

**Written Statement  
of  
Christopher Terzich  
Regional Consortium Coordinating Council Chair  
Before  
U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Emergency  
Management, Intergovernmental Relations, and the  
District of Columbia  
May 8, 2013  
“Role of Private Sector in Preparedness and  
Emergency Response”**

Good afternoon Chairman Begich, Ranking Member Paul, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. My name is Chris Terzich, and I am the chair of the Regional Consortium Coordinating Council, a partnership whose members are regional partnerships working in resilience and protection of our critical infrastructure across the United States. I personally have worked on critical infrastructure security and preparedness for nearly 30 years. On behalf of our council, it is a true honor to testify before you today.

Through social media, by traveling to disaster-stricken communities, or by completing the Boston Marathon and running to the hospital to donate blood, Americans will help each other during crises.

To be successful, we must be more focused on efforts that enable Americans in their own communities; efforts that understand community dynamics and leverage local skill and expertise. There are two areas where government and regional partnerships can be more effective in the short term and with little to no cost. Using the successful Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) model, create do-it-yourself “kits” for volunteers who 1) work through social media to inform and coordinate a community response or, 2) establish teams of skilled volunteers who travel to join disaster response.

The National Preparedness Directive is aimed at 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. It articulates that our national preparedness is the shared responsibility of all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individual citizens.

America is changing at a rapid pace. In 1930, we were a predominantly agrarian society with 70% of Americans living in rural areas. Today, 82% of us live in cities, and by 2030, this is projected to rise to 87%.<sup>1</sup> Our most urban state is California where 95% or 35.4 million people live in cities. Los Angeles (including Long Beach and Anaheim) is the most densely populated urban area in the country with 12.1 million residents.<sup>2</sup> We are also moving towards the coastlines. Between 1960 and 2008, the population in coastline counties along the Gulf of Mexico soared by 150 percent, more than double the rate of increase of the nation's population as a whole. This area is now home to nearly 14 million residents.<sup>3</sup> From 1980 through 2012, there have been 144 billion dollar weather disasters, or 4.5 per year. In 2011 and 2012 this number spiked to 25, or 12.5 per year.<sup>4</sup>

We are also more connected than ever before. Stanley Milgram's experiment with letters<sup>5</sup> in 1969 led to our now common understanding that we are all separated by an average of 6 friends and friends of friends: Six Degrees of Separation. Less known, but perhaps more important is the concept of Three Degrees of Influence<sup>6</sup>. The influence of actions moves through our social

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank

<sup>2</sup> US Census (<http://www.census.gov>)

<sup>3</sup> US Census (<http://www.census.gov/newsroom/emergencies/>)

<sup>4</sup> National Climactic Data Center (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/overview>)

<sup>5</sup> Travers, Jeffrey & Stanley Milgram. 1969. "An Experimental Study of the Small World Problem."

<sup>6</sup> Tasha Bock, James H. Fowler, Nicholas A. Christakis (<http://connectedthebook.com/index.html>)

networks three degrees (or in the most basic terms, to and from your friends' friends' friends). This influence dissipates after three degrees for three reasons, 1) the information loses integrity (think of the telephone game), 2) the connections become less stable with the loss of strong personal connections, and 3) most groups throughout history were connected by three degrees or fewer.

For example, Chairman Begich and I have not met before today, but if Wikipedia<sup>7</sup> is accurate we are connected; we are both of Croatian descent, his father and my mother grew up in the same small town of Eveleth in Northern Minnesota and our fathers both attended the University of Minnesota. We also have a shared connection on the professional networking site, LinkedIn.

At one time these connections between people took place through personal travel, letters and phone calls. They now happen at light speed almost anywhere in the world. We must fully understand how digital communications have and will continue to change our world. In December, Facebook saw daily use from an average of 618 million people, roughly twice the population of the United States each day.<sup>8</sup> In a more personal example, just today I used my iPad to have a "video conversation" with my daughter 1,000 miles away in Wisconsin.

