

Testimony of
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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I'm Elizabeth Zimmerman, the Deputy Associate Administrator for the Office of Response and Recovery at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak here today.

I look forward to discussing the groundbreaking work that our team at FEMA is doing to increase public-private cooperation in the sphere of emergency management.

FEMA Administrator Fugate recently told a gathering of U.S. private sector leaders: "There's no way government can solve the challenges of a disaster with a government-centric approach. It takes the whole team." This philosophy is central to how our leadership team has approached our mission since we took office over four years ago. We believe that the Agency is better able to serve our neighbors, fellow citizens, and our nation's disaster survivors in particular, when public sector and private sector representatives are both active members of the same team. FEMA places a premium on the value of public-private partnerships, and works steadily to provide tools, models, and resources designed to inspire their creation and nurture their success.

Throughout this testimony, I will highlight our collaborative endeavors with the private sector and how these efforts were put to good use on behalf of the American people during the team's response and recovery operations for Hurricane Sandy and other disasters.

Private Sector Outreach and Steady State Coordination

As part of the Office of External Affairs, the Private Sector Division conducts outreach to a wide range of non-government partners, including small, medium and large business; academia, trade associations and other organizations. Throughout the year, our headquarters and regional staff conduct a variety of outreach activities to interact with the private sector about its role in emergency management, provide information on tools and resources to support preparedness, and integrate the private sector into the emergency management team. The Division team includes six full time positions at FEMA headquarters, ten regional liaisons and a disaster workforce cadre of approximately 40 reservists.

During steady state, non-disaster operations, the Division focuses its efforts on ways to engage various segments of the private sector in activities ranging from seasonal public affairs campaigns to opportunities for providing feedback on national policies to participation in joint exercises. Over the past five years, the Division has led a number of initiatives to foster greater private-public partnership.

For instance, the Private Sector Web Portal provides one-stop shopping for the private sector on tools, resources, initiatives, and other content relevant to their interests. FEMA also established a Private Sector Representative (PSR) position in 2010 in order to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate between public and private sector stakeholders before, during, and after disasters. When the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) is activated, these special government employees serve as critical liaisons between FEMA and private industry through the National Business Emergency Operation Center (NBEOC) by leveraging private sector coordination and collaboration capabilities and sharing situational awareness information. When not activated for disaster response, representatives work as part of FEMA's Private Sector Division to seek and share information with the private sector on planning, training, and exercising activities.

The PSR position has been filled by eight companies, including Target, Big Lots, Brookfield Properties, Systems Planning Corporation (a small business), Verizon, Citi, Wal-Mart and Dominion. The Division expects to welcome the first academic representative in summer 2013. To date, PSRs have been integrated solely in the Private Sector Division; and, going forward, PSRs will be assigned to FEMA programs offices where their skills and background can be best leveraged. The role of the PSR is to provide FEMA leadership with guidance on how private sector resources and capabilities can best be leveraged to help communities respond and recover from disasters. PSRs, who are special government employees, are not expected to speak on behalf of industries outside of their realm of expertise.

On the preparedness front, the Agency has developed six tabletop exercises available on the FEMA website, complete with video injects and facilitator notes. These exercises can be used by the private sector as a preparedness activity at the community, organization, or partnership

level. FEMA also created the QuakeSmart program to help local businesses mitigate earthquake losses and get back up and running as quickly as possible after a disaster. A cornerstone of the program is FEMA's recognition that partnerships are key to raising awareness and to making sure that businesses take action to become "QuakeSmart." In support of its mission, "QuakeSmart" develops materials, delivers training, and increases its partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. Activities include successful dialogues between FEMA and local chambers of commerce and businesses in the New Madrid Seismic Zone over the past year in Memphis and recently in St. Louis – areas of focus during the 200th anniversary of the New Madrid earthquakes.

Although online resources are valuable for their broad accessibility, face-to-face opportunities are an effective way to fully engage our partners and encourage a productive exchange of ideas. FEMA held its first national conference on "Building Resilience through Public Private Partnerships" in August 2011. Combined, in-person and virtual participation reached close to 1,000 people nationwide. The conference was developed in collaboration with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) and was co-hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Red Cross.

In addition to direct private sector engagement, FEMA also coordinates with a broad array of other government agencies and offices whose interests or capabilities have a direct impact on the success of private sector engagement. Our team works closely with our partners throughout DHS, including the Office of Infrastructure Protection, the Office of Academic Engagement, the Private Sector Office and the Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

Importantly, the DHS Office of Infrastructure Protection Strategic Outreach and Partnerships Division helps extend FEMA's reach through coordination with the 16 critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR) sector-specific agencies and government coordinating councils. Division staff participates directly in several CIKR Government Coordinating Councils: Critical Manufacturing, Chemical, Commercial Facilities, Banking and Finance. The Division also has direct relationships with the sector leads from the Departments of Treasury, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Transportation and Energy as well as the Food and Drug Administration. Additionally, the Division has coordinated with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Internal Revenue Service, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Commerce, and the White House Office of Strategic Engagement (National Security Staff).

Overall, these efforts aim to leverage public-private partnerships to enhance situational awareness; expand reach and access for disaster preparedness and relief communications; increase the effectiveness of emergency management efforts; maintain strong relationships, build on mutual understanding; create more resilient communities and increase jurisdictional capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from major incidents.

