

STATEMENT

OF

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BEFORE
THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, INTERGOVERNMENTAL
RELATIONS, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
U.S. SENATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

“THE ROLE OF FIRST RESPONDERS IN CATASTROPHIC DISASTER PLANNING”

Submitted
By

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Craig Fugate, and I am the Administrator at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss FEMA's catastrophic planning efforts as a whole and in the state of Alaska.

FEMA has helped communities in Alaska build, sustain and improve their capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate hazards that threaten its people.

The men and women of FEMA Region X, as well as FEMA leadership in Washington, D.C., are dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Alaska using the programs and authorities provided to us by Congress and the President. FEMA is aware of the unique challenges on the ground in Alaska and works to develop solutions and find flexibility within its authorities to meet the needs of state and local governments, Alaskan Native Villages and citizens.

FEMA plans for catastrophic events in order to be ready for a worst case scenario. This worst case scenario would require the engagement of the whole community to achieve a successful response to a given event and ultimately allows us to be in the best position to aid survivors should an event occur.

Before I discuss the specific programs applicable to the topic of this hearing, I would also like to acknowledge that the success of our programs and operations is dependent on strong professional partnerships with state, local, tribal and federal agencies and counterparts. Thanks to the leadership of Major General Thomas H. Katkus, Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and Mr. John Madden, Director of the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, we have forged a partnership that ensures successful emergency management for Alaskan communities and citizens. FEMA greatly appreciates their leadership, professionalism and dedication.

The Agency is actively engaged in catastrophic planning for incidents ranging in scope from state, to regional, to national scales. Through our catastrophic planning initiatives we are building partnerships that will help optimize collaboration on the most effective actions to assist Alaska – whether the focus is on recovery from recent floods, or in the unfortunate event of a large-scale catastrophe.

As part of its ongoing efforts and stated strategic priority to posture and build capability for catastrophic disasters, FEMA continues to develop the National Preparedness System (NPS) and leverage the expertise and resources of partners across the whole community.

Building on National Preparedness Efforts

FEMA's planning efforts are centered on our preparedness policy and doctrine, which leads to coordinated catastrophic planning that relies on a shared understanding of threats, hazards, capabilities, processes, and ultimately, the value of being prepared.

The Administration remains committed to strengthening the security and resilience of the United States through systematic preparation for the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the nation, and we continue to become more secure and better prepared to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the full range of threats and hazards the nation faces. We plan, organize, equip, train, and exercise better, resulting in improved national preparedness and resilience.

Much of this progress has come from leadership at the state, local, and tribal levels, fueled by FEMA's grant programs. Over the past ten years, DHS has provided state, local, tribal, and territorial governments with more than \$37.6 billion in grant funding. As a nation we have built and enhanced capabilities by acquiring needed equipment, funding training opportunities, developing preparedness and response plans, and conducted exercises that help build relationships across city, county, and state lines. Although federal funds represent just a fraction of what has been spent on homeland security across the Nation, these funds and the development of capabilities they have made possible, have helped change the culture of preparedness in the United States.

In March 2011, President Obama signed Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8) on National Preparedness, which describes the nation's approach to national preparedness. PPD-8 aims to strengthen the security and resilience of the United States through the systematic preparation for the threats that pose the greatest risk to the security of the Nation, including acts of terrorism, cyber incidents, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters. PPD-8 defines five mission areas – prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery – as part of a continuum of interrelated activities and requires the development of a series of policy and planning documents to explain and guide the nation's efforts in helping to ensure and enhance national preparedness.

PPD-8 created the NPS, a cohesive approach that allows us to use the tools at our disposal in the most effective manner and in a way that allows us to monitor and report on our progress. This system allows us to understand how well prepared we are by setting a goal, establishing baseline capabilities, setting common and comparable terminology, measuring capability gaps, and assessing our progress toward filling them.

The NPS includes a set of coordinated National Planning Frameworks, one for each mission area, collaboratively developed to describe how the whole community works together to deliver the core capabilities needed to achieve the National Preparedness Goal. The Frameworks document the roles and shared responsibilities in national preparedness, recognizing the value of partnerships and working together.

Each Framework:

- Summarizes roles and responsibilities across the whole community;
- Defines each mission area's core capabilities, along with key examples of critical tasks;
- Defines coordinating structures – either new or existing – that enable the whole community to work together to deliver the core capabilities;
- Describes the relationships to the other mission areas;
- Identifies relevant information to help with operational planning;
- Provides information that state, local, tribal, and territorial governments can use to revise their operational plans; and
- Uses concepts from existing preparedness efforts and doctrine, such as the National Incident Management System.

The Frameworks also affect whole community preparedness reporting and assessments. For example, the Frameworks can assist whole community partners as they complete the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment process. The critical tasks described in the Frameworks will help whole community partners understand the activities, which help to deliver capabilities to the established targets, as well as the resources needed to conduct activities and achieve the targets.

