926 that affects south Florida, Tampa-St. Pete area, as well as the Panhandle, and we will put huge resources to make sure that we find out what gaps are in place in case that event happens this year.

In closing, the last two things I want to emphasize, it's about public outreach. We have a simple plan in Florida, every state does it a little differently, we tell people get a plan. It's real simple. There's civic responsibility. If you rely on the federal and state government, and even local government to save the day during a disaster, unfortunately, I'm not proud to say that they will come to the table. We will still assist people who are affected by disasters, but the best way to solve a catastrophic disaster is for residents of these communities to have the message of being prepared themselves, and that means food, water, commodities. Where are they going to go? Where are the closest shelters they should go to? Those are things that I cannot do for them. With almost 20 million residents in the State of Florida, I would need 50 warehouses the size that I have today to reach all of the residents of our community. So, the more people that are prepared, who have the resources, and have plans to take care of them, their family members, and their pets during disaster, the better the state can focus and use those commodities for people who are living paycheck to paycheck, the elderly, and the people living in south Florida in the communities that have very little to live on, and have no family members. Those are the people that these commodities should go to. And, so, we've talked about a very aggressive outreach program, which this year we kicked off "Kids Get A Plan." We realize that we have to get to the children, almost 3 million children in school every single day in Florida, so we are asking kids across this entire state to go to [KidsGetAPlan.com](http://KidsGetAPlan.com), so they can actually put together a kit on line in a very friendly interactive way to take these kids

and plans home and simply tell their parents, mom, where is our flashlight? Where is our water? Where is our kits?

And, in closing, I will tell you that Florida is only good because, unfortunately, the state has been impacted by more disasters than 47 other states in this nation. And it's nothing to be proud of, but also in Florida, out of the top 10 disasters in the state, seven affected Florida, so we gain a lot through experiences. We do some things well, and every time that we fail to meet the mark, we improve and use the best practices for future disasters. Madam Chair, I'll be available for questions, as well.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Almaguer. Now, I'm going to have to be through with this hearing before 12:00, and I want to get all this time to ask questions, so I appreciate that you all have your testimony reasonably within the 5 minute summary period. And I want to especially go to Mr. Lord now.

Jonathon Lord is Assistant Director, Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

Mr. Lord.

Mr. LORD. Thank you, Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart. Good morning, and thank you for asking me to speak before you today about Miami-Dade County's Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, and the County's state of readiness for the 2009 hurricane season.

Miami-Dade County is approximately 2,000 square miles in size, and has a population of about 2.5 million people. In terms of square miles, Miami-Dade County is larger than the District of Columbia, the states of Rhode Island, and Delaware. Miami-Dade government provides municipal government services for roughly 1.1 million of those residents in unincorporated areas, employs more than 30,000 people, and has an overall annual budget of \$7.5 billion, and an operating budget of \$4.9 billion.

The other 1.4 million residents live in 35 municipalities throughout the county. The cities of Miami, Hialeah, and Miami Gardens are the most populous municipalities in the county. Miami-Dade County is bordered by two national parks, to the southeast, Biscayne National Park, and to the west, Everglades National Park. Miami-Dade County is one of only three locations in the United States of America that has ever been struck by a Category 5 hurricane. And, as you all know, that was Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Since 1992, Miami-Dade County has activated its Emergency Operation Center 45 times; 20 of those activations were because of the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm. Since then, since 1992, Miami-Dade County has ordered evacuations and/or opened hurricane evacuation centers 20 times because of those same threats of a hurricane or tropical storm. The 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons were, by far, the busiest for our county. Our Emergency Operation Center was activated seven times to deal with those threats.

The last three hurricane seasons have been relatively uneventful. The county did activate its Emergency Operation Center in August of 2006 for Hurricane Ernesto, August 2008 because of Tropical Storm Fay, and September 2008 because of Hurricane Ike. Thankfully, those storms did not cause any significant damage or injury in Miami-Dade County.

While we are thankful for three consecutive years of relatively uneventful hurricane seasons, we are always concerned that complacency could set in amongst residents because of inactivity. The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security works tirelessly to keep residents prepared for hurricane season. The county produces all hurricane and emergency preparedness publications in English, Spanish, and Creole to serve the three major languages in our community.

The Department actively organizes and participates in local hurricane preparedness fairs, and expositions, no matter how small or large they are, and where they take place. The county works very closely with local municipalities to insure that all residents, not just those in unincorporated areas, are prepared for hurricanes.

While Miami-Dade County is rich in resources, the county works closely with Florida Division of Emergency Management when certain resources cannot be identified within the county. The Florida Division of Emergency Management then works to provide those resources to our county.

Our Department manages Miami-Dade Alerts, a wireless emergency notification system that alerts residents whenever a hazardous situation, like a hurricane, threatens the county. This system currently has more than 120,000 subscribers. The Department also engages private sector businesses through our Local Mitigation Strategy. This program actually just celebrated its 10th year anniversary last year, and its participants include major corporations, and small businesses.

Together, the public-private partnership has completed more than \$250 million in strengthening infrastructure around Miami-Dade County. This program's members are represented in the Emergency Operations Center, as well, during activations. Some examples of the work completed by the LMS Group, the Local Mitigation Strategy Group, include several major flood mitigation projects, and the shuttering of critical infrastructures, such as hospitals, and public safety agencies. Miami-Dade County has completed approximately \$800 million in public assistance enhancements when restoring infrastructure after declared emergency events.

The County also works very closely with Miami-Dade Public School system to establish hurricane evacuation centers that can be open, should their County Mayor order an evacuation. Presently, there are a total of 56 hurricane evacuation centers throughout Miami-Dade County, with a capacity of over 85,000 spaces. These totals include primary, secondary, and tertiary hurricane evacuation centers. In addition to these hurricane evacuation centers, the County has six special needs evacuation centers to serve our vulnerable population.

The County established an Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program. This program provides transportation to special needs centers that are operated by medical personnel. There are currently 2,000 people registered for this program. The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security works also very closely with the National Hurricane Center. Any storm within 1,500 nautical miles, and with a forecast track to bring it in the general direction of south Florida, is closely mon-

itored by our Department, as well as any system that initially develops in the Gulf of Mexico, or the Caribbean.

The Department issues readiness advisories to all of our Emergency Operations Center partners, and engages in conference calls with local agencies, and the National Hurricane Center. These advisories including things like the storm's position, and forecast track. We also provide a tentative planning schedule in which we enter data provided by the National Hurricane Center, such as direct path calculations, forward speed, and potential arrival of tropical storm force winds in our community. These advisories provide a time line for preparedness activities, including the issuing of press releases, conducting special needs population call-downs, and the opening of evacuation centers. And, additionally, establishing EOC activation levels, and considering a Local State of Emergency, and beginning general evacuations or Bus Pickups for assistance of those who cannot get to an evacuation center on their own.

Let me conclude by saying that maintaining local, state, and federal partnerships exhibited here in south Florida, are key to ensuring our community's preparedness. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for this opportunity.

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

Ms. Hagan.

Ms. HAGAN. Thank you very much, Chairwoman Norton, and Congressman Diaz-Balart. I am honored to represent the American Red Cross. My name is Karen Hagan. I'm the State Disaster Officer for the American Red Cross in Florida. And I know that you've read the written testimony, and I'd like to just focus on a couple of key points.

Behind me is Sam Tidwell, and he is the CEO of the Greater Miami and the Keys Chapter. And any specific questions related to this area, I'd like to engage him in that.

Today's issue is preparedness for the 2009 hurricane season beginning June 1st is important to the Red Cross, and it's especially important to me, and my colleagues around the state. The Red Cross stands ready to respond this hurricane season, and we continue to improve our coordination and relationship. We have a wonderful relationship with FEMA Region IV, with state Emergency Management, local Emergency Management agencies, other state organizations, and, of course, the other non-governmental and faith-based communities.

Specifically, what we bring to the table, the first and most foremost is mass care, that presence, that opening of a shelter where survivors can go. They can expect a place to sleep, a safe place to exist, food, mental health. And one thing I want to say about sheltering is the survivors that go into either a hurricane evacuation center or a shelter, when they are in that building, they do not know when they leave there whether or not they'll find a home to go back to. So, the mental health component to that is very important, and very critical.

We have been participating with the Catastrophic Planning Process since its inception. We're prepared to test some of the planning scenarios, and some of our planning assumptions at the statewide hurricane exercise at the end of May and beginning of June.



The other thing I want to mention is the difference between a hurricane evacuation center, a place where people need to get out of harm's way, a lifeboat, and a shelter. Once we can move people from an evacuation center into a shelter, then that's where they can expect a place to sleep, the food, and the support that is more traditionally thought of when we talk about a shelter.

I can say that in the State of Florida, Florida Division of Emergency Management has utilized the American Red Cross National Shelter System as its shelter database of record. Last year, as we prepared to enter into hurricane season, we had about 695,000 shelter spaces in that system. Today, we have 842,000 plus shelter spaces. That's an increase of 150,000 shelter spaces, which is very exciting. With that increase, however, is a need to train more shelter managers, more shelter workers, et cetera. So, it's an ongoing process of readiness and preparedness.

Along with sheltering, we provide feeding, both feeding within the shelters and mobile feeding for folks that haven't left their home. We'll be able to bring food to them, as well as bulk distribution items, such as: comfort kits, cleanup kits, and other necessities. And we have a whole system to provide that.

I mentioned mental health services in a shelter. We'll also have that available to folks wherever they may congregate because it is such an important component. We're available to do client case work, advocating for people, connecting community resources to the needs that the people have, and working with our partners, both government, and non-government partners.

We also have a tool, our Safe and Well website, which will allow survivors to communicate with family members outside of the affected area, just to allow them to know that they're okay.

Mr. Almaguer was talking about the outreach to people with disabilities. The American Red Cross is making it a nationwide priority to ensure that services and shelters are accessible, and as accessible as possible to people with disabilities. And we have initiated two big programs in Florida, both working with our State Disability Coordinator, Chip Wilson. One is to train emergency managers, the Centers for Independent Living and American Red Cross representatives to survey buildings for accessibility so that they can meet ADA requirements. The other is to teach disability etiquette to our shelter workers, so that we can provide the kind of services that we should be providing to people with disabilities when they come into our shelters.

The demographics of this state are diverse. We are trying to recruit the type of volunteers who can truly meet the needs, and communicate with people that we're going to be serving all over the state. And from training, to case work, to public messaging, everything we do is in Spanish, and much is in Creole.

Our collaboration with our government and non-government partners cannot be understated. We are in this together. We are actively working with many groups. This year, for example, besides the myriad of faith-based, community, and other religious organizations, we have worked significantly with the NAACP, with our Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living, and with our CERT, the Community Emergency Response Team, because

with that increase in shelter spaces, we need to see an increase in training and capacity building.

Are we ready for 2009? I believe that we are and will share some of our efforts taking place at the national level. We're expanding and pre-positioning supply inventory to support feeding and sheltering. We have on hand 500,000 meals, and MREs that we're storing. We've upgraded our IT systems to have greater controls over our financial management, and to share sheltering client information with our partners. We have pre-positioned communications equipment. In fact, in Florida, we have 20 Red Cross shelters serving all 67 counties, and every one of those chapters has a satellite communication unit, so that we can make sure that we're communicating. We have built more effective logistics, supply chain, and inventory control systems.

And, as far as our trained disaster workers, we have more than 80,000 people in the disaster response database; 93 percent are volunteers, and we've had an increase in Florida in that database of 11 percent since last year. So, we are ever-increasing our capacity.

I am confident, in closing, that the plans, processes, and partnerships that we have with our federal, state, local, non-profit, and faith-based organizations positions us well as we look to this hurricane season. Thank you, and I'll be happy to answer any questions.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Ms. Hagan.

In his home jurisdiction, I'm going to defer now to the Ranking Member for the first set of questions.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

First, Mr. May, the National Disaster Housing Strategy, which was released in January, and FEMA recently issued its 2009 Disaster Housing Plan. And, as I mentioned before, the plan advances a four-pronged approach to addressing housing units. And I think I'm going to have a couple of questions later about housing, as well. What plans specifically have been made here in Florida, and do they improve how housing would be managed in a worst case scenario? If you look at those flood lines, you realize that could be a huge issue.

Mr. MAY. Right. And, yes, we have been working with state and local government to identify that. And, as the Strategic Housing Plan, one of the big parts of that is, not only does it bring some of the old pieces of the FEMA housing opportunities, which were mobile homes and travel trailers to the scene, but also takes a look at the community, helping us make decisions how they want that housing to look in their communities. And, yes, we're working with them. A catastrophic event, though, is a catastrophic event. And we will have to work our way through a catastrophic event. The housing plan specifically does not address the catastrophic event. It creates a framework to establish a housing plan for the State of Florida.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Last year, I co-sponsored a bill that would provide incentives to states, and also to enforce statewide building codes. And how often do you think that building codes are for mitigation purposes?

Mr. MAY. How often do they contribute-

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. How successful are they, building codes-

Mr. MAY. I think they're tremendously successful. And normally, after an event, we will go out and do a survey to validate the flood heights, especially in the flood surge area, to determine if the mitigation efforts have been successful. And you heard, and you mentioned in your opening statements, I think both of you did, about the 4-1 ratio on mitigation efforts. They do work, and most cases, the maps are pretty accurate, and are reflective in the type of construction, and the height of construction, and those things do work.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Mr. May, one of the things that I think is a concern always, is you guys have to develop a balance, when FEMA should step in, and, obviously, who in local government has jurisdiction, or whatever. And you're doing a heck of a job, by the way, as I see it firsthand. Madam Chairwoman, I know that FEMA sometimes gets a bad rap, but you know, number one is they've done an incredible job of improving, and they've done some really good work. So I want to commend you for the work that you do. It's a delicate balance. How do you make sure that you don't overstep in order to make sure that you don't disincentivize local governments, and state governments from doing what they need to do. Obviously, they're closer to the ground than you are, so how do you balance that out?

Mr. MAY. Well, it is a partnership, and we're at the table in a partnership today. Second, we understand the responsibilities under the constitution of the governor and the state and local government, what their responsibilities are for the protection of the citizens of the community.

