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Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee:
“National Emergency Management: Where Does FEMA Belong?”
June 8, 2005

Thank you Madam Chairwoman and Senator Lieberman for the opportunity to testify on how to structure National Emergency Management resources to best ensure effective mitigation/prevention of, preparedness for, response to, and recovery from extreme events. The May report from this committee, *Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared*, provides recommendations that should be seriously considered by Congress and the White House.

When then Department of Homeland Security was created and FEMA became the core of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate, I had two immediate thoughts: first, emergency management in this country would now be conducted within the context of homeland security and secondly, that I had no idea what that meant. In a typical academic reaction, a colleague and I assumed that others would be struggling with these issues and started a new journal. The Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (JHSEM) provides a source of research and practitioner based material. The success of this electronic Journal may be an indication of the interest in the research and professional communities as the Federal government introduced dramatic changes in emergency management structure and doctrine. Hurricane Katrina was the first test of this re-construction of emergency management as a component of Homeland Security and of the National Response System created by the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System. The failures crossed all phases of emergency management. We failed to mitigate obvious vulnerabilities, we failed to evacuate people out of harms way, we failed to provide basic emergency services to disaster victims, we failed to provide adequate temporary housing or to develop a viable recovery strategy for a culturally unique and economically critical American city. As Karl Weick¹ has observed, “reality is a cruel auditor.”

My remarks are based on the following three premises:

1. The US continues to be vulnerable to extreme events with potentially catastrophic consequences---nature will not rest after Hurricane Katrina and terrorists will not stop with the September 11 attacks.
2. We have not reduced known vulnerabilities, to adequately prepare for extreme events, or to create the ability to mobilize, deploy, and coordinate an adequate response and recovery to a large scale event.

¹ Weick, Karl, *Managing the Unexpected*

3. Making our society and economy more resilient to extreme events is a national priority. It is not enough to ensure that our citizens survive extreme events. Our society and economy must be able to withstand and adapt to these events and continue to thrive at the local, regional and national level.

Form follows function, so we must first ask what we expect the Federal government to do. The post Katrina reports from this committee, from the House Select Committee, The White House, the General Accountability Office, and the Department of Homeland Security collectively contain 321 recommendations providing some insights into these expectations. We expect Federal leadership and coordination to produce an effective national emergency management network of organizations, led by DHS, capable of reducing vulnerability, and managing the response to and recovery from catastrophic events of all types. William Jenkins² of the General Accountability Office, notes that the Department of Homeland Security controls only a portion of the resources needed to succeed in this task. Coordination and networking, not command and control are the essence of emergency management. DHS must coordinate the actions of other Federal departments, notably DOD, DOJ, DHHS, and DOT, state and local governments, non governmental non profits, and private sector organizations. Coordination is one critical success factor, the others are capacity, capability, and competence. The national emergency management leadership must ensure:

- That the Federal government has adequate personnel and materiel resources available or immediately accessible to prepare for and to meet the needs caused by a catastrophic event. (capacity)
- That the Federal Government can rapidly mobilize and organize enough skilled personnel and can it deploy people supported by adequate resources to the places needed and coordinate their actions? (capability)
- That the Federal Government can provide the leadership, management, decision making, and situational awareness necessary to manage the response to a catastrophic event? (competence)

The current debate is framed in terms of solutions: Should emergency management responsibilities remain in DHS or should an independent FEMA be created? If emergency management remains in DHS are the changes proposed in Secretary Chertoff's Second Stage Review, and the revisions to the NRP and NIMS adequate or is more radical restructuring required to create an emergency management structure within DHS? How extensive an emergency management role should be assigned to DOD? I believe that, depending on the leadership and resources provided, any alternative could work or could fail, I believe that the organizational proposal made by your committee are superior to other alternatives based on the following four factors considered in your report.:

1. Minimizing the human, property, social and economic impacts of extreme events and building a resilient society are tasks that require cabinet level authority and political access.
2. The nation's emergency manager must have the budgetary, planning, research, training, and operational resources necessary to establish doctrine and to effectively coordinate its

² Jenkins, William, "Collaboration over Adaptation: The Case for Interoperable Communications in Homeland Security." *Public Administration Review*, May/June 2006. pp. 319-321

implementation and the political standing to coordinate with other cabinet secretaries and with state governors.

