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**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

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**Before the**

**Committee on Homeland Security**

**Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,  
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

**United States Senate**

**“The Role of Federal Executive Boards in Pandemic Preparedness**

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10:00 A.M., Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 342

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Good morning Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Art Cleaves, and I am privileged to serve as the Regional Administrator for the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region I. Region I, which is headquartered in Boston, covers the New England States of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to highlight for you the steps FEMA and Region I are taking to strengthen the region's preparedness as well as our role and strong interaction with the Federal Executive Board. Let me begin with a brief overview of Region I and my role as the Regional Administrator.

As the primary FEMA representative and coordinator, I oversee the development, implementation and execution of all FEMA Region I programs and initiatives, and have planning and operational oversight of special projects related to building a strong, capable, and responsive Region. My goal is to help Administrator Paulison build a new FEMA that will be the Nation's preeminent emergency management and preparedness organization by ensuring FEMA Region I: has collaborative and supportive relationships with the six New England States, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector focused in preparedness and response to all-hazard threats; has the necessary operational systems, planning and assessment tools, training, exercises, and equipment in place, 365 days a year, seven days a week, 24 hours a day; and has a robust FEMA infrastructure, appropriate resources, and a hardworking, professional staff.

### **Discussion of the Role of "New FEMA" in Regional Preparedness**

Administrator Paulison has laid out a vision for a new FEMA that integrates and incorporates the new missions assigned to FEMA by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. An enhanced role in regional preparedness is an important part of this vision. In the new FEMA, preparedness activities will be integrated with a regional focus designed to help better understand our States and local communities. FEMA's Regions will become a networked organization that will be instrumental in the development of a seamless connection between all partners, including Federal, State, local, tribal and territorial governments, Homeland Security Advisors and private sector organizations. This will result in a comprehensive preparedness

strategy that will create awareness and involvement from the State or local level down to the individual community. Our approach to preparedness is an all hazards approach which includes terrorist events, other man-made incidents and natural disasters. This awareness will become embedded through training and exercising from the local level all the way up to our headquarters.

Our Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) will be the focal point for all activity. We are continually utilizing the RRCC as a center for regional response and awareness. Our operational posture is continuing to develop in our RRCC through our Situational Awareness Unit (SAU). The SAU is a key operational concept utilizing a 24/7 unit that provides twice daily reports giving a snapshot of events in our region. The focus of the report varies, covering issues such as the power grid status, fuel supply, river status (depth, flood stage, etc.), ground saturation data, status of transportation systems, propane availability, liquefied natural gas supply, primary warning point data, flood hazard data, and maps of hazard areas. We are in the process of enhancing the SAU this year to include input from the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), Fusion Centers and State Primary Warning Points. Information gathered at the SAU will be passed on to the NRCC and back to States. Coordination of this effort will be both internal and external.

We must connect with our partners before, during and after disasters. This effort has to be consistent throughout the lifecycle of an incident, from prevention through long-term recovery. The region must execute this effort with an enthusiastic team effort behind which we fully integrate preparedness and mitigation actions. It is a focused effort that requires strategic planning with identified specific outcomes and a key to success is a quality communications plan.

We are also in the process of conducting readiness assessments in our region. This assessment makes use of the National Incident Management System. This effort will provide us with a true and accurate full assessment of our State partners. On the regional side we will be using this assessment to produce our Regional Status Report. Through these assessments we will help our

State and local partners understand the interdependencies needed to respond to a catastrophic event.

Another component critical to preparedness integration is coordination with other DHS agencies. This coordination will be in the form of a twice monthly conference call with all of the senior regional leadership of DHS. This call will be a forum to exchange information ensuring communication on all levels of DHS (TSA, USCG, CBP, and ICE). We will also be conducting a monthly call with our State Homeland Security Advisors to discuss specific State issues.

### **How FEMA is engaging Federal Executive Boards in emergency preparedness**

Federal Executive Boards, known more commonly by their acronym “FEB”, provide a critical link to all Federal Agencies with a presence in a local area and are a critical element to prevention, protection, response and recovery, as well as continuity of operations (COOP). FEMA Region I has a long standing relationship with the Boston FEB. The region is an active member of the FEB and participates in their monthly meetings. The Boston FEB has recently developed an emergency preparedness committee and FEMA is the lead agency for this committee. We have also been engaged with the FEB in our emergency preparedness activities. Recently we conducted a “Train the Trainer” seminar with members of the FEB on personal preparedness. There were several members of the FEB who attended the training with a goal of bringing the personal preparedness message back to each of their FEB agencies.