We mentioned the Gap Process earlier, how we engage, or are more engaged in asking probing questions of local officials about what their capabilities are, and then suggesting that maybe we could provide some assistance there; understanding it's their responsibility.

I think the catastrophic planning effort we're doing with Florida with the hurricane is a perfect example. Normally, when FEMA would let a contract to support an exercise, we would let a contract in Washington, and set the work schedule, things we want, the outcome of the exercise. This time, we went to Craig and said, "Craig, what do you want this exercise to accomplish? And you tell us what to put in the contract." And, so, by engaging that contract in that way, and it really is a bottom-up effort, and many of the folks who are at this table have been engaged in that process, so I think that's helpful, and how we approach the engagement with local government, and state government.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir.

Also about housing. If the worst case storm were to happen, and 50 percent of the homes and apartments were destroyed, how do you deal with that? How do you deal with that in the short term?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Well, one of the things we recently did that we'll be publishing is what Floridians want to do. We did a survey statewide, and we've realized, and we've already known, people want to stay either next to their house on their property, or very nearby, while their community rebuilds. It's their neighborhoods, it's where their churches are, it's where their jobs are. And, so, to displace people outside of these communities, and move them to other states is not what they want, and not what's going to happen in Florida.

So, even though it's the federal responsibility for the housing plan, it is a partnership with the state and locals, so the state already has in place contracts for implementing and assisting FEMA to get temporary housing units in these areas. We call it haul-and-install, and so, one of our responsibilities is to get as many travel trailers into these communities quickly to assist. But during catastrophic disaster, Congressman, I'll be very clear, for an exercise that we're going to conduct to replicate that great Miami Hurricane, there is not a housing plan in this country, in this world, that will be able to come to the table to assist in that event. We are still planning for that, but our focus is to focus on disasters in which we can get temporary housing in communities, but there will be situations where we have to move people outside of these communities, hopefully not outside of Florida, because generally, when they leave, they don't come back.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Well, right. And I think one of the things that we ought to realize is that there's something to be said about personal responsibility. Now, we're the ones that have to have—individuals have to have plans, have to have alternative places to stay. And I think the government always has to be the last gap approach, obviously. But let me restate the question that I asked before about the balance between FEMA and the state and local communities. How do you deal with that? How much is too much of a stretch for FEMA to be involved in the states and local communities? And how do you deal with that balance?

Mr. ALMAGUER. The public today would ask the media, or ask us where is FEMA? Which is actually the wrong question. Really, all these disasters, all the fire truck, police officers, paramedic, nurses and doctors, nobody owns any — the state doesn't have any of that stuff. FEMA doesn't have any of that stuff. It's the locals. So the question always needs to be at the local level.

The other side of this, sir, is, there is a very cautious approach in which a state doesn't want to be, and the counties in which we want them to grow their emergency management capabilities, and them to be as self-sufficient as possible.

I will tell you the worst thing Congress can do would be to embolden and empower FEMA to the point where they become so heavy-handed that it disincentivizes states to prepare, and have resources, and have the personnel to manage their own disasters. In our state, we love to be very proud to manage some disasters, and we do, many tornadoes and wildfires, and we don't ask for federal assistance. But there will come a day, and right now we have a Presidential declaration for the floods in north Florida, no one even knows about, that FEMA was right there at the table, very low-key assisting us, but the reality is, FEMA needs to—excuse me, the federal government needs to strengthen states and locals, and allow FEMA to have the resources for those large events that we would have to reach out to the federal government to assist us.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. You talk in your written testimony about building—which I thought was interesting—a survivor mentality, rather than a victim mentality, and that citizens should be encouraged to— and to empower the state to help in recovery efforts themselves after a disaster. Now, what are some of the steps that

can be taken to help empower individuals in preparing for a storm, and for the consequences after a storm?

Mr. ALMAGUER. I think we would all agree that it's a psychological dynamic in which, when we call ourselves victim, we feel like something has happened to us outside our control that now we can't do anything about. But now we deserve for someone to take care of us as a victim. We've been violated, something has happened, and that we are now traumatized. We actually look at victims are those unfortunate people who actually, we have to bury. We want very few of those people to ever happen in Florida. But, you know what, disasters will happen.

We believe that anybody who survives a disaster is a survivor. That means you have the responsibility to take care of you and your family, more importantly, check on your neighbor. Reach out in your community. There is not enough federal, state, and local resources for a large-scale disaster for everybody to come to the table and save the day. It's going to be Floridians in Florida who help neighbors to recover from these disasters, recovery that goes on many times for up to 10 years, so we want people in Florida to be survivors, not victims. And the way to do that is to get a plan, and be prepared for you and your family.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. You know, one of the things that is interesting is because when you have—you obviously warn people that these things are coming. You also help them to get prepared. You also have to tell them what's available, when it will be available, and that's also an interesting balance. We saw that after a few of the storms that we had able-bodied people standing in line for water and ice, when we never lost water in parts of the county. All you had to do was open the tap, and there were people waiting in line for hours, waiting for water, which I thought was interesting. So, that's a very interesting balance, to make sure that we continuously remind people that it's really our responsibility. The government is not the first line of defense, it's the last line of defense. Once you've—you can't do it for yourself, that's a very difficult balance to achieve, obviously.

Mr. ALMAGUER. If I may, one of the things that has not been mentioned here is the private sector. The private sector, the Publix, the Home Depots of all of Florida, as well as many other private companies really are the saving grace in Florida. It's easier and cheaper for the federal government and the state to get a Home Depot and a Publix open, to allow people to go in there and have the resources that these companies on a daily basis have the capabilities of reaching out and getting resources on the table, much better than the state and locals will ever be able to do. So, if they just need a generator, they need fuel, I'd rather get Publix and Home Depot open, where you can go and get your stuff. That means, guess what? It's not for free. And that's not the responsibility of government, but there is going to be times in which we can't do that, and those isolated communities is where we will open up points of distribution to get food, and water, and key assets to those areas that are very isolated. Our focus is generally to get private sector open to partner with the state, and get more resources on the table much more quickly.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. Mr. Lord, kind of the same question. How much is too much of an overreach, and what's the kind of relationship that you have with the state, and with FEMA?

Mr. LORD. I think the most important thing for us, actually, in looking at the partnerships is for us, at the local level, to truly take emergency preparedness very seriously, and help our residents build that culture of preparedness, whether it's housing, or having your supply of food and water, or having your place to go. And our concern is to make sure that all of our residents are always prepared for that. We have a great partnership with the state and the federal government.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. How do the local-

Mr. LORD. Yes. And the cities. You know, while we have the— the onus is on the county to provide emergency management services in the State of Florida, we have a very— like I said, 35 very strong municipalities in our county, that also do take emergency management very seriously. Even in the non-hurricane season, we focus on them, and meet with them on a regular basis, and address the concerns they have, make sure they're prepared for not just hurricanes, but other disasters, as well. Many things, such as providing ice and water when the time is needed for that to be provided, those municipalities do look to us to help provide those services. Many of them can provide it themselves, some rely entirely on us, depending on their size and their ability. And we take a look at the community as a whole, and try to find those areas that need our assistance the best.

We can also expect the same from the State of Florida, while we try to do as much as we can on our own, there's a point where Miami-Dade County cannot provide services any more, need assistance providing those services. Our great relationship with the State of Florida allows us in a matter of a phone call or an email to get those services and items we need almost instantaneously from the State of Florida.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. The Chairwoman has been very generous with me, so I'll be quick.

You spoke about outreach efforts to people with disabilities, which is something that I know the state has been very active with, and so has the local municipalities, and the county. But I'm also pleased to see that you're expanding your language bank, ensuring effective communications with those who speak Creole and Spanish. Can you talk about the progress that you're having there, and how you're doing there? Are you satisfied where you are there? I also want to thank you for, you and your's for the efforts that you make. I've also, unfortunately, I went to see not only with the shelters, but also in your trucks out there, feeding people in different areas, which is one way to keep people in their homes, which is great. A lot of people just don't have access to food anymore, so, again, thank you for your efforts. But talk to us a little bit about the language challenges, and how you're doing.

Ms. HAGAN. Okay. And let me first answer your question about disabilities. It's a national priority. It's a state priority. It's a local priority, and we're really in this together to make sure that we meet the needs of people with disabilities and can accommodate them. And I think I articulated that in my testimony.

I'd love to ask Sam to share some examples of what they're doing here locally with the language banks, and their training. Sam?

Mr. TIDWELL. Well, let me just say that certainly here in -

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Sir, give your name.

Mr. TIDWELL. Oh, Sam Tidwell, CEO of American Red Cross, Greater Miami and the Keys Chapter. Certainly, here in greater Miami and the Keys, our culture is so diverse. Seventy-five, eighty percent of our volunteers are bilingual, mostly in Spanish, but more and more in Creole, as well. And so, everything that we have, all of our communications, everything that we do is multi-lingual. And we have volunteers at every shelter, every evacuation center, and every feeding process that have people who are bilingual, or trilingual. And we certainly work closely with our partners in local government and state government to make sure that all the communications that we have going through that same process are in multi-language.

We engage so many partners from community organizations to traditional organizations that deal with the specific cultural communities that we have, as partners in the American Red Cross. And they are our volunteers, they are our sites for sheltering after storms, and they are communications with the communities.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thanks so much. Madam Chairwoman, can I ask one more.

Ms. HAGAN. Thank you.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Again, I apologize for abusing your generosity, but I'll ask Mr. May, the status of the Long-Term Recovery Office in Orlando. You talked about a little bit. Is it operational, is it fully operational there? There was plans I guess last year to downsize it, and closing it. Where are we on that? How is it going? What insurances do we have that it's going to continue to be there?

Mr. MAY. It's up and operational, and we continue to rightsize that office, when appropriate, based on workload. We use those personnel throughout the State of Florida for work to work in other disasters. We've used them also because of their expertise in other states around the country to work disasters, sometimes several months at a time, so it's a valuable resource for me. And I consider that's so, but it is our intent at long-term to watch, to continue to rightsize that office, like I have an office also in Biloxi, one in Alabama, also, that have been stood up as a result of previous disasters, that we also look at the needed staffing levels on a daily basis, on a weekly basis, excuse me, and determine what that should be. The staffing level there is very stable right now, as far as the workload is concerned. The state is staffed up their resources there, and we're making great progress on the 2004 and 2005 storms. And it's a valuable resource for us.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. That's one of the reasons I need to talk to you about the drywall later.

Mr. MAY. Chinese drywall?

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Chinese drywall, yes.

Mr. MAY. I've heard about it.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Yes, I, sure you've probably heard about it, and there's a bill that Congressman Wexler and I have spent some time on.

Mr. MAY. Yes, sir.

Mr. DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. NORTON. Certainly. I wish all of you would tell me what resources have been pre-positioned, and how that works as of now for any upcoming hurricane season. Which of you goes in first with resources? How are the others clicked in, if at all? What resources are we talking about? Where are they? Would you briefly give me answers on this.

Mr. MAY. Ms. Norton, I cannot specifically give you all the numbers, but FEMA does have strategic storage sites around the country.

Ms. NORTON. I'm only talking now about the Florida area.

Mr. MAY. Okay. We have co-located with the State of Florida in Orlando, we have resources there. And we do logistics planning with the State of Florida to determine what their logistics needs would be, and bring those resources in, primarily in the area of water and MREs, or meals ready to eat. And they'll be available based on the State of Florida's need.

Mr. ALMAGUER. Madam Chair, to be very specific, the State of Florida has 300 tractor trailers load of water, pre-positioned in Orlando. We have 50 tractor trailers pre-loaded of water in Homestead.

Ms. NORTON. So, does the state go in first?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Well, the state will always be -

Ms. NORTON. How is that coordinated with water, for example, that FEMA has?

Mr. ALMAGUER. The local county administrator, mayor, emergency management official will ask the state for assistance. At that point, we are going to mobilize all the resources.

Ms. NORTON. So, Miami-Dade goes in first?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. So, it's Miami-Dade in front of Florida, the ultimate source is FEMA. Is that the way it works?

Mr. MAY. That's correct. We bring the water to a staging site, and the state takes it from there.

Mr. LORD. Obviously, our supplies are much smaller, our stockpiles, but we do every year make sure we have supplies of mass-care items, sheltering items. Actually, our school district is very good, which serves as our shelters, actually having three days supply of food on throughout the entire hurricane season. So, in the event we have to turn those schools into shelters, they can actually be self-sufficient for three days, and provide feeding, and water, and care to those residents in the shelters. At that point in time, when we can no longer provide that care level, probably even before that when we know we're getting close to that breaking point, we would make the request up to Tallahassee, and the state would then help push out more items for us, if we do need them.

Ms. NORTON. Now, I want to find out, Mr. May, who is going to bear responsibility for Puerto Rico? You closed the center in Puerto Rico. How does this enable you to provide assistance to a largely Spanish-speaking island?

Mr. MAY. We've closed the NIPC, which is the application taking center that was established to serve the Spanish-speaking population there.



Ms. NORTON. Also, the people.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am. We have three sites around the country, and we have-

Ms. NORTON. You have what? I'm sorry.

Mr. MAY. We have three NIPC sites.

Ms. NORTON. NIPC, what's that?

Mr. MAY. That's a site-

Ms. NORTON. Speak English.

Mr. MAY. It is a center where we take the applications for disastrous needs after a disaster.

Ms. NORTON. Now, why did you close that? It is a very vulnerable, to say the least, area for hurricanes.

Mr. MAY. It was determined that the operational need for the facility based on capacity and the other sites that were located in this country could still take those applications.

Ms. NORTON. What about how isolated it would be, if people have to get there. We're talking about an island right off our coast, and if there's no center to take applications, and you've got to go from here to there?

Mr. MAY. Well, these applications—the NIPC Center applications are taken by telephone or by electronic means. We would still provide individuals in our mobile disaster centers to take applications.

Ms. NORTON. But who do you have on the island to-

Mr. MAY. We would have people-

Ms. NORTON. — to receive telephone— applications that would be relayed to where?

Mr. MAY. To three locations in the U.S. We have people standing by to take those applications.