### **Why Regional Partnerships Matter**

The National Preparedness Goal<sup>9</sup> describes the concept of Whole Community as "a focus on enabling the participation in national preparedness activities of a wider range of players from the private and nonprofit sectors, including nongovernmental organizations and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of Federal, state, and local governmental partners in order to foster better coordination and working relationships."

Regional partnerships give the preparedness and critical infrastructure resilience community identity. This sense of community is critical to our success. It is an all-encompassing characteristic, a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared confidence that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together.

According to researchers<sup>10</sup>, there are four elements necessary to create a sense of community: membership, influence, reinforcement and shared emotional connection. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal connection. Influence can be described as a sense that members matter and can make a difference, that this influence is bi-directional. Reinforcement or the integration and fulfillment of needs: Do I have confidence that the group will meet my needs? The last element is a shared emotional connection. Do we have and will we have a shared history, beliefs, places and experiences? I experienced community in the strongest sense when I joined the Marine Corps 30 years ago. To this day, when I meet another Marine, we are instantly and strongly connected.

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<sup>7</sup> Mark Begich - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark\\_Begich](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mark_Begich))

<sup>8</sup> Facebook by the Numbers ([http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023\\_3-57566550-93/facebook-by-the-numbers-1.06-billion-monthly-active-users/](http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57566550-93/facebook-by-the-numbers-1.06-billion-monthly-active-users/))

<sup>9</sup> National Preparedness Goal (<http://www.fema.gov/pdf/prepared/npg.pdf>)

<sup>10</sup> A Definition and Theory of Sense of Community (<http://www.drdauidmcmillan.com/article-1/>)

In the partnerships I have founded, supported and led, I have seen no limits to the variations in formal organization. Some are loose gatherings that form naturally and others have been funded, organized and operated very much like a business.

In a practical sense, successful regional partnerships all have several characteristics in common. A small group of committed leaders starts with a clear and shared purpose. They create a simple organization, determining rules and structure that will prevent major conflicts but is not too cumbersome to operate. A small number of volunteers who are committed to seeing the partnership work to completion will enable accomplishment of goals. Other members may engage and disengage over time, but without a few constant leaders, the partnership can fall to irrelevancy. The larger group is equally connected to the shared purpose, but may be more loosely tied to the leadership and each other. In social groups, strong ties are good for local cohesion and are more likely with a small core of leaders, but they but can cause more fragmentation on a larger scale. In a larger group, weak ties enable reaching populations and audiences that are not accessible via strong ties. In other words and perhaps counter intuitively; more weak ties mean the group is more capable of acting in concert<sup>11</sup>.

### **Successful Partnerships**

Those in homeland security at all levels of government are charged with protection of our critical infrastructure. The common estimate is that private businesses and other non-governmental organizations own 85% of the critical infrastructure of the United States. In very simple terms, if we are to succeed at keeping people safe, keeping the lights on and the economy moving, no one doubts that we must work together.

In Alaska, where an emergency manager once summed up the worst case scenario as “a 9.0 at 40 below”, the Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection<sup>12</sup> has worked toward the clear goals of direct connection of the private sector to the State Emergency Operations Center, which now includes the membership Rapid Alert System during a statewide emergency.

In New York and New Jersey, the All Hazards Consortium<sup>13</sup> worked with the local business community during Hurricane Sandy to provide an unprecedented map of business that were opened or closed during the storm and recovery.

In Illinois Chicago FIRST<sup>14</sup> became one of the most robust partnerships in the post-9/11 years with the goal of forging a relationship between financial institutions and government at all levels to promote information sharing about employee safety and business continuity issues.

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<sup>11</sup> Granovetter's Theory of the Strength of Weak Ties (<http://www.analytictech.com/networks/weakties.htm>)

<sup>12</sup> Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection (<http://www.ak-prepared.com/APIP>)

<sup>13</sup> All Hazards Consortium (<http://www.ahcusa.org/>)

<sup>14</sup> Chicago FIRST (<https://www.chicagofirst.org/>)

The Safeguard Iowa Partnership<sup>15</sup> was launched on January 29, 2007 with support of the Iowa Business Council, Business Executives for National Security and the State of Iowa. Their mission is clear: Strengthening the capacity of the state to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters through public-private collaboration.