National Business Emergency Operations Center

In the aftermath of a major disaster, getting the local economy back up and running again requires close coordination across government and the private sector. The NBEOC was established in July 2012 as part of Emergency Support Function 15 (ESF-15/External Affairs) to provide an information sharing and collaboration platform for national partners during major disasters. The NBEOC is a virtual network of national corporations, infrastructure (through DHS), federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial government, and trade associations that have disaster roles. Under the National Response Framework, there are two seats dedicated to the NBEOC within the NRCC which are typically staffed by a member of the Private Sector Division and the current Private Sector Representative.

A key goal of the NBEOC is to promote business getting back to business, which means that information and interactions will focus on this objective.

Our team at FEMA is keenly aware that an established capability in every community already exists through which the private sector provides daily transportation, food, shelter, and communications services. Ideally, that existing structure should be back up and running as quickly as possible after an incident. Achieving a rapid return to normalcy may require government assistance clearing roadblocks, sharing information, connecting the dots at federal, state, tribal, territorial and local levels, as well as other solutions. It also means ensuring that the government is moving resources where and when they are needed, in collaboration – not competition – with the private sector.

The NBEOC has been activated twice, most recently for Hurricane Sandy, which was the largest activation for the Private Sector Division since it was established in 2007. The NBEOC was activated as part of the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) for almost three weeks--beginning pre-landfall--to assist impacted private sector organizations. In addition, 30 private sector liaisons were deployed to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut to support ESF-15 at a more local level.

From both the private sector and federal perspectives, the need for public-private coordination was so pressing that NBEOC membership almost doubled, rising to almost 350 before the storm made landfall. The team sent twice-daily situational updates to NBEOC members, responded to more than 125 requests for information, and helped resolve a range of private sector issues. Simultaneously, the NBEOC was able to provide critical private sector information on operating status, obstacles, and issues to inform decision-making in the NRCC and the Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCCs). For example, retail open/closed status was a critical component in daily commodities planning in the NRCC and the Regions.

Along with a constant stream of requests from federal operational partners, the NBEOC desk also fielded at least 125 private sector inquiries during the initial response, ranging from credentialing and transportation requests to lodging offers. For example, the NBEOC desk

helped connect private sector partners with the Department of Transportation for transportation waiver requests, so they could deliver critical supplies and generators to impacted areas. The NBEOC also worked with a *Fortune* 500 big box store to fulfill a request for information on shelter locations, so their stores could maintain adequate stock levels.

As the immediate response and recovery operations for Hurricane Sandy ramped down, FEMA leadership acted quickly to capture lessons learned from the NBEOC's operational output during the storm. On April 23, 2013, NBEOC members met with senior Agency personnel with the goal of securing greater mutual understanding of capabilities, needs, and opportunities among FEMA's operational leadership and the NBEOC members. I welcome the opportunity to share the results of our analysis with the Subcommittee in the near future.

Public-Private Partnership in Action

The Administration's efforts to bring to bear the full resources of our partners during the response and recovery phases of disaster operations has paid substantial dividends in helping to make communities whole again.

The spring of 2011 brought a series of devastating tornados to the southeast, starting with an outbreak in Alabama. Working hand in hand with the private sector and the state of Alabama, support streamed rapidly into the impact zone. FEMA deployed private sector specialists with the disaster response team. These reservists coordinated with the Alabama Department of Insurance, Alabama Insurance Information Service and Joint Field Office leadership to bring major insurance companies to the table on a recurring basis to discuss how they could work together to better assist survivors/policyholders. In addition, FEMA worked with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs and the Housing Task Force to plan at least five "Recovery Expos," scheduled in the Phil Campbell/Hackleburg, Tuscaloosa, Cordova, Pratt City and Rainsville areas. These expos played an important role in providing local businesses an opportunity to sell their goods and services thereby helping to stimulate the local economy in the aftermath of the tornados. Finally, our private sector team worked with Alabama Gas to provide FEMA disaster assistance information on billing statements to 400,000 people.

As I previously stated, the team's response and recovery efforts during Hurricane Sandy provided a new opportunity to operationalize the partnership with our private sector colleagues on a broad scale. By leveraging their existing networks and capabilities, a number of private sector companies were able to channel critical information and resources to impacted communities in need. For example, a national lodging association reached out to its membership to promote the Transitional Shelter Assistance program, helping to increase available housing resources for disaster survivors and emergency personnel in New York and New Jersey. A major internet search engine's crisis action team worked with FEMA and private sector partners to map out gas stations, retail locations and power outages for public use. A nationally known

telecommunications company brought its mobile communications trailer to provide online access for survivors to register for assistance in Rockaway and Long Beach, New York. Finally, an organization representing pharmacies provided daily updates to the general public on open and closed pharmacies in New York and New Jersey.

Conclusion

FEMA, under the leadership of Administrator Fugate, has made great strides in embracing our private sector colleagues as full-fledged members of our emergency management team that includes federal, state, territorial, local and tribal partners. The Agency continues to learn from our partners who are handling emergencies on a daily basis. They offer the most relevant lessons and good practices. We build on what works in the field, and help amplify the reach of the most promising efforts by sharing them nationally.

As a leadership team, we recognize that there are areas where we can improve. Two key challenges include fundamental differences between the way the federal government and the private sector operate and the lack of consistent connections at the state government level for private sector engagement. The latter is critical since much of the collaboration between the public and private sectors must happen at the state level, due to the nature of emergency management. At present, only half of all U.S. states have any type of private sector engagement effort for emergency management issues, and those efforts range widely in format, focus, level of effort, and sustainability.

I believe these challenges present ample opportunity for us to continue to work with the members of this Subcommittee and your colleagues in the House and Senate, to further enhance the cooperative frameworks through which we collaborate with our private sector partners.

Thank you Chairman Begich for providing me this opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering questions you or other members of the Subcommittee may have.