Ms. NORTON. I hope you all have done some tabletops on that. We do not need to leave people who are very vulnerable in hurricanes-

Mr. MAY. Based on the workload-

Ms. NORTON. — with any delay whatsoever. These are American citizens, they just happen to be a little offshore.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am, we understand that. And we think we have capacity to meet that need.

Ms. NORTON. Let me ask you about trailers, Mr. May. I understand that, from the Disaster Housing Plan, that you're going to get the trailers with improved quality of air care exchange and the rest. How many of those do you have? What's happening with the older trailers that caused so much pain, and lawsuits, and all that goes along with that? Are there trailers available should they be needed here in the Atlantic, Florida, south Florida area?

Mr. MAY. There are trailers available if they're needed here.

Ms. NORTON. And what kind of trailers would they be, these new improved air quality, air exchange trailers?

Mr. MAY. We have some of those available. And I don't have those numbers. I can get back with you and give you exact numbers on those. We also have some trailers that meet a standard.

Ms. NORTON. Are any of these refurbished older trailers, of the kind we already had on-

Mr. MAY. Some of the trailers are refurbished, and meet the formaldehyde standard that we need to meet.

Ms. NORTON. I don't have any problem with that, so long as they meet the standard.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. NORTON. The problem I had was throwing away stuff. I never did understand throw-away society, and we're seeing a structural change in the American standard of living. I hope everybody knows, everybody—get you to throw your credit cards away. The United States is going to have to throw its away, too. But this is not just Wall Street's fault. Everybody has been living this way in a society that no longer makes anything, but thought it could still keep making dollars.

Mr. MAY. We will get back with you-

Ms. NORTON. So, we've got all these trailers out here that turned out to cause sickness, if not death. I wish you would get to this Committee within 30 days, the disposition of all of these old trailers, particularly for reconditioning them

so that they are so safe for human beings, for long-term occupancy, if necessary. We certainly hope that won't be necessary. Have there been any recent—are people still in trailers here in Florida?

Mr. MAY. I think we have seven families, maybe, in the State of Florida that are in trailers from the 2005 and 2005 season. And those trailers did not have a formaldehyde issue, if my understanding is correct.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Almaguer?

Mr. ALMAGUER. That is correct. We still have the Long-Term Recovery Office managing 18 open disasters out of Orlando, but, Madam Chair, I think you're bringing a point well taken, that I don't think has a final answer to. I think the long-term temporary housing solution is not a Florida issue, it is a national issue. So, the next event, and it doesn't have to be a hurricane, it could be a massive catastrophic wildfire, tornado, and any other event, housing, after food and water, is a long-term issue that this country needs to address. And we'd love, as the State of Florida, as well as with the other states, we'd love to partner with FEMA, try to come up with those solutions.

Ms. NORTON. This, of course, continues to be an outstanding problem. You have jurisdiction over several states, that includes, you said, Biloxi. How much of Mississippi do have?

Mr. MAY. The entire state. How many trailers there, ma'am?

Ms. NORTON. Is that your jurisdiction?

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am, it is.

Ms. NORTON. I'd like you to get to this Committee within 30 days how many people are still living in trailers in the State of Mississippi following Katrina, and Rita. This was a particularly troubling state, Mississippi. The state has spent a lot of their housing money on other economic development, in other ways, and we had to extend the period for care for people. That's something we very much want to hear. You don't have Louisiana?

Mr. MAY. No, ma'am.

Ms. NORTON. So, 30 days get us that information. The state of the trailers, how many people are still in trailers, and what are the plans for getting people out of trailers. Those are the most vulnerable people. Those were the most handicapped people. Those were

the disabled people, so we would like a status report on that, if you will.

Now, how much has each of your jurisdictions used on mitigation, preparation and mitigation for hurricanes or other disasters? How much in funds have you used? And could you give me examples of where mitigation preparedness has been useful to you?

Mr. LORD. Actually, I don't have exact numbers, but we can get back to you with those.

Ms. NORTON. With those numbers in 30 days.

Mr. LORD. But we actually have a very good example of a partnership with the state, and local, and federal mitigation project. One of the big things that keeps south Florida dry is our canal system. It's actually managed primarily by the South Florida Water Management District, which is a quasi-state agency. But, obviously, for us to keep our communities dry, we rely very heavily on these canals.

When a storm comes, the storm surge on top of the rainfall in one of these tropical systems actually fight against each other, and actually double the impact in South Florida, because you have storm surge coming in from the ocean, as well as rainfall we're trying to drain through the canals. One of the huge mitigation projects, I think at this point in time, is actually the largest mitigation project in the country funded through FEMA, was actually reverse pumping stations, and retention basins built actually in Central Dade County. So, at times when we can't pump water out to the ocean to keep Dade County dry, we can actually pump back into these gigantic retention basins. And that was a project that was primarily funded through the Mitigation Program through FEMA, and partnership with the State of Florida, as well.

Ms. NORTON. Any examples we can get. Mr. Diaz-Balart and I are both great supporters of mitigation and preparedness funding. This goes against the grain of the federal government, to spend money to keep something from happening. It is almost anti-American; that is to say, if it happens, we will be there for you. If you get terribly sick from cancer, or heart disease, or high blood pressure, and you get so you can't work, we will get you some disability, and we will get you to the emergency room. But if you ask us for wellness programs, because you have high blood pressure, you don't have health insurance, we will tell you I'm sorry, we don't fund that. If you get so living in your home, if you are an elderly person, and you are declining, and you finally get so you're among those in the elderly, of course, because they are elderly, need more hospital care than anybody else, we will take care of you in your final days, but we will not provide you with someone to come into your home to help you take care of yourself. And the reason I have this historical sense of our country, it's because it seems to me we live in this vast continent-size country—well you go to the next place. You know, we own the world. We don't own it any more. So, when we come and say there hasn't been a disaster in Florida yet. Louisiana and Mississippi got by without a hurricane. Then we ask for money in advance in order to help the states to take the kind of action that Mr. Lord has taken. We've got to be able to show what our studies show you were able to get this reauthorized. Huge savings, just huge savings to the American. We'll take care of you

one way or the other. And we're going to take care—let us take care of you with our funds behind the fact, as possible, because we will spend any more of those funds.

I would like to ask you about reimbursements following a disaster. What has been the experience here when there need to be reimbursements from FEMA? How long does it take to get a reimbursement? What happens when there are disagreements? How do you work out those disagreements?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Madam Chair, on behalf of the State, that's the value of having the Long-Term Recovery Office in Florida. Director May, even allowed the State of Florida to sit on the interview panel of a gentleman who actually is the Director of that office, because it truly is a partnership, so when you say if there is a problem, I call Robert Ives, the Director in Florida. If not, I call Phil May. I'm not sending memos from my governor to the White House, and these are relationships that have been built over the years. And I will tell you, it's been very successful in Florida, my short two and a half years, and that I know of right now, there is not an outstanding issue in Florida that either a Congressional Member, or a state legislative member have brought to our attention, or that we've identified that could not have been resolved on a phone call, or a face-to-face meeting.

I will tell you, it will never be fast enough. These are long-term, complex projects. Road repavements, drainage, ditches issued, to be rebuilt, as well as homes and communities that have been devastated, especially, we're still-

Ms. NORTON. I'm talking about who is responsible for what?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Well, it's really—three people are responsible, the locals are-

Ms. NORTON. I'm talking about disagreements between the state and FEMA over who pays before—I'm talking, Mr. May, about the kind of disagreements, if I can give you an example, that we have outstanding, shameful, in Louisiana. In Louisiana, more than \$3.5 billion hung up because the state and FEMA have been unable to resolve who should pay for what. In Mississippi, Mr. May, a billion or more, same problem, less, of course, than Louisiana, except they only had more of the—so much so, and I understand this was an unusual catastrophe, but it really brought to light very, very terrible issues that we didn't have in place, mechanisms in case you got to that point. And so what we have here was they could build their major hospital down, Charity Hospital. Well, they're hung up, and FEMA tells me well, we have a field mechanism, as if we're fools. The problem is not with appeal. They can't agree first where the disagreement is. It's like being in District Court, and the District Court doesn't come to a decision, to you can't go to the Court of Appeals. That was the kind of gobbledygook I was getting back from FEMA. So you know what happened? In that case, Mayor Landrieu, whose state this was, put something in the Omnibus Appropriation Bill that had the President appoint an arbitration panel. Now, isn't that disgraceful? Instead of doing so, he and I got together and now what is supposedly happening is that there's some ALJs that are supposed to work it out.

We are prepared to deal with differences, different situations in different ways. My great disappointment in FEMA was that it

didn't see that wait a minute, you know, this is outsized. And we just can't—and I can understand the position of the federal government. The federal government say okay, we give up. Here's the money. Meanwhile, the state is always going to want more money than the federal government has to give. What bothered me was that nobody had the sense to sit down and say well, wait a minute, do we have anything in our arsenal that could enable us to find some objective way to deal with this?

I'm asking, of course, and I'm getting good answers here, but then you haven't had a catastrophe since 1992, I'm asking you, Mr. May, where are with, between one and two billion dollars lying up there, when the federal government is having to distribute money out in order to get jobs for people? Where are we on that money in Mississippi?

Mr. MAY. I can't give you the specifics. By the way, I was just given the responsibility for that disaster, Katrina, about two weeks ago.

Ms. NORTON. Well, are you new, or is that—

Mr. MAY. No, they had a construct called the Gulf Coast Recovery Office that ran that operation out of Louisiana. And just recently, the Director Ward changed that relationship, and has given me the responsibility for that disaster for Mississippi, about two weeks ago.

Ms. NORTON. I hope that means that you've been so successful in dealing with respect to disputes, that they decided that you are—that's the biggest thing there. That's the biggest thing going, Mr. May, as far as I'm concerned.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am. I understand. And I know the arbitration piece is not set up for Mississippi, but it is set up for Louisiana—

Ms. NORTON. So that means you're under real pressure.

Mr. MAY. And I have been on the phone with the governor. We've been talking about projects that need to be turned, dirt projects that need—and we've been working. We've met with local officials in the Gulf Coast to talk about the fact this could be Mississippi's economic stimulus package, just get this money going. So, we—

Ms. NORTON. I don't know if this affected how much money—I think it sort of affected how much stimulus money both Mississippi and Louisiana got. I don't know why the federal government, trying to stay struggle ready, shouldn't have given a cent to people who have been sitting on billions of dollars for many months. I could not believe it when the amounts came forward at the hearings, which got us to move in this direction. So, Mr. May, 30 days, we want to know how much money is left. What mechanisms you are using to rapidly dispose of this backlog. I am not, as you well know, as a guardian of federal funds, I am not saying just to go out and spend money, because then it reverberates on you, and on us. Well, how come you paid that money to Mississippi when they clearly weren't ready to use the money, or they misused the money. So, the reason that I'm pressing is precisely because of stimulus, precisely because if we're talking about getting jobs for people, who has been jobless more than the people of Mississippi and Louisiana? So, in 30 days I want to know the status of these funds, what is the mechanism for disposing of those funds, and any information you

can give us to restore our confidence, the confidence that was completely lost with the outstanding number—I understand you weren't there, but if you were moved, whether they moved it to your jurisdiction, I would take that as a compliment, that you can resolve it.

Mr. MAY. Some of these issues are hung up on insurance issues, settlements, FEMA pays a portion, insurance company pays a portion, if they have insurance. One of the other issues in mitigation-

Ms. NORTON. Insurance issues of individuals. Are you talking about-

Mr. MAY. No, ma'am, I was talking about the public projects, not the individual projects.

Ms. NORTON. No, see I'm interested in the public projects.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. NORTON. Charity Hospital couldn't have been insurance issues. The whole thing—the London Bridge fell down there. Some of it, and here you will have that in spades, because we have this question of wind versus water.

Mr. MAY. Water.

Ms. NORTON. That has to do with housing, as I understand it. I'm interested in public projects.

Mr. MAY. Right. And some of the other public projects or applications for mitigation grants have required cost-share. We approve a mitigation project for say the State of Mississippi for a particular local government, they have to come up with their cost-share. And that's difficult to do that sometimes, so there's monies sitting aside for mitigation that local governments cannot access then because they don't have their cost-share monies to make that match.

Ms. NORTON. Where local governments don't have the money, then we spent—you need to—then where is the State of Mississippi? I mean, I don't understand—see, that's what we don't want to hear. If Miami-Dade didn't have it, I would expect Florida not to let a whole lot of money go to waste, just sit there, with a deep recession, with people with no jobs. You've got a double reason wanting to get this money going, so I'm telling you, I am in no mood to hear excuses. Now, what is it, Rainwater? The one person I have heard since Katrina who had a problem solving approach looking at what he has as his disposal was this person who is charge of Louisiana. What's his name, Paul?

Mr. MAY. Rainwater. It is. It's Rainwater.

Ms. NORTON. I don't know the—I'm a former law professor, and as I heard him, I would ask him hard questions, even hypothetical questions, and this is somebody who didn't have at his disposal anything more than anybody else when they began. What was so impressive, and he went down there without—he's in the National Guard, a lot of managerial experience. He had an analytical approach to questions. Disaggregate the problem, let's disaggregate the problem. Let's look at what we have here. Let's not look for bureaucratic obstacles. The sign posts of an obstacle are very clear that you can't cross.

What really bothered me was that that administrative authority that FEMA had that it was not using. Some have said that we have enacted Post Katrina Act mostly because the Post Katrina Act simply tells FEMA to do what it already could do. You know, if you

think you're crossing the line, all you've got to do is go to our Subcommittee or the Homeland Security Committee, and we will tell you if you're crossing the line, rather than say we didn't think we could do that. We don't think the law allows us to do that.

Now, I understand that Florida spends a lot of its own money on mitigation. Is that the case?

Mr. ALMAGUER. Well, one of the successes, and I would encourage most states to do this, FEMA has got a program that's called Enhanced Mitigation Program, which means after a disaster, states generally get 7.5 percent of the cost of that disaster for mitigation. It's a great success story.

Ms. NORTON. Oh, that's amazing.