The environment in which we operate grows ever more complex and unpredictable. The Frameworks are living documents, and will be regularly reviewed to evaluate consistency with existing and new doctrine, policies, evolving conditions, emerging risks, and the experience gained from their use.

Plans and Annexes

FEMA has facilitated the development of incident-specific annexes to its all-hazard plans at the Regional level as well as annexes to the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operations Plans where necessary to address tasks and critical considerations for unique or catastrophic situations that would not otherwise be addressed in an all hazard plan. The FEMA catastrophic planning program has successfully facilitated the completion of an array of annexes to address the major threats of hurricane zones, earthquake faults, and cities presenting high risk targets for an improvised nuclear device or bioterrorism. Annexes are also developed to address the unique risks of certain geographic areas such as Alaska, Hawaii and the Caribbean islands.

Understanding the Unique Needs of Alaska

FEMA's commitment to Alaska and to understanding the unique environment there has never been stronger. FEMA recognizes that Alaska faces unique operating challenges, including limited infrastructure in a large and remote geographical area with increasing economic activity; logistical challenges due to extreme weather and a changing climate. Since 2009, there have been nine presidentially declared disasters in Alaska. In each, FEMA response and recovery efforts

were dedicated to helping local communities, and the resilient, self-sufficient people who are a part of them, get back on their feet.

The Agency is aware of the challenges on the ground in remote Alaska and works to develop creative solutions to meet the needs of state and local governments, Alaskan Native Villages and citizens. FEMA works to understand the needs of these communities' and their challenges through partnerships with them, by hiring locals and through the establishment of an Alaska area office in Anchorage.

FEMA Deputy Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery Elizabeth Zimmerman has traveled to Alaska multiple times in recent years. In 2009, she examined the unique recovery challenges first-hand after spring floods and ice jams damaged homes and infrastructure in remote villages along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. She traveled to Eagle, the village hit hardest by the disaster, and met with community and tribal leaders, residents and volunteers who were building and repairing houses. Former Deputy Administrator Richard Serino, Deputy Administrator for Protection and National Preparedness Timothy Manning and Associate Administrator for the Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration David Miller have also been in Alaska in recent years.

FEMA is always on the ground in Alaska, having established the Region X Alaska Area Office in 2007 as required by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. This office serves as a forward field office for pre-disaster preparedness and planning, as well as a staging and work area for preliminary damage assessment teams. Having a local office allows FEMA officials to develop a deeper knowledge of Alaska and its demands, as well as to develop real relationships with state, local, and Alaskan native officials who they work with closely on a day-to-day basis.

To ensure FEMA leverages the local perspective that are so critical in Alaska, FEMA also hires locally for positions such as applicant service program specialists, writing and resource specialists and administrative assistants.

FEMA also conducts joint exercises from the area office, including Alaska's recent "Alaska Shield" exercise. FEMA catastrophic planning and exercise efforts are based upon analysis and products developed jointly between FEMA Region X and the State, making these plans stronger as a result of this combined effort.

Catastrophic Planning in Alaska

The assessment of risks in Region X highlighted the need to more fully investigate the challenges and requirements for response operations in Alaska and to tailor the federal interagency response concepts to address its unique challenges. Through FEMA's Catastrophic Planning program, Region X led an interagency effort in 2013 in conjunction with the State of Alaska to develop an Alaska Response Annex to the Region X All Hazard Plan. The Senior

Leadership Steering Committee for the plan included the State Adjutant General and the State Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, along with several other federal representatives.

The worst-case planning scenario used for the Alaska Response Annex is a replication of the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake, with present day conditions. The magnitude 9.2 earthquake would occur without notice in winter during the workday, 70 miles east of Anchorage, causing four minutes of shaking followed by ground failure, rockslides, avalanches, seiches, tsunamis and significant aftershocks. The impact area would include the Municipality of Anchorage, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kodiak Island Borough, Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and communities in the Prince William Sound unincorporated area such as Cordova, Valdez, and Whittier. Landslide-induced tsunamis would impact coastal communities within minutes of the earthquake. The tectonic-induced tsunami would make landfall within 20 to 45 minutes, depending on the location.

Given the State's distance from the location of federal and private sector distribution centers, as well as the limited means of transportation into the state under an earthquake scenario, great care must be taken early in the response to prioritize and synchronize life-saving and life-sustaining resources. Therefore, FEMA foresees the need to establish Incident Support Bases within the lower 48 states, using all available modes of transportation, while making resources available in the priority order and magnitude required by the state based on its ability to receive and manage those resources. Forward Staging Areas would be strategically placed in Alaska in a manner that enables a distribution of resources throughout the state's diverse communities and landscapes.

