

Written Statement of
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“National Capital Region Coordination”



FEMA

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U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government
Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of
Columbia and
The U.S. Senate Homeland Security Ad Hoc
Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and
Intergovernmental Affairs

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I. Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka and Ranking Member Johnson, Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Paul. My name is Steward Beckham, and I am the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before both subcommittees today to discuss the way FEMA coordinates with our local, state, and federal partners in the National Capital Region (NCR).

II. The Role of the NCRC

The NCRC Office was created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with local, state, and federal partners in the National Capital Region to enhance domestic preparedness.

NCRC was transferred to FEMA along with other preparedness elements under the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) in 2007. This shift recognized FEMA's strong partnerships with state, local, and federal authorities, and was designed to promote the seamless coordination of all-hazards preparedness and response efforts between and across all National Capital Region jurisdictions.

As Director of the NCRC, I represent DHS and FEMA on the National Capital Region's Senior Policy Group (SPG), a body of homeland security advisors and chief emergency managers from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. The SPG plays a key role in sustaining a coordinated regional approach to homeland security and in strengthening integrated decision making and planning in the National Capital Region.

To proactively maintain this coordination role across the region, the NCRC interacts daily with public, private and non-profit homeland security officials, including chief administrative officers (e.g. city and county managers), public health officials, first responders, emergency managers, leaders from the private sector and non-profit communities, and many other local, state, and federal partners in support of all hazards preparedness.

Preparedness is the best way to ensure a consistently effective, integrated, coordinated, government-wide response to emergencies. FEMA regularly participates in and hosts exercises in the NCR with our local, state, and federal partners to test and ensure the preparedness of individual jurisdictions and agencies as well as to identify practices to improve planning and coordination. Additionally, to bolster information sharing and integrated planning, NCRC develops and participates in exercises, drills and events (e.g., presidential inaugurations, national security special events, state funerals, and large demonstrations) that occur with regularity across the region.

The region's training and exercise programs are administered and coordinated by the NCR Exercise and Training Operations Panel (ETOP). The ETOP is comprised of representatives from local, state, and federal NCR entities. The cooperative efforts of this group are critical to

integrating and strengthening all-hazards preparedness across the NCR, whether for natural disasters or other terrorist threats.

III. Incident Management

The National Capital Region is the fourth largest metropolitan region in the United States and comprised of twelve local jurisdictions encompassing the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland and Virginia. It is home to the three branches of the federal government, one of the largest metropolitan public transportation systems in the country, thousands of non-profit, private sector, and federal offices, and a complex and diverse populace.

In accordance with the National Response Framework, emergencies are managed locally. During disasters, Maryland, Virginia, and the District maintain their sovereign authorities and work with FEMA Region III, located in Philadelphia, to receive any direct assistance for unmet needs or other aid approved by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

During incidents in any National Capital Region state, or within the District of Columbia, the local jurisdiction maintains lead authority and addresses emergencies as they arise. If a jurisdiction is overwhelmed by the incident, the District and nearby states may, through their participation in both the National Capital Region Mutual Aid Agreement and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), request and receive assistance from neighboring states.

When emergencies occur in the U.S. Capitol, the Capitol Police respond first and assume incident command. Per the National Incident Management System and as required under the National Response Framework, the incident commander maintains responsibility for coordinating the engagement of any additional responding authorities or resources. In a larger, multijurisdictional event with a federal Stafford Act declaration, the jurisdictional coordination will be managed by a Unified Command Group within a Joint Field Office.

Local jurisdictions lead incident response, and FEMA facilitates local coordination with federal partners through the National Watch Center (NWC) at FEMA Headquarters and the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) Watch in Region III. When an incident is underway inside the NCR, the NCR Watch Desk, which is funded and staffed by the NCRC, will support watch operations and facilitate information exchange with our NCR partners. For example, during weather events, conference calls are conducted between the National Weather Service, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), transportation agencies (e.g., WMATA, DDOT, MDOT, VDOT), state and local law enforcement and others. These calls are hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Certain types of incidents that might otherwise be relatively minor events take on a greater significance because of the high volume of commuter traffic within the National Capital Region. This has occurred during winter storms, when federal government operations in the NCR were officially suspended. Federal agencies follow the guidelines set by OPM to ensure the safety of

their employees. A decision to change the operating status of the federal government in the immediate Washington, DC, area, including closing federal offices to the public, rests with OPM.

Like many federal agencies, FEMA has increased the use of telework for business continuity purposes. When weather or other events force FEMA staff to work from alternate locations, non-emergency employees are prepared to work from home and continue normal operations. FEMA staff exercise this process at least annually, and most recently during the Determined Sentry 2011 exercise, a one-day, 'No Fault' exercise for FEMA personnel to telework from their designated Continuity of Operations (COOP) alternate facility or telework sites, which was held in November. FEMA staff across the country logged on to the network and performed specific tasks to try to stress the system with emails, conference calls, and document retrievals from centralized systems. This exercise again demonstrated that FEMA is ready and able to effectively perform from alternate locations, including from employee's homes, during emergencies.

IV. The National Capital Region Strategic Plan

The most effective means of providing help to those affected by an emergency within the National Capital Region is through the progressive involvement of local, state, and federal assistance. If more than local assistance is necessary, a cooperative and unified local, state and federal partnership is the best approach.

To strengthen this process, a broad cross-section of local, state and federal government officials, along with many non-profit and for-profit organizations, made significant contributions to develop the most recent NCR Strategic Plan. NCR stakeholders engaged in a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative process to reach consensus on the key components of the plan which is in force through 2015.

This Strategic Plan identifies a series of goals, objectives, and initiatives to further its mission; but it is not an operational emergency plan. Because emergency response is a local and state responsibility, each local and state jurisdiction in the NCR has developed its own set of emergency operation plans. This Strategic Plan does not replace those emergency operation plans, but instead guides investments in improving the capabilities needed to execute emergency plans to respond and recover from all-hazards incidents.

The NCR Strategic Plan-along with other local, state, and federal plans-serves as a roadmap for strengthening capabilities and enhancing capacity to realize the NCR partners' vision for a safe and secure NCR.

The plan's goals include: enhancing interoperable communications capabilities; improving information sharing and situational awareness, including the communication of accurate, timely information with the public; critical infrastructure protection; development of core capabilities such as mass care; and coordinating alert and warning systems. Initiatives to implement these goals include: developing and maintaining secure data communications governed by common standards and operating procedures; ensuring NCR partners have the systems, processes, security

clearances, tools, and procedures to access, gather, and share appropriate intelligence, law enforcement, and classified data; and conducting a comprehensive risk analysis of the NCR critical infrastructure and key resources, including a review of the critical systems upon which they depend and the interdependencies of those systems.

Funding for the activities that build the capabilities identified in the plan and other NCR implementation documents is derived from a variety of sources, to include, federal grant programs from DHS, such as the Urban Area Security Initiative, the State Homeland Security Grant Program, and the Transit Security Grant.

IV. Conclusion

Effective collaboration remains the key to the success of FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. The strong working relationships forged between local, state, federal, private, and non-profit partners within the NCR will serve as our most beneficial asset during a disaster response. FEMA will continue to support common regional goals through exercises, collaboration, and coordination efforts, and along with our NCR partners, we will continue to build and sustain an integrated effort to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. In the event of an incident in the NCR, the NCRC stands ready to support FEMA's core mission and our local, state, and federal NCR partners. Building on decades of regional collaboration, local, state, and federal partners remain committed to a common vision of working together toward a safe and secure National Capital Region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.