Mr. ALMAGUER. But, if you're a state that has enhanced mitigation, which means the federal government, FEMA has come in, evaluated your state programs, looked at your locals, and has blessed you for to be an enhanced state, which Florida now is as of last year, we get 20 percent of that disaster dollars towards mitigation. So, we recently got declared for the North Florida floods, those 20 percent, which now is a huge advantage to Florida, that we can work with locals, and to have governor statewide initiatives for mitigation, are great success stories in Florida. I believe only 20 states in the union actually have the enhanced mitigation.

I would encourage every state in this country to have enhanced mitigation. There are dollars that are being left off the table post-disaster. But, to the point of mitigation, Florida has had, historically, a program called "My Safe Florida", which uses state dollars to go to the locals. One specific example is West Florida Coast Rebuild, which actually has rebuilt in hardened homes the entire envelope. Not just hey, we're going to give you some money for redoing your windows, but we've emphasized the importance of the entire envelope, strap down your roofs, harden the windows, the garage doors, the front doors. So, Florida has put millions of dollars on the table. But, more importantly, these years forward will have more federal dollars because of disasters to enhance mitigation efforts statewide.

Ms. NORTON. What you had to say about people leaving money on the table is really of interest to me. Mr. May, how come people are not picking-up these funds? Do you have any idea?

Mr. MAY. It, primarily, is, every county that's in the plan, the program, has a mitigation plan. And in that plan, they identify projects for future disasters.

Ms. NORTON. Now, he said it's only 20 states?

Mr. ALMAGUER. I'm aware of only 20 states that are enhanced mitigation states.

Mr. MAY. There are some standards they have to meet, and some of the states have not met those standards to come into that program.

Ms. NORTON. I know that you're only in-charge of three southern states, but would you take it back to headquarters that we would like a report within 30 days of who are the states that have-

Mr. MAY. Right. And I have six of mine that are in it, so I've got-

Ms. NORTON. Are already-

Mr. MAY. Yes. Six of my eight states are in the enhanced program.

Ms. NORTON. It may be states that have experience.

Mr. MAY. That's correct.

Ms. NORTON. Yes. But I, therefore, would like to know what states have, the amounts, and especially what the 20 would be. It looks you all account for a fair number of them.

Final question is for Ms. Hagan. The bane of our existence has been transitioning. We've heard some discussion of it here, from temporary housing. Indeed, I understand we are at the end, Mr. May, that the Katrina Temporary Housing program was supposed to end literally as of today. Does that mean that all the families are out of FEMA housing as of today?

Mr. MAY. No, ma'am. They're still in FEMA housing.

Ms. NORTON. What is going to happen then to those families still with the Housing program?

Mr. MAY. The program will be extended. We're working with HUD to try to provide a bridge to place those people, using case work, and local assistance to provide a bridge for those individuals to get in appropriate housing. But, yes, it is a tremendous challenge.

Ms. NORTON. So, it's going to have to be extended for those—as long as you all can't find housing for people, you realize you're going to have to take responsibility for that.

Mr. MAY. That's correct. We have to continue to work for them, work with them to get them to a point where they can move onto other housing.

Ms. NORTON. I need to know how many, within 30 days, how many people are still in housing as of today, when the Housing program was supposed to end, the status of those families that you expect—because if the program is supposed to end, I have to send the assume the money— what do you—

Mr. MAY. We will be giving notice to some families, I think in Mississippi we're giving notice, that they have two weeks to find alternate housing. And then, at that point in time, we will address the issue of their housing need—

Ms. NORTON. Good luck, Mr. May. Mr. May, you're new, but our hearing last year shows that those were mostly the most vulnerable people. They were the older people, I mean, really old. They were disabled people. They were people that somebody is going to have to place, not sort of bridge. You're going to have to find a place for people like that. Those are the only ones left.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am. That's why we need to work very strongly with HUD to see if these people are eligible for HUD housing vouchers to move them into more stabilized housing.

Ms. NORTON. We know they are. But we also know that there are long lines, and I don't know priorities they have. That's what I want to know in 30 days, what priorities, in your areas, what priorities do they have? We keep extending them. I just need to know how many of them are there in Mississippi. I want to know how many of them right now, how many as of the last time you extended, so I can see the progress that you're making.

Mr. MAY. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Hagan, have you had any such-or, for that matter, the state and local officials here, have you had any such problems?



Ms. HAGAN. I'll start, and then pass it over to Mr. Almaguer.

You know, when people are in a shelter environment, we're really planning to move them out of that sheltering environment into some sort of transitional housing. And it is a challenge, especially when there's not housing stock, especially when the schools need to reopen so we can get a community back to normal. So we would work with federal, state, and local government organizations to see what kind of housing is available, both transitional-

Ms. NORTON. Has it been a problem, or-

Ms. HAGAN. It's been a problem in different communities, at different times, depending upon the availability of transitional housing, and long-term housing.

Ms. NORTON. That's true. Red Cross is not a government funded organization. When you perform these services, how are you funded to perform the services? When you come straight into a community and you have to stay there longer, who funds it?

Ms. HAGAN. Well, we are primarily funded by the American people, not primarily funded by government.

Ms. NORTON. We know, at least in the United States, government, that we're the American people.

Ms. HAGAN. Yes. By donations, by voluntary donations of the American people. But if I could just say, as we look to long-term recovery, in Florida we have a pretty strong system of long-term recovery organizations that is primarily made up of faith-based and non-governmental organizations to look at the people, like you were talking about in Mississippi, and help work them through, get them back into their community, and move forward. But that's where the partnership between government and non-governmental organizations is so critical, because everybody has a piece of the pie to bring to the table to try to help these people move forward.

Ms. NORTON. What has the state and city, I'm sorry, county representatives here. Are there people still in, if not trailers, I think you said not trailers, but not placed back in some kind of permanent housing from any recent disaster?

Mr. ALMAGUER. I think we discussed there may be seven people or less in the State of Florida. Even though we had 57 counties affected by the recent Presidential declaration of Tropical Storm Fay last year, we got hit with Ike and Gustav, most of those events did not cause widespread housing problems. So, anybody who's really still affected by the housing issue are people who have already been affected in the 2004-2005 storm. So, if there are any, there's probably none, but just to not know the exact number, it's very small. And it's not our problem today. Probably, the bigger issue today is to continue working the recovery efforts for long-lasting storms.

I mean, we talked a little bit about ice, Madam Chair. I think the most important visual effect for people to know is an iceberg. In an iceberg, what you can see above the surface is no more than 20 percent. That's response. That's the nice exciting thing that people like, and see. Recovery is that 80 percent of that iceberg beneath the surface of the water that people forget about. People have been impacted, they've lost their jobs, they've lost their homes. And, in Florida, that's my full-time responsibility on behalf of the governor, so these long-term disasters, people are not forgot-

ten. And that's what recovery is, that's the hard part about emergency management. It's not the response. People forget about that, and so FEMA's long-term success, when people ask about their ability to respond to disasters, I say FEMA's long-term success is to have more resources for getting dollars to states and locals in the recovery effort, and that will never happen fast enough.

I'll tell you, with the leadership of Craig Fugate, and leadership of Phil May, I have trust in FEMA now. I will tell you that. And my governor feels the exact same way. We have leaders, we have people who know about how this works. They've been at the local level, the state level. Boots have been on the ground. But I'm going to tell you right now, it's about recovery.

And, in closing, I will just tell you that I encourage the federal government, like you said, Madam Chair, to get more dollars for mitigation. This is no different than fire prevention. The day that there's no fires, is a great thing, which means a lot of people put a lot of dollars into sprinkler systems, standpipe systems, into homes and businesses so they don't burn down. This is no different, and so the more dollars that can harden locals, and the state, the better off all these states will be in future disasters.

Ms. NORTON. You've closed this hearing with some wise words, Mr. Almaguer, that recovery is the point, and mitigation is the other part.

As much of a scandal as the evacuation debacle of Katrina was, the worst part surely was the aftermath. After the evacuation, people left on the rooftops. That's the part you see. I guess that's the tip of the iceberg. But then they developed catastrophe after catastrophe, the trailers, the long-term rebuilding, the recovery. And the answer to that, of course, is mitigation, mitigation, mitigation. But one thing that our experience and our coming to Florida as the first hearing of the season on hurricane season tells us, is that Florida is the model for the country. And Florida's experiences come out of what Florida could not control, that it is located where these disasters occur. And instead of sitting around waiting for the next one, the state here in Miami-Dade, has seen itself as the guard of the country, frankly, to be most proactive on disasters. We think you have much to teach us, not only in terms of disasters, natural disasters, but parts of the country where we must prepare even for disasters of the kind we saw in 9/11. We are poised for an all-hazards approach. That what you do to prepare for a hurricane, and there was even a tornado down here in recent years, what you do to prepare for one is essentially the same. What we're doing in the National Capitol region area to prepare in case there is, God forbid, some other attack on those parts of our country that would be highly targeted for some kind of terrorist attack is in a real sense no different from what you are doing. So I think we have a great deal to learn, and probably more to learn from Florida, especially South Florida, about an all-hazards approach than any other section of the country. I think people from the West Coast, who are petrified that there's going to be an earthquake need to come here. They've done a lot of mitigation, of course, but whether they've done enough, or whether they've had to go through some of what you had to go through, is something that they need to look at.

I don't know of any other part of the country, there may be parts in the Midwest that have constant floods, but the people who had the ice storm in Kentucky, and Midwest, were facing a very different kind of hazard, one that was much harder to prepare for. But, in a real sense, the very same issues came up.

I want to thank Mr. Diaz-Balart for recommending that we come here for our first hearing of the hurricane season. I particularly want to thank each and every one of you, because your testimony is valuable to us, as we recommend to the Administration, and as we contemplate whatever changes we ought to make in our own jurisdiction. This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:24 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

**RUBEN D. ALMAGUER**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FLORIDA DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**  
**2555 SHUMARD OAK BLVD.**  
**TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-2100**  
**850-413-9969**

**TESTIMONY**  
**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Introduction**

Thank you Chairman Oberstar, Ranking Member Mica, and distinguished members of the Committee for allowing me the opportunity to testify before you regarding the State of Florida's level of preparedness for the 2009 Hurricane Season. I am Ruben D. Almaguer, the Deputy Director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management. I currently serve as the Deputy Director for the Florida Division of Emergency Management, appointed by Governor Charlie Crist on January 2, 2007. I oversee the day to day operations of the agency, including direct supervision of the function areas tasked with preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation and finance and administration. I previously served as a Division Chief and Paramedic for the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department, the sixth largest fire service in the nation, for over 20 years. My hands on emergency management disaster experience including responding to over 25 local, state, national and international disasters including earthquakes, bombings, floods, and hurricanes in Venezuela, Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Turkey, Taiwan, and Africa. I also responded to the Oklahoma City Bombing, the 9/11 Pentagon Attack, as well as Hurricane's Andrew and Katrina, among others.

Emergency management is built upon three very basic concepts: 1) All-hazards preparedness is the foundation in which readiness is built for all disasters regardless of the cause or size; 2) The emergency management cycle includes preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation; and 3) All disasters are local. In Florida we take great pride in being prepared to respond to the people of our state and other states in need when called upon. In 2009, our team truly feels we are better prepared for the upcoming hurricane season than ever for the following reasons:

**Professionalizing Emergency Management**

- In response to the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, the State of Florida has taken a more aggressive and active posture towards hiring more qualified professionals to manage disasters including emergency management professionals from the local, state and federal level.

**In State Commodities--System for Distribution**

- The State Logistics Response Center opened in Orlando, Florida in July 2007. Currently the 200,000 square foot facility houses over \$16.2 million in direct relief supplies (water, meals, tarps, cots, bedding etc.) through state, federal and private partnerships.

**Technological and Infrastructure Improvements**

- In 2007 the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Tallahassee enhanced and updated our technologies as well as added 47 positions to the operational layout of the facility in order to

Ruben D. Almaguer, Deputy Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management  
 2555 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2100, 850-413-9969  
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ensure that a unified structure was in place for coordination with FEMA from the inception of a disaster, as well as technology to provide the latest mapping and the ability to secure video feeds and still photos from the field for key decision makers.

**Outreach and Preparedness for the Disability Community**

- Creation of a Statewide Disability Coordinator position in the Division of Emergency Management. This has resulted in collaboration between individuals with disabilities, advocates and emergency management officials in all aspects of emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

**Catastrophic Planning & Exercise**

- The State Emergency Response Team since 2006 has participated with FEMA in a Catastrophic Planning process based on a scenario identical to the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926. This process has allowed the state to engage partners from private sector as well as the state, local and federal levels in the planning process for a disaster that today could cause the State of Florida to incur damages of more than \$150 billion dollars. This planning process will culminate in the largest hurricane exercise in Florida's history to be held May 28-29 and June 1-3 statewide.

**Public Education and Outreach**

- Continued public awareness and preparedness campaigns have been expanded to focus on children. In 2009 the Division launched a website for children statewide that educates them in a non-threatening educational forum on how to prepare themselves and their families for a disaster. The website is located at [www.KidsGetAPlan.com](http://www.KidsGetAPlan.com).

**Experience and Coordination Equal Success**

- Ongoing coordination and partnership with our federal partners at FEMA and local emergency management programs in Florida. Over the past year Florida has actively engaged with FEMA in various planning scenarios, training opportunities and exercises that improve collaboration and teamwork between our agencies. Additionally, through disasters during the past year such as Tropical Storm Fay, Hurricane's Gustav and Ike, and the recent North Florida flooding those planning, training and exercises paid off with exceptional teamwork between the State of Florida FEMA, local government and our private partners. The utilization and best practices from these experiences have provided a strong foundation for future disaster responses that will build on these past successes.