Another facet of our emergency preparedness is our quarterly Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) meetings. FEB member agencies have always been active participants in the RISC meetings. Last week we conducted a RISC meeting which focused on emergency preparedness. Nearly 90 Federal, State, and local representatives attended, including many members of the FEB.

In July, the region hosted our second Homeland Security Advisors meeting. This meeting was hosted by the United States Coast Guard, another member of the FEB. The two and a half day meeting consisted of presentations from Homeland Security partners, the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, the United States Coast Guard, FEMA's Federal Coordinating Officer cadre, the Region A Principal Federal Official (PFO) George Naccara, State Adjutant Generals, the New Hampshire Office of Emergency Management (Fusion Center) and the General Services Administration.

### **The role of FEBs in Pandemic preparedness**

FEBs can and should play an important role in pandemic preparedness. FEMA Region I will be conducting a region wide pandemic exercise in next quarter, the first such exercise of its kind in New England. The goal is to bring Federal and State partners together to look at the issues that will present themselves and to better understand the roles and responsibilities of each government entity. A major component to that exercise will be the use of the FEB as a unifying agent for Federal departments.

Our regional planning will involve key Federal agencies that will have the lead in a pandemic outbreak. The Department of Health and Human Services, including its Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will be key components in a response effort, but given the nature of a pandemic and its potential for a broad reach, utilizing the FEB and all Federal Agencies will be critical.

In Region I we already have a very close working relationship with our Federal partners and participate regularly in exercises and conferences. The U.S Coast Guard, the Transportation Security Administration, Customs and Border Protection and all of DHS's component agencies work very closely in the region. It is those Federal Agencies that do not have an institutional role in emergency preparedness and response, but are a part of the FEB, that we must engage in the event of a pandemic.

The FEB and its relationship building mantra can be a key resource in the event of a pandemic. Here are just a few ways that the FEB can play a major role in a response situation:

- It can be an informational distribution resource for the Federal Government within the region. With established relationships and networking capabilities unique to the FEB for the distribution and exchange of information, it can assist with a critical component of a response operation. One of the important issues in a pandemic is coordinated communication among and between agencies while they are implementing social distancing recommendations. This will require greater connectivity through technology such as e-mail and video conferencing. The FEB is positioned to be a major asset as a repository of incoming and outgoing information for the Federal Government and it will be able to utilize existing standard operations to accomplish this. In Region I key players (PFO, FCO and RRCC staff) have defined, specific actions that would take in a pandemic outbreak. These actions would include the opening of the RRCC at a Level III. Level III activation of the RRCC is a full activation which includes all FEMA staff with emergency assignments there and full Emergency Support Function (ESF) personnel. The FEB plays a very important role in the education of other Federal partners by teaching the specific steps that we go through in our activation during an event.
  
- The FEB can be a conduit for resource support during a response operation. Perhaps the most critical resource needed in a pandemic will be staff to carry out the response mission. The FEB once again is uniquely positioned to be a coordinating body for obtaining essential staff and personnel. The nature of a pandemic is its ability to cripple a workforce, something about which government and the private sector are most concerned. With its already established relationships with other Federal agencies, the FEB could utilize its position to identify a workforce capable of assisting with a response. Since the FEB has an extremely close relationship with the Federal agencies in Region I, they may be asked to support our response operation. The assets that they can bring to assist could be staff from other federal agencies. During a pandemic outbreak staff shortages will exist in all agencies. FEB and FEMA should discuss their respective pandemic plans to see how the agencies may be able to support FEMA's essential functions during a pandemic.

The FEB can and should play a major role in pandemic preparedness and response. By pre-identifying the unique capabilities that exist within the FEB and establishing what roles and

responsibilities it will undertake in a pandemic, the FEB can engage from the outset to enhance the response effort and integrate all Federal Agencies from the very beginning.

### **How can FEBs assist in COOP/COG of the Federal workforce?**

The FEB has been engaged in the area of continuity of operations/continuity of government (COOP/COG) in Region I for some time. The FEMA Region I COOP coordinator has met with the FEB agencies and provided training to each on this issue. Each agency has a plan and has either exercised their plan or will do so soon. Recently we met with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and discussed their COOP exercise that they conducted over a 3 day period. They identified this training as a pivotal part of their process in becoming better prepared.

As I have previously indicated to you, we are planning a Pandemic Influenza Exercise in Region I in December. This exercise will solicit active participation from many of our FEB members. This will give an opportunity to test our ability to COOP and ensure that COG is maintained. We feel this exercise and others will give us a more accurate picture of where we stand. We will continue to conduct these exercises so that when a real event occurs, we will be as ready as possible.

The FEB is an integral part of our COOP/COG initiatives and we will continue to work hand-in-hand to become better prepared.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions.