

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Tammy Baldwin**  
**Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management**  
**FEMA: Assessing Progress, Performance, and Preparedness**  
**April 12, 2015**

Good Afternoon.

Thank you, Chairman Paul for working with me to hold this important hearing to examine the Federal Management Agency's (FEMA) efforts to assist states in preparing for terrorism and natural disasters. I would also like to thank our witnesses for being here today.

We have learned from the attacks in Brussels, Paris and San Bernardino that we face critical and evolving threats as a nation. Not only do we face new risks of terrorism, but we also face ongoing threats of natural disasters, including floods, hurricanes and tornadoes.

FEMA is charged with the critical role of ensuring our first responders have the tools and resources they need to prevent, prepare for and respond to all hazards. For nearly forty years, FEMA has implemented robust programs to increase states' capabilities to protect against disasters. Notably, FEMA provides critical federal preparedness grant funding as well as real-time training and exercises for first responders.

I think all of our states, and indeed the country, have benefited from this critical assistance. However, as I have said in previous subcommittee hearings, we must continuously assess and evaluate our programs to ensure that we are addressing our Nation's priorities in the most efficient and effective manner possible. So thank you again for being here, Mr. Manning, to discuss ways that FEMA can continue to prepare first responders for new and emerging threats, as well as increase oversight of its programs.

One area of particular importance in my home state of Wisconsin, and many other states across the country, is the exponential increase in the transportation of crude oil by rail. At a rate higher than ever before, this volatile substance is travelling in rail cars past homes, schools and businesses.

With increased volume, comes increased risk. Just last November, two trains carrying hazardous materials derailed in Wisconsin, spilling hundreds of gallons of crude oil and thousands of gallons of ethanol. Fortunately, nothing caught fire and no one was hurt. However, 35 families were evacuated from their homes. We have seen other derailments across the country, including in Illinois, West Virginia, North Dakota, Alabama and Virginia. These incidents pose an immense threat to communities, people and the environment. For example, this past weekend, a train derailed in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. No one was hurt—but it is not enough to rely on luck. We must have sufficient plans in place to respond to derailments—including the worst case scenario.

I am proud to have included a number of provisions in the recently-passed highway bill to improve first responder access to information about these trains and it is critical that the Department of Transportation implement the reforms as soon as possible.

However, we must do more to address this significant security concern. That is why I requested that the Inspector General audit whether the Department of Homeland Security has established

sufficient plans and coordination efforts to effectively respond to and recover from railway accidents involving hazardous materials. I look forward to the results of that audit and to hearing from our witnesses about what more we can do to respond to this emerging threat.

I am also concerned by a recent Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General report that found that FEMA has not adequately analyzed recurring OIG recommendations to improve oversight of the Homeland Security Grant Program. Specifically, the IG found that while FEMA tracks specific audit recommendations on a state by state basis, FEMA has not “taken the extra step of proactively analyzing the audits to discover trends, engage in a root cause analysis, and implement corrective action over the entire program.”

Like the IG, I am concerned that states could be repeating the same mistakes and that we run the risk of money not being spent for its intended purpose.

Similarly, I am concerned by a Government Accountability Office report that found that FEMA does not comprehensively collect or monitor the status of corrective actions made by federal departments that participate in national-level exercises. While FEMA has made progress in addressing this issue, more needs to be done to track corrective action to ensure that FEMA has an up-to-date outlook of national preparedness.

I look forward to hearing from you, Mr. Manning, on how FEMA plans to improve oversight of the Homeland Security Grant program and track the status of corrective actions made by federal departments.

I again want to thank Chairman Paul for providing us the opportunity to discuss these important issues and our witnesses for taking part in the discussion.

My hope is that when we leave here today, we have concrete ways to improve preparedness efforts for first responders, strengthen oversight of FEMA programs and deliver our Nation’s priorities in the most efficient and effective manner possible.