There are several key areas that I wish to discuss with you today:

1. **Balancing local, state, and federal disaster response;**
2. **Building Effective Mutual Aid ;**
3. **Embracing the "survivor" mentality;**

**BALANCING LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL DISASTER RESPONSE**

As previously pointed out, Florida takes the mindset that all disasters are local. This does not mean that during a disaster the state waits for local government to fail, it is more of an acknowledgement that the majority of resources available to assist with disasters are available through interstate or in some cases intrastate mutual aid at the local level of government. Fire, police and emergency management

Ruben D. Almaguer, Deputy Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management  
2555 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2100, 850-413-9969  
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capabilities at the county and municipal level many times may augment the need for state and federal assistance during a disaster. Florida has a wide range of counties with different capabilities and resources. Recently during the flooding throughout North Florida we were successful in integrating teams from other counties and municipalities into the Emergency Operations Centers of many smaller counties who lacked the personnel to maintain 24 hour operations. This type of response leads to partnerships and exchanges of knowledge and information that have a great inherent value to both parties as they return to normal operations following a disaster and when the next disaster strikes.

The State of Florida always stands ready to support local response efforts when the capacity of local governments and their mutual aid resources are well on their way to, or have been depleted. It has been proven repeatedly that the most effective response is one that begins at the local level and grows with the support of surrounding communities, the state and then the federal government. This approach provides communities with the most effective and timely results, which ultimately lead to saved lives, protected property and communities getting back to normal as quickly as possible following a disaster.

When local and state governments coordinate their efforts and their emergency plans are in sync, this will ultimately lead to a diminished need for taxpayer money from the federal government for relief. However, in its haste to "lean forward," the federal government could overwhelm the ability of local and state governments to conduct preparedness, response and recovery activities. Such preemptive action leads to the suffering and lack of balance needed between the three levels of government to engage in planning for emergency response. We should not create an overdependence on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the federal response, it is not realistic and it lessens ability of local and state governments to be willing to take ownership of their disasters in the future. All involved must be mindful of and willing to accept their responsibilities and provide support through a thoughtful and balanced approach to responding to disasters.

#### **BUILDING EFFECTIVE MUTUAL AID**

The response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005 resulted in the largest deployment of interstate mutual aid in the nation's history through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC deployed personnel comprised of multiple disciplines from all member states to respond to Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, and Texas. The process enabled National Guard, search and rescue teams, incident management teams, emergency operations center support, building inspectors, law enforcement personnel, and other disciplines to immediately assist the requesting states in need of support. The National Guard even chose to continue under EMAC when deployed under Title 32 because of the organization, liability protections, accountability, and tracking abilities EMAC provides. It is important to note that over half of the resources provided by Florida through EMAC were resources provided through the local level.

After Hurricane Katrina the State of Florida, acting under provisions of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and as a result of a direct request from the Governor of Mississippi, deployed a self-contained response team on the day of landfall to the impacted coastal area of Mississippi (3 coastal counties of Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson; 3 contiguous inland counties to the north consisting of Pearl River, Stone, and George). By the evening of landfall on August 29, 2005 assets of law enforcement, firefighting, search and rescue, medical, Incident Management Teams, and others were in the area of operations in coastal Mississippi performing lifesaving, safety, and security missions. Major logistical assets were sent to the area, as well, to include ice, water, food, fuel, and other commodities to support

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initial response operations. Due to the dire situation caused by Hurricane Katrina on the Mississippi coast, the mission of the Florida Task Force grew significantly and commodities and personnel continued to flow from the State of Florida continuously until the end of October 2005 (note: some smaller level missions continued with Florida support up until November 2006).

Continued support of EMAC will allow Florida and its local governments to focus on the implementation of lessons learned from prior disasters and other EMAC missions such as training and education for all mutual aid stakeholders, resource typing and credentialing, and information and resource management. It is imperative that we continue to build effective interstate and intrastate mutual aid capabilities with local governments. History is a clear indicator that local governments provide a great deal of the commodities, personnel and teams used to assist their neighbors in state as well as out of state for larger scale intrastate mutual aid in responding to disasters. This cooperative spirit among sister states must go both ways and by building relationships during these events this becomes more probable. By utilizing the strengths of each state's programs mutual aid can always be a viable answer to address the needs of those people impacted by disasters.

#### **EMBRACING THE "SURVIVOR" MENTALITY**

As Florida has worked with FEMA in undertaking its catastrophic planning initiative over the past few years, it has become readily evident that there are not enough resources at the local, state or federal level to deal with a catastrophic disaster. As we have written these plans and debated how we don't have enough search and rescue teams, how we don't have enough mobile kitchens, how we don't have enough supplies to adequately serve the numbers that would be necessary during a catastrophic disaster we have lost sight of and written out our most important resource following a disaster: those who survive it.

In previous disasters the media and our society has been quick to label the people left behind to pick up the pieces after a disaster as "victims," as if they are unable to check on their neighbors, assist in cleaning up their community and take an active role in getting life back to normal for themselves, their neighbors and their families. Our society has created "the culture of the victim;" the conviction among residents that the first fallback after a disaster is government aid. Victims actually are those that we unfortunately lose during a disaster and while we mourn their loss it is imperative that our nation begin to create a culture of "survivors" whereby we work to empower those people remaining after a disaster to get actively involved in their community recovery efforts and to work daily alongside local, state and federal officials. This investment in their communities and the development of a "survivor" mentality pre-disaster as well will create a culture whereby people are actively involved in preparedness activities and training for disasters. Then when a disaster hits these "survivors" will act as a force multiplier to assist communities in recovering. In a catastrophic event, there is no doubt that a response based strictly around a local, state, and federal response and recovery will fail. Such a response will end up with more victims, many communities may never recover, and the economic impacts on local, state and the federal government will be dire.

We must immediately begin to instill on a national level that people must get involved and prepare and after a disaster strikes use their gifts and skills to assist their community in recovering. This type of response where neighbors help neighbors and communities are actively engaged and invested in the rebuilding of their lives will always be more effective than any amount of aid or funding the government can bear.

Ruben D. Almaguer, Deputy Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management  
2555 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2100, 850-413-9969  
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#### **CONCLUSION**

It all starts with the leadership and in Florida that starts with our Governor Charlie Crist, who has given me a clear mandate to take care of the people of Florida. With the passage of the Post-Katrina FEMA Reform Act, Congress has affirmed their support for ensuring preparedness for our nation's continuous vulnerability against all-hazards. We must continue to build national preparedness efforts with a multi-hazard approach involving all available resources. Instilling the "survivor" culture that was previously discussed will be imperative as we continue to refine and exercise plans for a catastrophic disaster. It is clearer than ever that a government only response to a catastrophic disaster will fail miserably. We must write our residents back into our plans and intend to use them as a resource and not view them as victims, but survivors who are engaged in the recovery process and not waiting for the government to fix everything. We must continue to involve and utilize the resources of private, faith based, and volunteer organizations as well. We cannot afford to continue to repeat history as we did with Hurricane Andrew and Hurricane Katrina. We must, once and for all, learn the lessons of the past and resolve ourselves to ensure that local, state and federal governments continue to have adequate funding for baseline emergency preparedness so exercises and training can ensure that plans and systems are effective before a disaster. Public awareness, education and training also have to become a greater focus. The use of survivors as a force multiplier to support and aid in the response and recovery from disasters will only serve to improve outcomes for communities following a disaster.

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





EMBARGOED until delivery:  
10:00 am EST, Friday, May 1, 2009

For more information contact:  
Neal Denton (202) 303-4371

**TESTIMONY OF KAREN E. HAGAN  
DISASTER OFFICER FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA  
AMERICAN RED CROSS**

**Before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency  
Management  
United States House of Representatives**

Chairwoman Norton, Congressman Diaz-Balart and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to appear today on behalf of the American Red Cross. My name is Karen Hagan, and I am the American Red Cross Disaster Officer for the State of Florida.

For more than 125 years, our nation has relied on the American Red Cross in emergency situations. The Red Cross provides shelter, food, clothing, emotional and other support to those impacted by disasters in communities across the country and around the world. We supply nearly half of the nation's blood. We teach lifesaving skills to hundreds of thousands of people each year, and we support and provide invaluable resources to the members of the military and their families. Whether it is a hurricane or a heart attack, a call for blood or a call for help, the Red Cross is there.

The issue we are discussing today, preparedness for the 2009 hurricane season, which begins June 1, is very important to the American Red Cross and particularly important to me and my colleagues serving in the state of Florida. We appreciate your attention to this subject and are grateful to those colleagues and partners working together to help prepare Florida for the coming hurricane season.

Allow me to begin by saying this: The American Red Cross stands ready to respond to the 2009 hurricane season. We have reviewed and studied what we did well in the recent seasons and improved upon those successes. We have also taken a hard look at those areas where we must improve our response and we've addressed our shortcomings. Tropical Storm Fay affected the majority of Florida counties in the 2008 hurricane season. Over 1400 Red Crossers came to the aid of affected Floridians and the vast majority of those volunteers came from our Florida Red Cross Chapters. We opened 118 shelters with 21, 224 overnight stays and 372,919 meals and snacks.

The American people can continue to rely upon the Red Cross to deliver our promise of neighbor helping neighbor. Our legendary corps of volunteers is well trained and ready to help America. We are working closer than ever with our colleagues in the nonprofit, charitable and faith-based communities to expand our reach. We continue to improve our coordination with Federal, state and local officials. Here in Florida, the partnership with State and County

Emergency Management is very strong. From responding to single family fires to a major hurricane response, we keep our Emergency Management Partners informed and work along side of them to serve disaster survivors.

From its inception, we have been participating with our Federal, State, Community and faith-based partners in the Florida Catastrophe Planning efforts, following the path of a fictitious but plausible Hurricane Ono as it makes landfall along the southeast Florida Coast. We have had local, state and national Red Cross representatives involved in every stage of this planning effort, concentrating on mass care, sheltering and feeding, as well as family notification and reunification, post disaster relocation, case management and health and welfare workgroups.

I am very pleased to share with you today our plans for the coming season and our rejuvenated sense of urgency as we address our goals. For as we all know, the next disaster may not show up with advance warning on our weather radar screens. We can not wait for June 1 to be ready for disaster response. The American Red Cross remains on guard each day, everyday.

#### **American Red Cross Services – What We Do In Times Of Disaster**

Our citizens rely on the American Red Cross to provide comfort and care during an emergency. Floridians in particular know that the American Red Cross will be there to provide the basics of food, shelter and a shoulder to lean on in times of disaster. But it is important to know the details of these services and I would like to take a moment to expand on them.

**Sheltering** – Shelters often become a focal point for the interaction between disaster victims and the community at large. They are a place of safety, refuge and comfort for many. When a family or individual walks through the door of a shelter operated or supported by the Red Cross, they can expect food, a safe place to sleep, mental health support and access to some basic first aid and health care. The Red Cross often uses congregate sheltering in facilities such as schools, churches, or other large facilities as shelters for individuals or families. Those shelters may be opened in anticipation of a disaster, during an evacuation, or after a disaster occurs. The Red Cross usually initiates sheltering activities in coordination with government and/or emergency management or with other community organizations.

In Florida we are prepared to support and manage Hurricane Evacuation Centers where we bring people out of harms way as well as shelters where we provide the types of services listed above.

We coordinate all of our shelter operations with our government partners. The State of Florida has adopted the American Red Cross National Shelter System as their official State Shelter Database. Subsequently, during a tropical event, we are able to provide both responders as well as Floridians with a public site – [floridadisaster.org](http://floridadisaster.org) – that can direct people to open shelters. In partnership with the Florida Department of Health, we also indicate the open Special Medical Needs shelters. We are also committed to the important work of moving people out of the shelter environment – which really serves as a lifeboat – and into transitional and long term housing. This is where our communities truly depends on the partnerships with Federal, state and local government.

**Feeding** – In addition to feeding efforts at shelters, the Red Cross also meets this basic need through mobile distribution and fixed feeding sites in affected areas for people who cannot travel to a shelter or choose to stay in their homes. Emergency workers or other groups providing disaster relief need meals as well and the local chapter or disaster relief operation can choose to provide feeding services to those groups. Mobile feeding is critical to meeting the immediate

needs of affected communities and establishing the presence of Red Cross relief efforts. Red Cross workers drive through damaged neighborhoods delivering meals, snacks and beverages to people returning to and cleaning up damaged homes.

**Bulk Distribution** – In some disasters, essential items clients need to assist their recovery might not be immediately available in the local area. In such cases, the Red Cross distributes comfort kits, clean up kits, shovels, insect repellent, or other things that may be needed.

**Disaster Mental Health Services** – Red Cross workers provide mental health services wherever a client is in need. Our mental health workers are always present at shelters, feeding sites and aid stations. They also travel with caseworkers and console families at hospitals and in disaster affected neighborhoods where clean up and rebuilding is taking place. Red Cross mental health volunteers are licensed mental health professionals and often work with practitioners in the community to provide services where the need is greatest.

**Client Casework** – Disaster victims often need the type of one-on-one advocacy our caseworkers can provide. In the complex world of disasters, it is often hard to know where to get help and how to start on the road to recovery. Red Cross caseworkers are skilled in matching a client's needs with the resources available in the community and then advocating on behalf of the client to access those resources. Caseworkers can also help their clients with wellness issues such as replacing lost medication or damaged medical equipment.

**Safe And Well Information** – Red Cross workers help concerned family members understand how they can communicate with their loved ones during an emergency. Within the disaster affected area and through the use of tools like our *Safe and Well* website, the Red Cross helps individuals and family members to communicate with family and friends outside of the affected area.

#### **Outreach To People With Disabilities**

In developing mass care and sheltering capacity throughout the community, the American Red Cross is making it a priority nationwide to ensure that services and shelters are as accessible as possible to people with disabilities. Our Red Cross chapters work closely with their county Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) offices on disability issues as well other expert organizations. To that end we have been taking a number of steps including:

- Reviewing all our shelters for accessibility
- Providing training developed by the American Red Cross in conjunction with our State Disability Coordinator to Red Cross chapters, the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living and local Emergency Management in order that they might be able to survey a building for accessibility and compliance with all ADA regulations
- Identifying in general, and on specific location levels, how we can best set up our shelters to be more accommodating. This includes training on *Disability Etiquette* that the American Red Cross in partnership with Volunteer Florida and the Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living developed for shelter managers and workers.
- Working with other subject matter experts (including experts from FEMA, State Emergency Management, our State Disability Coordinator, and the State Department of Health) to identify specific items that need to be available in shelters to make them more accessible to people with disabilities. Based on those recommendations, we have pre-stocked accessible cots, shower stools and commode chairs in some of our warehouses.