The Minnesota InfraGard Members Alliance<sup>16</sup> grew to 1,400 members (one of the largest chapters) when it set out to create a trained team within the Minnesota State Emergency Operations Center. This group also held a 5-state private sector led exercise<sup>17</sup> using social media to connect and interact with remote participants.

In the Pacific Northwest, 5 states and 5 Canadian provinces formed the Pacific Northwest Economic Region and later the Center for Regional Disaster Resilience<sup>18</sup> with the goal of creating and fostering cross-sector partnerships focused on infrastructure security and disaster resilience.

Just last month, the SouthEast Emergency Response Network (SEERN) hosted a call for businesses and partnerships to talk through the collective and individual response to the Boston Marathon Bombing on April 15<sup>th</sup>.

These are just a few examples of regional partnerships at work. Their legal and formal structures may vary greatly as do their specific activities, depending on the needs of their members, but they are all successful because they recognize the importance of membership, influence, reinforcement and shared emotional connection in building a thriving regional resilience community.

### **Effective Government Efforts**

My experience in public – private partnerships began in 1989. In 2003 through a working group of the National Infrastructure Advisory Council<sup>19</sup>, we recommended the Department of Homeland Security include the private sector in a framework for partnership that includes a regional focus. I am pleased to report that while much work remains, we have achieved a great deal together. The National Infrastructure Protection Plan has outlined a partnership frame work that engages the private sector and in calling for the creation of the Regional Consortium Coordinating Council (RCCC), creates a connection to community partnerships.

Since assuming the chair role for the RCCC in 2012, my experience with the Office of Infrastructure Protection (IP) has also been positive. Assistant Secretary Durkovich and her leadership team have been strong and committed partners.

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<sup>15</sup> Safeguard Iowa (<https://safeguardiowa.wildapricot.org/FAQ>)

<sup>16</sup> Minnesota InfraGard (<http://mninfragard.us/>)

<sup>17</sup> Northern Lights (<http://northernlightscip.blogspot.com/p/exercise-overview.html>)

<sup>18</sup> Center for Regional Resilience (<http://www.regionalresilience.org/>)

<sup>19</sup> Cross Sector Interdependencies and Risk Assessment Guidance (<http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/irawgreport.pdf>)

During Hurricane Sandy and more recently the Boston Marathon Bombing, DHS leaders provided regular and open briefings, communicating what they knew even when the picture was unfolding and incomplete. This kind of open dialog may not provide more detail than written situation reports or statements, but it offers context and perspective that cannot be conveyed through written communication and helps us understand and prioritize risks to critical infrastructure.

At FEMA, Administrator Fugate has led a strong effort to both embrace the concept of resilience through community, but also in engaging through digital media. In its Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management<sup>20</sup>, FEMA is working to understand community complexity, recognize capabilities, foster relationships, build partnerships and leverage and strengthen social infrastructure. Toward these goals, FEMA is active on YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. FEMA Private Sector Office has also stood up a National Business Emergency Operations Center to engage private sector in planning and response to crises. Additionally, in partnership with Citizen Corps, FEMA has launched a program for preparedness and response volunteers called FEMA Corps.

FEMA also has and continues to play an important role in one of the most successful, and cost-effective partnership efforts of the last 40 years; Community Emergency Response Teams<sup>21</sup> (CERT). In February, New York City Mayor Bloomberg recognized CERT members<sup>22</sup>; “CERT members volunteered throughout the Hurricane Sandy response and recovery efforts, even when their own homes suffered severe damage from the storm. That’s the kind of dedication that really defines CERT volunteers. You are our most direct connection to communities in times of crisis, and you are a vitally important part of helping us prepare New Yorkers before a crisis starts.” The CERT model is successful because it provides a “partnership kit”. Training and “branding” are standard providing the identity, purpose and structure for a successful partnership. Groups themselves are formed more organically in established communities.