3. The Committee's recommendations propose innovative solutions to the problems of restoring the conceptual and programmatic coherence of all hazards, comprehensive emergency management within DHS while not interfering with non emergency management homeland security functions.
4. Effective mobilization and coordination of DOD resources will be required to adequately prepare for and respond to any extreme event. The Committee proposes a structure that has the Cabinet level status and staffing required to provide this coordination.

The DHS Second Stage Review re-organization does not restore comprehensive, all hazard emergency management within DHS and in my opinion will exacerbate some of the problems we witnessed in the Katrina response. The reorganization has been opposed by the National Emergency Management Association because it separates preparedness from response and recovery, creating a disconnect for states. States receive preparedness funding and guidance from the DHS Preparedness Directorate while the responsibility for mobilization and coordination during a disaster response remains with FEMA. Under this plan, FEMA will become a response organization, competing with preparedness for budget. More importantly, the proposed structure will constrain vital feedback between response and recovery results and mitigation and preparedness programs.

FEMA cannot be re-created as an independent agency without a difficult transition period and a re-writing of doctrine and re-design of systems that we can ill afford. Natural hazards and terrorists are not going to wait for us to re-organize yet again. Emergency management at the Federal level has been conceptually absorbed within homeland security with the creation of the National Response Plan, NIMS, and the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. FEMA as an independent agency ceased to exist when DHS was formed and the Secretary was designated by law as the Primary Federal Official for all incidents of national significance. The name was retained largely to preserve internal morale and capitalize on the agencies good public image. Functions performed by the independent agency have been distributed and consolidated in the DHS structure. The removal of FEMA from DHS will seriously disrupt the Department, removing the consequence management portion of its comprehensive risk management responsibilities. FEMA is a small agency that will be overwhelmed by an extreme event. It has been capacity and capability constrained both as an independent agency and as a part of DHS. As the Director of the GW Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management, I was frequently interviewed by the media in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina about FEMA's performance. I made a practice of asking my interviewer how many people he or she believed served as full time FEMA employees. The smallest answer I got was 10,000 people. Frequently the response was 100-150,000. All were shocked when I informed them that the answer was less than 2,000. The creation of DHS was supposed to dramatically expand the pool of skilled personnel available as a surge capacity for emergency management functions. Katrina showed that it has not yet worked that way, but the potential is there and is recognized in both the Second Stage Review and in your committee's proposals.

In conclusion, getting the structure right will not be easy, and is only the first step in solving the problems identified in all the post Katrina evaluations. The resulting organization must be

flexible and agile enough to respond to the unexpected and structured enough to coordinate state and regional preparedness and risk reductions programs. It must creatively engage the private sector in all phases of emergency management. It must provide for competent leadership, with the regional and local presence required to ensure capability, capacity, and competence at all levels. The next event will bring totally unanticipated challenges, will we be ready?

The 9-11 commission termed the failure to anticipate and react to the terrorist threat a failure of imagination, the House Select committee called the inept response to Hurricane Katrina a failure of initiative. We now know about the potential catastrophic consequences from the threats and hazards facing us, we also know what must be done to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme events. Failure to successfully reduce these potential future catastrophic consequences will be viewed by history as a failure of intent. We must truly get it right this time. I thank the committee for the opportunity to testify, and more importantly for focusing the public discourse on issues critical to our nation's survival.

Biography of John R. Harrald, Ph.D.

Dr. John Harrald is the Director of The George Washington University Institute for Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Management (www.gwu.edu/~icdrm) and a Professor of Engineering Management and Systems Engineering in the GWU School of Engineering and Applied Science. He is the Executive Editor of the Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (www.bepress.org/jhsem), and is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, National Research Council's Disaster Roundtable Advisory Committee and a member of the National Research Council's Computer Science and Technology Board's Committee on the use of Information Technology for Crisis and Disaster Management. He is the immediate Past President of The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS). Dr. Harrald has been actively engaged in the fields of emergency and crisis management and maritime safety and port security and as a researcher in his academic career and as a practitioner during his 22 year career as a U.S. Coast Guard officer, retiring in the grade of Captain. Dr. Harrald received his B.S. in Engineering from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, a MALS from Wesleyan University, a M.S. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he was an Alfred P. Sloan Fellow, and an MBA and Ph.D. from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.