We carefully analyze the demographics of our very diverse state in our response planning. From our training to our casework to public messaging, everything we do is in Spanish and much of it is also in Creole. With our other chapter partners, we are working to coordinate and expand our language bank to be sure that we have the capacity to effectively communicate with those with limited skills in English. Here in Miami/Dade, our local volunteers are 75-85% bilingual – mostly Spanish/English but also many who are bilingual in Creole as well.

**Government, Nonprofit and Other Partner Collaboration**

In Florida, as is the case across the country, the American Red Cross staffs the state and local Emergency Operation Center(s) (EOC) with Red Cross Government Liaisons who collaborate with their government and nonprofit agency counterparts. This staffing provides a direct link between the government agency most directly responsible for the event and the Red Cross and the resources that we can bring to support that government agency.

The Red Cross takes a lead role in actively working with the local VOADs (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), which are coalitions of independent voluntary agencies that meet regularly to ensure a coordinated community response that addresses the needs of victims and minimizes overlap of services in the event of a disaster.

To ensure effective disaster readiness and response, the Red Cross has established relationships with partner community agencies. While our national headquarters seeks out and negotiates partnerships with national-level agencies and organizations, our local chapters make those partnerships come alive by establishing and nurturing local relationships. Besides the VOAD partnerships, we look to Americorps, CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams), the Florida General Baptist Association, the NAACP and many other faith-based groups in times of disaster.

**American Red Cross: Ready for 2009**

In our efforts to continuously prepare for the coming season, I am pleased to share our ongoing efforts with you:

- **Supplies:** We have expanded pre-positioning supply inventory to support feeding and sheltering for 500,000 people. This includes a stock of six million ready to eat meals, representing a capacity of one million meals for six days. We also have more than 48,000 potential shelter locations now listed in the National Shelter System.
- **Technological Improvements:** We have upgraded our IT systems to improve greater controls over financial management and can more easily share shelter and client information with our partners.
- **Improved Relationships:** Our Disaster Field Structure is aligned by state and provides a point of contact and integration of plans with other Federal and state officials across the country. We rely upon this robust network to provide field support, performance improvement, strategic project management and federal disaster relations.
- **Communications:** We have pre-positioned communications equipment and supplies in 48 cities in high-risk states including Florida.

- Logistics: We have built a more effective logistics, supply chain and inventory control system and are more engaged with NORTHCOM, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) and FEMA's logistics teams.
- Volunteers: We have more than 80,000 people in disaster response database, 93% of which are volunteers.
- There are other improvements post-Katrina that will ensure improved response from the Red Cross to those we serve, including:
  - Creation of the National Shelter System
  - Enhancements to the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN)
  - Better coordination with other nonprofit partners and agencies
  - Refinements to the *Safe and Well* website
  - Redesign of the Shelter Intake Form in conjunction with DHS to better evaluate health needs of shelter residents

**Closing Remarks**

My fellow Floridians and I are privileged to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. Because the winds often blow hardest in our beautiful state, we also know it is an awesome responsibility to ensure that Florida is the most prepared place on the planet. I am confident that the plans, processes and partnerships that we have in place with our Federal, state, local, nonprofit and private sector partners will result in a proud and strong response from Red Crossers in this region and around the country.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director  
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security  
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404  
Phone: 305-468-5400

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management  
Testimony for Hearing – May 1, 2009**

- Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart – Good afternoon and thank you for asking me to speak before you today about the Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security and the County's state of readiness for the 2009 Hurricane Season.
- Miami-Dade County is approximately 2,000 square miles in size and has a population of about 2.5 million people.
- In terms of square miles, Miami-Dade County is larger than the District of Columbia and the states of Rhode Island and Delaware.
- Miami-Dade County government provides services to roughly 1.1 million residents in the unincorporated areas, employs more than 30,000 people, and has an overall annual budget of \$7.5 billion and an operating budget of \$4.9 billion.
- The other 1.4 million residents live in 35 municipalities in the County.
- The cities of Miami, Hialeah and Miami Gardens are the most populous municipalities in the County.
- Miami-Dade County is bordered by two National Parks, Biscayne National Park to the east and Everglades National Park to the west.
- Miami-Dade County is one of only three locations in the United States that has ever been struck by a Category 5 hurricane, and that storm was Hurricane Andrew on August 24, 1992.
- Since 1992, Miami-Dade County has activated its Emergency Operations Center 45 times – 20 of those activations were because of the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director  
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security  
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404  
Phone: 305-468-5400

- Since 1992, Miami-Dade County has ordered evacuations and/or opened hurricane evacuation centers 20 times because of the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm.
- The 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons were by far the busiest for the County. Our EOC was activated seven times to deal with the threat of hurricanes.
- The last three hurricane seasons have been relatively uneventful. The County activated its EOC in August 2006 because of Hurricane Ernesto, in August 2008 because of Tropical Storm Fay and in September 2008 because of Hurricane Ike. Thankfully, those storms did not cause any significant damage or injury in Miami-Dade County.
- While we are thankful for three consecutive years of relatively uneventful hurricane seasons, we are always concerned that complacency could set in among residents because of the inactivity.
- The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security works tirelessly to keep residents prepared for hurricane season.
- The County produces all hurricane and emergency preparedness publications in English, Spanish and Creole to serve the three major languages spoken in the County.
- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security actively organizes and participates in local hurricane preparedness fairs and expositions no matter how small or large they are or where they take place.
- The County works closely with local municipalities to ensure that all residents, not just those in the unincorporated areas, are prepared for a hurricane.
- While Miami-Dade County is rich in resources, the County works closely with the Florida Division of Emergency Management when certain resources cannot be identified within the County. The Florida Division of Emergency Management then works to provide those resources to the County.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director  
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security  
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404  
Phone: 305-468-5400

- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security manages Miami-Dade Alerts, a wireless emergency notification system that alerts residents whenever a hazardous situation like a hurricane threatens Miami-Dade County. The system currently has more than 120,000 subscribers.
- The Department also engages private sector businesses through its Local Mitigation Strategy. The program celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2008 and its participants include major corporations and small businesses.
- Together, the public-private partnership has completed more than \$250 million in strengthening infrastructure around Miami-Dade County. This program's members are represented in the Emergency Operations Center during activations.
- Some examples of the work completed by the LMS group include several major flood mitigation projects and the shuttering of critical infrastructure such as hospitals and public safety agencies.
- Miami-Dade County has completed approximately \$800 million in public assistance enhancements when restoring infrastructure after declared emergency events.
- The County works closely with the Miami-Dade Public Schools system to establish hurricane evacuation centers that can be opened should the County Mayor order an evacuation.
- Presently, there are a total of 56 hurricane evacuation centers throughout Miami-Dade County with a capacity of 85,500 spaces. These totals include primary, secondary and tertiary hurricane evacuation centers.
- In addition to the hurricane evacuation centers, Miami-Dade County has six special needs evacuation centers (SNECs) in order to serve our vulnerable population.
- The County established the Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program. This free program provides transportation to special needs evacuation centers that are operated by medical personnel. There are currently 2,000 people registered for the program.





Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director  
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security  
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404  
Phone: 305-468-5400

- The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security works closely with the National Hurricane Center.
- Any storm within 1,500 nautical miles and with a forecast track bringing it in the general direction of South Florida is closely monitored. As well as is any system that initially develops in the Gulf of Mexico or Caribbean.
- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security issues readiness advisories to all of our EOC partners and engage in conference calls with local agencies and the National Hurricane Center.
- These advisories include things like the storm's position and forecast track. We also provide a tentative planning schedule in which we enter data provided by the National Hurricane Center such as a direct path calculation, forward speed, the arrival of tropical storm force winds, etc.
- The advisories provide a timeline for preparedness activities, including the issuing of Press Releases, conducting our special needs population call-downs, the opening of evacuation centers, establishing EOC activation levels, considering a Local State of Emergency declaration, beginning evacuations and Bus Pick ups, and completing evacuations.
- With that, Madam Chairwoman, I conclude my presentation.

**Statement for the Record**

**Major Phil May**

**Region IV Administrator,  
Federal Emergency Management Agency  
Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the**

**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
*Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management*  
United States House of Representatives**

**Region IV Preparedness for the 2009 Hurricane Season**

**May 1, 2009**

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## INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Holmes Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart and Representative Brown, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today in Florida.

I am Major Phil May and I am privileged to serve as the Region IV Administrator for the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In this role, I oversee FEMA's all-hazards efforts in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

As the primary FEMA representative and coordinator for a natural disaster-prone region, I oversee the planning, development, implementation and execution of all FEMA Region IV programs and initiatives. I have planning and operational oversight of special projects related to building a strong, capable, and responsive Region. My goal has been to make sure that FEMA Region IV has a robust infrastructure and all the appropriate resources, in terms of people, operational systems, planning and assessment tools, training, exercises, and equipment.

In addition, I work to foster the necessary relationships before disasters strike among the full spectrum of emergency management at all levels of government, the private sector, non-profit, and non-governmental entities. DHS Secretary Napolitano has made communications and outreach to tribal, state and local officials a high priority for the Regional Administrators. We are building strong ties on the ground before disasters strike, so that we are not exchanging business cards when we meet in the emergency operations center.

We work closely with our state counterparts to deliver effective disaster assistance to individuals and communities affected by a disaster. We call it "engaged partnership." That is the FEMA you saw in last fall's series of storms and hurricanes—Fay, Gustav, Hanna, and Ike. You saw it in the ice storm in Kentucky this winter and you see it now with the declarations just made for flooding in the Florida panhandle, Georgia and Alabama. Already in the first four months of 2009 across the country, FEMA has been working side by side with states on over 24 federally declared disasters, with several requests in process.

Within minutes of the President's declaration of a disaster, FEMA deploys operational and technical experts to the disaster site. FEMA leads the charge by coordinating an effective Unified Command with other federal agencies, and state and local officials, working together to help a devastated community.

FEMA's Region IV has been preparing for an active 2009 hurricane season. We have engaged our tribal, local, state and federal partners in thorough and informed hurricane planning. We are building FEMA Region IV's operational capabilities for a more effective response and recovery. Amplifying our stance on hurricane readiness will put FEMA in a good position to meet whatever challenges unfold.

## **BACKGROUND**

FEMA continuously evaluates and learns from past hurricane seasons. While Hurricanes Katrina and Rita served as catalysts for major changes in federal policy, one of the most tangible results has been the strengthening of relationships among the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, the private sector and all levels of government.

The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA) codified and expanded FEMA's regional office structure and strengthened our all-hazards operational framework and coordination capabilities. The ten Regional Administrators provided for in the Act report directly to the FEMA Administrator. Even prior to PKEMRA, three of the ten Regional Administrators, including myself, were career senior executives. Having career staff in three of the Regions allows for continuity of best-practices from administration to administration.

PKEMRA also provided for the creation of Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) and new regional Incident Management Assistance Teams, called IMATs. I am pleased to advise that Region IV was the first in the country to establish both of these strategic elements.

## **ENHANCED REGIONAL COORDINATION**

### *Regional Advisory Council*

Regional Advisory Councils provide valuable advice and recommendations to the Regional Administrator on regional emergency management issues as well as identify weaknesses or deficiencies in preparedness, protection, operations, assistance, and mitigation for state, local and tribal governments. This new structure has helped facilitate and further enhanced our national and regional planning efforts to include the areas of evacuation and catastrophic planning.

### *Defense Coordinating Officers*

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

### *Regional Communications*

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

Critical information is shared and problems are solved among the state and federal agency partners in the Regional Response Coordination Center, or RRCC. The RRCC identifies and coordinates response requirements, performs capabilities analysis, and reports on the status of federal disaster response operations. The Regional Response Coordination Center has representation from each of the 26 agencies with responsibilities under the National Response Plan as well as secure links to key offices around the country and the capability to bring state and local officials into the conversation.

During Katrina, we experienced a failure in communications with people in the field, which ultimately led to confusion. Let me give you an example of what was done this year in Kentucky when it had an ice storm, the worst natural disaster in the history of the state. Emergency responders were without communications in large areas of the state. We sent a FEMA strike force, known as the Mobile Emergency Response System (MERS), which provided communications links rapidly in the disaster-stricken areas.

MERS is made up of high-tech vehicles, highly trained crews and support equipment trailers. In Kentucky the MERS crews distributed hand-held radios to National Guard units to facilitate the distribution of commodities that FEMA was channeling into the state. They also worked with the Kentucky Division of Emergency Management to pinpoint areas of need, then erected three portable Land Mobile Radio towers (LMR), which were quickly moved to new areas as power was restored and needs changed. These units aided law enforcement, relief teams, medical professionals, as well as citizens. The MERS crews established four mobile command posts utilizing satellite-communications trucks, known as Mobile Emergency Operations Vehicles. These command posts were in Frankfort, the state capitol, and three staging areas that received and distributed emergency meals, water and other supplies from FEMA. We were able to provide rapid-patch phone and internet service to the Kentucky National Guard and a Red Cross shelter serving some 250 occupants.

These resources are an essential part of our communication strategy for dealing with any disaster we may face in the future.

#### *Hurricane Preparedness*

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

#### *Enhanced Response Teams*

The IMAT teams support our efforts to meet the emergent needs of state and local jurisdictions. They have the capability to provide initial situational awareness for federal decision-makers as well as support the establishment of an initial unified command. Accurate information is critical to effective decision making. We need to know what is happening on the ground, as do our emergency management partners. Our IMAT teams provide this type of insight, through their communications unit which provides live video feed, digital images, and up-to-the-minute

reports of the situation on the ground. The IMAT teams provided real-time information to the RRCC and the state of Florida during last September's Tropical Storm Fay.

Our IMAT teams have been deployed nine times since May of 2008, both within RIV as well as to assist other regions. As a newly formed component of our disaster response and recovery team, RIV IMAT initiates efforts to build relationships and coordination with state and Region IV program and planning counterparts. IMAT team members have conducted state meetings, participated in training sessions, and assisted the states of Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi and Florida in table top and full scale functional exercises.