## **Innovations**

Regional partnerships and government agencies are making progress, but the truly innovative and rapid advances are happening from within our communities themselves.

Crisis Commons<sup>23</sup> is a global community of volunteers from technology, crisis response organizations, government agencies, and citizens that are working together to build and use technology tools to help respond to disasters and improve resiliency and response before a crisis.

Google Public Alerts<sup>24</sup> takes information from the National Weather Service, USGS and other sources to provide a platform for disseminating emergency messages such as evacuation notices for hurricanes, and everyday alerts such as storm warnings. The goal of Google Public Alerts is

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<sup>20</sup> Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management (<http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4941>)

<sup>21</sup> FEMA – CERT (<http://www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-teams>)

<sup>22</sup> NYC Press Release (<http://goo.gl/RDQPK>)

<sup>23</sup> Crisis Commons (<http://crisiscommons.org/about/>)

<sup>24</sup> Google Public Alerts (<http://www.google.org/crisisresponse/publicalerts/>)

to show relevant official weather, public safety and earthquake alerts in the U.S., Japan, and Canada when you search on Google Search.

Team Rubicon<sup>25</sup> sets out with two important goals, the first is to engage returning veterans in a sense of purpose and community while they reintegrate into civilian life and the second is to provide trained and coordinated volunteers during disasters. Team Rubicon realized that natural disasters present many of the same problems that confront troops in Iraq and Afghanistan: unstable populations, limited resources, horrific sights, sounds and smells. The skills cultivated on those same battlefields – emergency medicine, risk assessment and mitigation, teamwork and decisive leadership – are invaluable in disaster zones.

These are just a few examples and there are countless more where they come from. We need to learn from them and use our unique strengths and capabilities to advance our shared goals for a resilient America.

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<sup>25</sup> Team Rubicon (<http://teamrubiconusa.org/>)

## Path Forward

But there is much more work to do. Most businesses understand they play a role in promoting the long-term economic prosperity and quality of life for everyone in our communities. Put simply, if the community prospers, then so do businesses. And, most are committed to assuming their responsibility for our shared resilience. But too many are still not engaged in building community resilience. We need to engage them better.

And we need to adapt to social media much faster than we are today. If we are to be successful in our work toward a resilient Nation, we must not only understand the basics of posting updates and tweeting, we must fully embrace it and learn to innovate within it. The mindset shift required of us now is no less than a pilot flying the first jets. We may be in a time of transition that is significant as the world saw in the century after Gutenberg introduced his printing press. Only this time, we have weeks, months and years to adapt, rather than centuries.

I leave you today with a challenge to move quickly to create programs that build on the success of Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). CERT does a good job of enabling local community resilience at a relative low cost. But CERT doesn't address the full range of disaster volunteers. The CERT program can be applied to volunteers whether they want to respond in social media or by chainsaws and clearing debris.

Together, we can create efficient and effective programs for resilience that reflect where Americans engage in their communities. Here are two examples to start the conversation:

**Social Media Volunteers** - Create digital version of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) – communities will respond to a disaster and more frequently the fastest and most capable communication and coordination happens in the digital environment. The fastest and often most-coordinated understanding of a disaster as well as available resources and volunteers happens online. In one potential example, I have described these in a concept called Social Media Active Response Teams (SMART)<sup>26</sup>.

**Skilled Volunteer Responders** – Like the example of Team Rubicon, there is a need for volunteers who are trained and equipped at higher levels than the light search and rescue that is the hallmark of CERT teams. FEMA Corps<sup>27</sup>, a new program for volunteers to support FEMA response is a step in this direction. I assert there is a role for government in providing the program and structure that can enable volunteers across the United States to follow in the footsteps of Team Rubicon.

These examples demonstrate the collective shift we need to make; from building structures and organizations to enabling and connecting communities. Never before have we had such connection and innovation to build a truly resilient America.

Thank you for your time today.

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<sup>26</sup> SMART – Teams for Social Response (<http://mninfragardstudent.wordpress.com/smart-teams/>)

<sup>27</sup> FEMA Corps (<http://www.fema.gov/fema-corps>)