To compound the immediate effects of a catastrophic earthquake, the environment in Alaska presents particular challenges, including:

- Limited in-state production of food and other basic commodities
- Nearly all of the in-state response capabilities, as well as responders, are in the impact area
- No rail connection with the lower 48 states
- Few roads leading into Anchorage, which is 360 miles from the next closest metropolitan area of Fairbanks
- Limited medical care capabilities with no Level 1 Trauma Centers

These are a few of the many critical considerations that will drive federal support requirements.

Further, environmental characteristics will require a coordinated focus on infrastructure assessment, as well as the repair and restoration for natural gas pipelines and facilities, petroleum pipelines, including the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System, potable water facilities and systems, electric power facilities and systems, roads, rail lines, airports and ports of entry. Federal strategies to support and reinforce state and private sector infrastructure assessment and repair

teams will also have to be executed in an environment that allows for a very compressed timeline for construction.

FEMA and its partners also take into account the unique attributes of the environment in Alaska when planning the response to a catastrophic event. Alaska is different from other states in many ways, and these differences drive response requirements. For instance, Alaska has the largest land area and the lowest population density of any state. There are five distinct regions with extreme variations in climate, terrain and local economies. Most parts of the state are inaccessible by road. Limited ground routes connect Alaska with the contiguous United States (the lower 48), all of which cross international borders. Alaska also has 229 federally-recognized tribes, more than any other state.

Region X has engaged directly and indirectly with a wide range of members of the Alaskan emergency management community. For instance, its planning efforts have been conducted with, and socialized at, many venues to include the State Emergency Response Commission, the Local Emergency Planning Committee Association, the state Preparedness Week events (widely attended by tribal emergency management representatives), the Regional Interagency Steering Committee, the Alaska Federal Executives Association, the Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection and the state emergency management task force meetings.

The Region X Alaska Response Annex is drafted and will be validated and revised based on the lessons learned during the recent Alaska Shield Exercise. This exercise was conducted as a centerpiece for the nation's larger Capstone 2014 event.

Exercises, including Capstone 2014

The Alaska Shield Exercise was the centerpiece of the 2014 National Exercise Program Capstone Exercise, which served as the culminating event in the biennial National Exercise Program Cycle. The exercise provided an opportunity to examine the collective ability of the nation to coordinate and implement risk assessments, core capabilities and plans across all mission areas.

Not only did the event afford FEMA the opportunity to validate its draft plan for an Alaskan response, it allowed us to assess the collective federal response and recovery mission's capability to manage extreme logistical and environmental risks, as well as to effectively coordinate assistance for simultaneous disasters across multiple regions.

FEMA also tested several unique requirements during the exercise, including transporting teams and resources via military aircraft, as well as the level of cold-weather preparedness of responders.

The scale of the event and the preceding planning reflects a major federal preparedness investment in support of the State. To ensure it was structured in a manner that supported the

State, the State Director for Homeland Security and Emergency Management helped facilitate a National Table Top Exercise in Washington, D.C. This table top served to educate headquarters program officials on the State's unique requirements.

FEMA will use the lessons learned from these exercises to further improve the planning process and its support to Alaska. Changes will undeniably need to be made to the Region X Alaska Response Annex in conjunction with the State, which is the purpose of a validation exercise.

Ready, Training and Community Involvement

FEMA reaches out to local communities in Alaska through its *Ready.gov* program, a national public service advertising campaign designed to educate and empower Americans to prepare for and respond to emergencies. The goal of the campaign is to get the public involved and ultimately to increase the level of basic preparedness across the nation.

The Agency has developed brochures, posters, and radio public service announcements to assist local and tribal efforts to help the public prepare for emergencies, including creating information that speaks to specific tribal and local area issues and concerns.

FEMA also offers training courses for state and tribal representatives, including elected leaders, emergency planners, first responders, school administrators and others who play a role in emergency management response.

PPD-8 called for a nationwide campaign to build and sustain national preparedness, including a public engagement campaign that encourages the public to take the necessary action to be prepared for the risks within their community. To address the President's challenge, FEMA and the federal family created America's PrepareAthon!, a nationwide, community-based campaign to increase emergency preparedness and resilience at the grassroots level. The goal of America's PrepareAthon! is to build a more resilient nation by increasing the number of people who understand the disasters that could happen in their community, know what to do to be safe and mitigate damage, take action to increase their preparedness, and participate in community resilience planning.

The first America's PrepareAthon! National Day of Action is April 30, 2014 and it will focus on preparing organizations and individuals for tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding and wild fires. America's PrepareAthon! community events and activities will be held across the country to encourage individuals to discuss, practice and train for relevant hazards, including in Alaska.

Conclusion

FEMA is actively engaged in catastrophic planning through national, regional and state planning partnerships that facilitate collaboration on the most effective response actions to assist Alaska in its recovery after a catastrophic event.

Because of the great responsibility FEMA has to support citizens, states, first responders and survivors, it is committed to learning from each disaster and evolving our plans and processes to meet local needs and better serve survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our catastrophic planning efforts and I look forward to your questions.