#### *Evaluation Planning Initiatives and Coordination*

Our Mass Evacuation Transportation Planning (METP) goal is to have updated state evacuation plans, with the focus this year on the Atlantic coast — South Carolina and Georgia. To make this effort work we coordinate with several key players such as Amtrak, as well as ambulance and bus contractors.

In 2008, the focus was the Gulf State region and we are confident those Gulf States' evacuation plans are functional and effective for the 2009 season.

#### *Regional Exercise*

To further strengthen our partnerships, FEMA is actively engaged with state governments in joint exercises to prepare for the 2009 hurricane season.

Region IV in partnership with the State of Florida is preparing for the Hurricane Suiter table top exercise scheduled May 28-June 3. Hurricane Suiter is a state-federal collaborative exercise to test selected systems and procedures prior to hurricane season. The National Hurricane Center of NOAA's National Weather Service, among other partners, are key collaborators in this effort. The exercise will provide Florida and Region IV with an opportunity to test new methodologies and approaches developed from the Florida Catastrophic Hurricane Planning process. Issues identified during the exercise will be addressed in June.

Activities will include:

- RIV RRCC activation. Staff will be assigned workstations and become familiar with time-oriented processes.
- The Region IV Liaison and both national and regional IMAT teams will be deployed to the Florida EOC to begin operational coordination efforts.
- The Region Air Operations Branch will be activated and will have a liaison deployed to the Florida EOC to address exercise issues related to air traffic control and resource management.
- FEMA headquarters will be activating a coordination cell to receive communications and informational updates.

- o The Regional Evacuation Coordination Unit will be activated to test a new operational plan.

#### *Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments*

Other federal agencies have considerable resources and expertise that are critical to saving lives and providing major support to the disaster response and recovery process. FEMA identifies needs and tasks, and then “mission assigns” the appropriate agency to meet those needs. FEMA has developed Pre-scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs) to standardize and speed the process. PSMAs are essentially checklists for federal, state and local partners that identify lists of required actions, necessary supplies, and instructions for getting supplies to the disaster site. Prior to Katrina, only 13 mission assignments were pre-scripted. FEMA now has 223 PSMAs with 31 federal agencies to facilitate a rapid response to a disaster.

#### *Logistics*

Over the last year, FEMA Region IV has greatly improved logistics capabilities. Commodities are now staged near a disaster in a National Logistics Staging Center, often a military base, where they can then be distributed to locations specified by the state for further distribution to the impacted area. Other initiatives supporting logistics are:

- Points of distribution (POD) training is available to all states and their Army National Guard forces.
- Region IV has collaborated in planning with the state’s logistics personnel to produce commodity distribution schedules that are specific to each state’s requirements and level of preparedness.
- Last year our Logistics staff piloted a cross-docking method of distribution. That has been refined and now offers the region and states a truly dedicated response fleet for commodity distribution at the incident level.
- The region’s state-assigned Logistics Liaisons are trained and proficient in the application of the new Logistics Capability Assessment Tool (LCAT). This new tool enables each state to measure their logistics capabilities at every level.

#### *Lessons Learned from the 2008 hurricane season*

Region IV updated the guide used by our Emergency Support Functions (ESF) during RRCC activations, as well as streamlined reporting with the IMAT and the NRCC. We have made improvements to the planning processes with our ESFs through review of our latest business practices. We are continuing to work with host states, states that have agreed to support disaster evacuees from other states, to provide solutions to issues that resulted from the 2008 hurricane season those host states provided support to the State of Louisiana.

**CONCLUSION**

I believe we have made real progress in strengthening relationships with our federal, state and local counterparts. As Nancy Ward stated, "If we do not plan together, train together and develop policies and procedures together, from the start, we as an emergency management community will never be as effective as we should be. It's that simple." Thank you for your time and I look forward to answering your questions.



Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management  
 Hearing on **FEMA: Preparedness for the 2009 Hurricane Season**  
 Miami, Florida  
 May 1, 2009

Hearing Questions for the Record  
 Mr. Phil May

- What is the disposition of the previously used trailers, particularly reconditioning them so they are safe for long-term occupancy?

**Due to health concerns from formaldehyde, all travel trailer's purchased during the 2005 Hurricane Season, upon deactivation, designated as scrap. These units will be disposed of, by law through the process designated by the U.S. General Services Administration.**

- How many people are still living in trailers in Mississippi as May 1, 2009?

**Current Status (as of 5/20/2009)**

State	Group Sites	Commercial Sites	Private Sites	TOTAL HH
Mississippi	0	128	1,159	1,287

- How many people are in FEMA Housing as May 1, 2009, (when the program was supposed to end) and what is the status of the families that remain?

**Current Status (as of 5/20/2009)**

State	Group Sites	Commercial Sites	Private Sites	TOTAL HH
Louisiana	32	274	2,123	2,429
Mississippi	0	128	1,159	1,287
Alabama	0	0	14	14
<b>TOTAL HH</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>3,296</b>	<b>3,730</b>

For more than three years, FEMA has been aggressively working with communities and households to identify alternative, long-term housing solutions to assist with the transition into their own sustainable housing solutions. Each household residing in a temporary housing unit was assigned a FEMA caseworker to assist in locating available affordable housing resources that match the household's needs. FEMA offered each household at least three rental resources and in some cases as many as sixty-five rental resources within a reasonable commuting area were offered. FEMA continues to partner with state, local and voluntary organizations to ensure a comprehensive approach to transitioning occupants to more suitable long-term housing options and social services programs.

Even though the end of the housing program has passed, FEMA continues to make every effort to assist individuals and families occupying temporary housing units to find long-term housing.

- In Louisiana, FEMA partnered with the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA). LRA joined with FEMA during these visits in order to refer applicants to the State-led Joint Housing Solutions Group where they were either provided with state vouchers, decided to go back to their homes, or found other solutions. The State of Louisiana has worked with many parishes to request FEMA units for donation to house those without a permanent housing solution.
- In Mississippi, FEMA continues to work hand in hand with the State and the Mississippi Case Management Consortium on equitable solutions for households still residing in FEMA-provided temporary housing.
- The states have access to and are taking advantage of other federal resources that are available to the population still remaining in temporary housing units and Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). For example, states could choose to prioritize federal funds such as Community Development Block Grants to provide rental assistance to those households that the states determine are still in need of continued rental assistance.
  - HUD, in the most recent continuing Appropriations Act (H.R. 2638), received \$50 million for areas impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These funds must be used for the project-based voucher program and will help expand the affordable housing stock in Louisiana.
  - The LRA also received \$74 million in a separate appropriation, of which \$23 million must be used for new project-based voucher units that can assist affected households. HUD recognizes that these units will not be readily available when DHAP and the housing program end. In addition, the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) has received approximately 1,500 vouchers for unoccupied units in the “Big Four” developments. HANO has agreed these vouchers will be used to assist households impacted by the disaster.
- FEMA is and has been giving residents in mobile homes and park models the opportunity to purchase the unit in which they currently are living under the Temporary Housing Units Sales-to-Occupants program. The sales program is open only to households currently residing in a mobile home or park model provided by FEMA. Conditions of the sale include:
  - All units are sold “as is” with no implied warranties of any kind.
  - Households must purchase the unit in which they currently live. No substitutions or exchanges of units are permitted.
  - By purchasing the unit, the household accepts all responsibility and liability for the unit.
  - The purchasing household is solely responsible for any applicable sales taxes, permits, or inspection costs associated with the sale.

- The household must provide proof of hazard insurance for the unit.
- The purchasing household must agree to comply with local floodplain management codes, including purchasing flood insurance if the unit is or will be located in a designated Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA).
- The unit must test within the state-set formaldehyde threshold. For Louisiana, this level is .016 ppm; for Mississippi, this level is .04 ppm.

Out of an abundance of caution due to the presence of high levels of formaldehyde in some travel trailers, households in FEMA-provided travel trailers will not have the opportunity to purchase their units.

- What is the plan to assist in getting these people to vacate these trailers?
- In mid April of this year, FEMA notified applicants that Notice to Vacate were impending.
- On May 1, FEMA began delivering Notices to Vacate to inform applicants that they must surrender the temporary housing unit by May 30.
- FEMA will continue to make every effort to encourage and assist individuals and families to find long-term housing to fulfill their needs.
- However, for those applicants who continue to remain in the FEMA unit after May 30, FEMA may request the Department of Justice's (DOJ) assistance to pursue legal action to gain possession of the temporary housing units.
- This may include DOJ seeking orders from federal courts to help FEMA implement its decision not to further extend the period of direct housing assistance.
- How much money in federal funds for disputes is left and what mechanisms are you using to dispose of the backlog?

Please see attachment for response to question number 5.

- In your region, what priorities do those in FEMA trailers have, if any?
- All applicants in Temporary Housing Units (THUs) have the same priority, however, we do expect that some of our hardship cases, i.e., elderly and disabled will not be able to transition to permanent housing as quickly as others.
- MS-- On May 1<sup>st</sup> 2009, there were 1,713 households occupying FEMA THUs in Mississippi. As of May 26, 2009, there were 1,175 households in THUs. Our Transitional Recovery Office in Mississippi is working hand and hand with the Mississippi Case Management Consortium (MCMC), the Salvation Army and other non-profit and volunteer organizations to assist applicants in finding more permanent housing. Mississippi is also in the process of selling mobile homes at a reduced

price to qualified occupants. This program is going well with over 370 purchased and 284 sales pending.

- AL--14 units occupied; 8 Mobile Home's (MH) that are in the donation process, Regional Voluntary Assistance Liaisons are working to bring donation to closure. Six Travel Trailer's (TT) occupied in AL, five of which will be deactivated this week with one possible case being sent to OCC and DOJ for eviction. The 5 occupants have found permanent housing and the one has refused all resources from FEMA and has not done anything to achieve a permanent housing solution
- FL— 3 units still in place.

#### STATUS OF REMAINING TEMPORARY HOUSING APPLICANTS

(DR-FL-1561):

This FEMA TT is located on applicant's private property in Polk County, Florida. To date, the applicant has never granted FEMA access to inspect the government's property (the FEMA TT), per the lease and right of entry agreements. Also, per a review of the Polk County Property Appraiser's web site records, the applicant is paying taxes on additional homesteads, including two (2) non-FEMA mobile homes and approximately five (5) acres of land. Further, the occupant is in litigation with Polk County for allegedly installing a non-FEMA mobile home without obtaining the necessary permits. The Florida Recovery Office (FRO) Closeout team has been in contact with local law enforcement and State Attorney Officials in Polk County to address various options of retrieving this FEMA TT unit.

(DR-FL-1609):

This FEMA TT is located on a commercial pad lease (Star-by-the-Sea) in Key West, Florida. As of February 20, 2007, the applicant was previously eligible for a Habitat for Humanity home and a move-in date was scheduled for August or September 2007. However, on April 22, 2008, a Habitat Representative stated that the applicant was de-selected from the Habitat Program over a year ago because of his lack of willingness to perform duties and agreements as a Habitat for Humanity participant.

The FRO Contracting division noted that the pad lease agreement with Star-by-the-Sea will conclude on June 30, 2009. FEMA Headquarters (HQ) has previously indicated that pad lease payments should continue to be made regarding this applicant,

until further notice, direction and guidance is received from FEMA HQ.

On May 27, 2009, FEMA HQ OCC engaged the FRO Contracting Lead regarding whether payments could continue to be made on a 'month-to-month' basis, until FEMA HQ makes a decision regarding conclusion of this pad lease occupancy (e.g., litigation or termination of lease). In the interim, the FRO Closeout team has been in contact with the applicant regarding available housing he has been pursuing in the past thirty (30) days.

(DR-FL-1545):

This FEMA TT is located on a commercial pad lease (Easy Living) in Ft. Pierce, Florida. To date, the applicant has been non-cooperative with FEMA, in attempts to provide her alternative permanent housing solutions. On June 16, 2006, the applicant was provided the following resources for assistance: Catholic Charities, Mustard Seed, Private Organization and Section 8 Housing. On September 22, 2006, Director of Disaster Relief Ministries offered to pick up applicant's belonging and relocate her to new Section 8 Housing in Chiefland, Florida, but the applicant refused. Further, on September 23, 2006, the applicant refused Fanny Mae Housing options. On September 25, 2006, a FEMA caseworker provided the applicant additional assistance, and also a referral to INTACT, a Social Services Agency.

The FRO Contracting division noted that the pad lease agreement with Easy Living will conclude on June 30, 2009. HQ informed the FRO OCC that pad lease payments should continue to be made regarding this applicant, until further notice, direction and guidance is received from HQ.

On May 27, 2009, FEMA HQ OCC engaged the FRO Contracting Lead regarding whether payments could continue to be made on a 'month-to-month' basis, until HQ makes a decision regarding conclusion of this pad lease occupancy (e.g., litigation or termination of lease). In the interim, the FRO Closeout team has considered an option of seeking a Private Non-Profit sponsor to donate the FEMA TT to the applicant.

- What states in FEMA Region IV have enhanced mitigation plans and therefore are eligible for 20% under HMGP?

Florida, Georgia, and Kentucky.

## PUBLIC ASSISTANCE APPEALS:

Appeal Level	State	Appellant	Date Received	Issue	Status	Amounts
1st appeal	MS	Mississippi State University	10/21/2008	\$88,888.18; Insufficient scope of work for building repairs; improved project	Being Processed	\$88,888.18
1st appeal	MS	University of Southern Mississippi	12/10/2008	Amount not specified; Repair estimates insufficient on campus facilities; denial of replacement costs; 50-Percent Rule	Additional Data being developed. Being Processed	
1st appeal	MS	MS Dept of Finance and Administration	12/10/2008	\$1,619,200; Denial of eligibility for concrete slab repairs; latent damages; pre-existing damage	Being Processed	\$1,619,200.00
1st appeal	MS	Ocean Springs, City of	2/3/2009	\$14,789.46; Denied repair costs; A/E Fees	Being routed for signature by Regional Administrator	\$14,789.46
1st appeal	MS	Hope Academy	2/3/2009	\$3,259,750.33; Not an eligible PNP facility; denied relocation costs	Being routed for signature by Regional Administrator	\$3,259,750.33
1st appeal	MS	Pascagoula, City of	3/10/2009	Denial of Eligible Engineering and Monitoring Costs	Being routed for signature by Regional Administrator	\$65,476.59
1st appeal	MS	Biloxi, City of	4/15/2009	Denial of Repair Costs	Being Processed	\$62,042.00
1st appeal	MS	MS Gulf Coast Regional Wastewater Authority	5/20/2009	De-obligation of Salvage Values	Being Processed	\$15,666.67
1st appeal	MS	MS State Port Authority	5/28/2009	Limited Application of CEF Factors	Being Processed	
2nd appeal	MS	Ocean Springs, City of	5/1/2009	Denial of Debris Removal Costs on FA roads	Being Processed	\$82,140.14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>MS</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$5,207,953.37</b>

**MITIGATION APPEALS:**

FEMA-1604-DR-MS - Mississippi Department of Finance & Administration

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) Project Application - Pilot Reconstruction for three Casinos

- The estimated total project cost is \$190,000,000 with approximately \$970,000 in Federal funding. The overmatch would be used as a “Global Match” (non-federal cost share) for HMGP.

FEMA-1604-DR-MS - Jackson County - Singing River Hospital

- The estimated total project cost is \$1,400,000 with a federal share of \$1,330,000 and a local share of \$70,000.

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF  
DR. EDWARD RAPPAPORT  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**FIELD HEARING ON  
FEMA: PREPAREDNESS FOR THE 2009 HURRICANE SEASON**

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

**May 1, 2009  
Miami, Florida**

Madam Chairwoman (and Congressman Diaz-Balart), I am Edward Rappaport, Deputy Director of the National Hurricane Center, in the National Weather Service (NWS) at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss NOAA's role in forecasting, warning, and helping the public prepare for hurricanes.

First, I would like to thank you for your support of NOAA, the NWS, and our hurricane program. Your support enables us to make the best forecasts possible and to help the people of our Nation understand the potential effects of hurricanes and the actions they can take to protect their life and property.

The hurricane challenge goes beyond forecasting the track, strength, and size of the storms. Impacts of hurricanes are felt first in the pounding winds, storm surge, waves and rainfall at the coast, but they often extend well inland from where the storm makes landfall. Our first hand experience in Florida with Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan, and Jeanne in 2004, and the following year with Dennis, Katrina, and Wilma, reminded us that hurricane effects can be felt across the entire state. Inland flooding, tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, and strong winds can cause tremendous damage for any part of a coastal state such as Florida, as well as in states as far inland as Ohio, which last year experienced hurricane force winds and flooding rainfall from the remains of Hurricane Ike. These examples demonstrate the critical role education, awareness, and preparedness play in making sure people know what actions to take when threatened by hurricanes.

My testimony today will focus on the NWS role in forecasting hurricanes, how we communicate that information, and our collaboration with emergency managers to inform those in harm's way about the hurricane threat and the actions they need to take.



### **The Role of the National Weather Service in Tracking, Forecasting and Communicating the Threats of Hurricanes**

NOAA provides the nation with services and information to protect lives and property, and improve management of weather and water sensitive sectors, including emergency response. These services and information are built upon an infrastructure which includes satellites, aircraft, buoys, environmental observations, analyses and predictions, forecasts, and sustained user interaction. The mission of the NWS is to issue weather, water, and climate forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. Nowhere is that more evident than in the hurricane program. Various components of the NWS play important roles in the overall hurricane forecasting and warning process. The National Hurricane Center (NHC), within the NWS, has been the centerpiece of our Nation's hurricane forecast and warning program for over 50 years. The mission of the NHC is to save lives, mitigate property loss, and improve economic efficiency by issuing the best watches, warnings, and forecasts of hazardous tropical weather and by increasing public understanding of these hazards.

NHC tropical cyclone forecasts are issued every six hours, and more frequently during landfall threats. These forecasts include text messages and supporting discussions, as well as a suite of graphical products depicting our forecasts and the accompanying probabilities and "cone of uncertainty," as it has become known. The NHC is responsible for predicting the path and intensity of the system, issuing coastal hurricane watches and warnings, and describing broadly the weather conditions expected, including projected storm surge levels. (The storm surge is simply water that is pushed toward the shore by the force of the winds swirling around the storm. In addition, wind driven waves ride atop the storm surge.) The NWS Hydrometeorological Prediction Center provides forecasts on the amount of rain expected, while the NWS Storm Prediction Center has responsibility for forecasting the potential for tornadoes.

Local Weather Forecast Offices (WFO) also play a critical role in this forecast and warning process. WFOs use their local expertise to refine NHC advisories and provide specific, detailed information about the impacts from the hurricane, including more details about storm surge inundation levels and local watches, warnings, and advisories to their local forecast area of responsibility. Weather forecast office staffs have detailed knowledge of the local terrain and effects, and provide this information through direct interactions with local emergency managers via frequent online webinars and conference calls, local forecast products including the Hurricane Local Statement, and newer means of instant Internet communication. This detailed information is used by local emergency managers when making their evacuation and other preparedness decisions.

The forecast process begins with collecting data from all sources, including buoys, aircraft, ships, and satellites. This information is incorporated into high performance computer models that project the path and intensity of hurricanes. NWS forecasters interpret this information and issue the official forecasts and warnings for the hurricanes.

NHC forecasters depend heavily on computer models, especially those run by the NWS National Centers for Environmental Prediction, as input to the operational forecasts and warnings. The NHC disseminates its vital information through a broad range of methods including the media, commercial weather sector, and the Internet. This allows the NHC to provide greater public awareness once a hurricane or tropical storm forms and then approaches.

In 1995, there were nineteen tropical storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico – the most in any one hurricane season up to that point. It became a challenge for the NHC to communicate with all the different emergency managers and to meet the increase in requests by state and local governments for timely information. To address this concern, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the NWS established a Hurricane Liaison Team (HLT) in 1996. The HLT has become a Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/FEMA/NWS-sponsored team made up of federal, state, and local emergency managers, and of NWS meteorologists and hydrologists who have extensive hurricane operational experience. The DHS/FEMA HLT leader works full-time at the NHC facility on the campus of Florida International University in Miami, Florida. Other HLT team members deploy to the NHC for a storm threat at the request of the NHC director. The HLT is strategically activated well in advance of potential impact to provide the proper coordination of critical information between the NHC and the emergency management community at the federal and state levels. After consulting with their local weather service offices and the NHC, emergency managers make evacuation and other preparedness decisions. The HLT is a critical effort undertaken to ensure emergency managers and first responders at all levels know what to expect and to help them prepare for their response operations, which may include evacuations, sheltering, and mobilizing equipment and support personnel.

The media is a most essential partner and helps us get the information to the public. It provides an invaluable service to the people of the impacted areas by communicating official NHC forecast and warning information and details provided by the local WFO about potential storm impacts.

#### **Inland Effects of Hurricanes**

The effects of hurricanes can reach far inland and it is the responsibility of the appropriate local WFO to issue inland hurricane and tropical storm warnings and to describe the local impacts from the storms. Local WFOs work with NWS River Forecast Centers to forecast and provide warnings regarding floods and flash floods. WFOs also provide forecasts and warnings for all other inland effects, including strong wind and tornadoes, in partnership with the Storm Prediction Center. The WFO's work closely with local emergency managers to ensure they are aware of the potential effects from the storms. Local media relays NWS watch and warning information to the public, providing a critical way to disseminate potential life saving information from the NWS.

#### *Wind*

Hurricane-force winds, sustained at 74 miles per hour or more, can destroy buildings and mobile homes. Debris such as signs, roofing material, siding, and small items left outside can become flying missiles in hurricanes. Winds can stay above hurricane strength well inland. Hurricane Hugo in 1989 battered Charlotte, North Carolina—about 175 miles inland—with gusts near 100 miles per hour, downing trees and power lines.

#### *Tornadoes*

Hurricanes and tropical storms also produce tornadoes. These tornadoes most often occur in thunderstorms embedded in rain bands well away from the center of the hurricane. Usually, tornadoes produced by tropical cyclones are relatively weak and short-lived, but still pose a threat.

#### *Inland/Freshwater Floods*

All tropical cyclones can generate widespread torrential rain. This rain can produce deadly and destructive floods. Heavy rain can trigger landslides and mudslides, especially in mountainous regions. Flooding is the major threat from tropical cyclones to people well inland. For example, Tropical Storm Allison in 2001 was the most costly tropical storm in U.S. history, causing 24 fatalities and more than \$5 billion in flood damage to southeast Texas and southern Louisiana. Allison then moved northeastward and weakened to a depression as it brought heavy rain to South Carolina. Hurricane Floyd in 1999 brought extremely heavy rainfall to many locations in the eastern United States. Last year the remains of Hurricane Ike flooded Ohio with record rains.

Flash flooding, a rapid rise in water levels, can occur quickly due to intense rainfall. Longer term flooding on rivers and streams can persist for several days or even weeks after a storm. Intense rainfall is closely related to how fast the storms are moving and the geography of the area affected. Slow moving storms produce relatively greater rainfall. Mountainous terrain enhances rainfall from tropical cyclones and can lead to mudslides and debris flows. Inland flooding can be a major threat to people hundreds of miles from the coast.

Between 1970 and 2004, more people lost their lives from freshwater floods associated with tropical storms and hurricanes than any other weather hazard. In addition, Hurricane Katrina provides a vivid reminder that potentially the most devastating component of tropical systems is still storm surge.

#### **NOAA Encourages Everyone to Prepare**

We work year-round with federal, state, and local emergency managers; we educate them about weather effects from hurricanes and they educate us about response issues and their challenges. It is a constant learning process and the key is working together to ensure the public takes appropriate action. Most preparedness activities and outreach takes place outside hurricane season. Every year, as part of our ongoing mission to enhance economic security and national safety, NOAA conducts Hurricane Awareness Tours, alternating between the Gulf Coast and the East Coast. This year the tour will be along the East coast and will take place next week. The tour will make stops at Portsmouth,

New Hampshire, Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, Farmingdale, New York, and Key West, Florida. The tour helps raise awareness about the potential effects from hurricane landfall. Local NWS WFOs arrange the tour events with FEMA, local governments and emergency managers, schools, the public and the media in a team effort to increase hurricane awareness and encourage preparedness in these vulnerable areas of the Nation. At many of the stops, upwards of 1,000 school-aged children, and many others, tour the NOAA P-3 Orion (Hurricane Hunter) plane and are informed about hurricane preparedness.

One way a community can prepare is to become StormReady. StormReady is a nationwide community preparedness program to help communities develop plans to handle all types of hazardous weather events, from hurricanes to tornadoes. There are today 1,426 sites in 50 states. I am pleased to say that Florida has all 67 counties designated as storm ready, as well as many universities, cities, and other government sites.

The annual Hurricane Awareness Week, around the last week of May, provides another avenue to raise awareness. In most years, DHS/FEMA and NOAA jointly develop educational materials and the week has been accompanied by a Presidential Proclamation. This raises the visibility of our joint preparedness efforts with the goal to educate as many people as possible.

During land-falling storms, it is essential for the emergency management community and the weather community to have one message for the public so businesses and people can take appropriate action. Nowhere is this more critical than in areas most vulnerable to the impact of a hurricane. Our local NWS offices work very closely with local emergency managers to ensure we all speak with one voice. For example, during the past year NWS offices across the state of Florida in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Melbourne, Tampa, Key West, and here in Miami, gave numerous presentations, online "hurricane chats," and training classes to people across the state to discuss weather and the potential impact from hurricanes and tropical systems. These outreach efforts raise awareness and are designed to teach people how to prepare for the storms long before they happen.

Let me provide a few other areas where the NWS and DHS/FEMA work together on the preparedness effort. For more than 15 years, DHS/FEMA and NOAA have coordinated to teach an "Introduction to Hurricane Preparedness" course at the NHC for emergency managers and other local decision makers. Each winter, these three one-week long courses provide training on the fundamentals of hurricanes, hurricane forecasts and forecast products, and include an extensive table-top exercise to better prepare participants. The course has trained more than one thousand emergency managers and decision makers since the program began.

The NWS also participates in other state and regional hurricane preparedness table-top exercises. For example, the NHC and local weather forecast offices generate storm based scenarios for the annual State of Florida hurricane exercise. This drill is designed to

build pre-storm expertise for emergency managers. The NWS provides similar scenario development and participation for national level FEMA hurricane exercises as well.

One last area of DHS/FEMA and NOAA partnership I would like to highlight is storm surge prediction. NOAA's Storm Surge Model, known as SLOSH (Sea, Lake and Overland Surge from Hurricanes), provides excellent guidance and is used extensively for emergency management planning purposes. For 25 years, FEMA has helped fund the NHC storm surge team to develop SLOSH-based maps depicting the hurricane storm surge risk across about 40 basins spanning the U.S. coastal flood plain. Thousands of hypothetical hurricane track and intensity simulations are generated for each of about 40 basins from Brownsville, Texas, to Portland, Maine, and Puerto Rico. The information depicts potential water inundation levels based on the track and intensity of hypothetical storms. These data provide a key component of the preparedness and decision making plans of local decision makers. Basin maps are updated to account for local changes, such as new or modified roadways, levees and shorelines. The NHC storm surge team also runs and makes available event-specific storm surge simulations beginning one to two days in advance of a particular storm threat. Local WFOs help disseminate and discuss the graphics associated with these runs with their local emergency managers.

#### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I would like to state that NHC hurricane track forecasts have continued to increase in accuracy. Nevertheless, no matter how accurate our forecasts, our communities need to hear the forecasts and warnings, and then know what actions to take. In this regard, the combined preparedness, education, and communication efforts of the National Weather Service, DHS/FEMA, state and local emergency management officials and decision makers, and the media have been key advances in safeguarding the lives and property of our citizens during the past several decades. These partnerships will remain critical in our efforts to minimize future losses caused by the forces of nature. I will be pleased to answer any questions.

NOAA National Hurricane Center  
11691 Southwest 17<sup>th</sup> Street  
Miami, FL 33165