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**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**U.S. SENATE**

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Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I am Richard Skinner, Former Inspector General for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) level of preparedness for the next catastrophic disaster.

In March 2008, the Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG) issued a report in response to a request from the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to perform a high-level assessment of FEMA's preparedness to handle a future disaster. DHS-OIG reported that the agency had made progress in all of the key preparedness areas we reviewed, although in some areas the progress was modest or limited.

The primary objective of DHS-OIG's 2010 assessment was to determine the progress FEMA has made in key preparedness areas for the next catastrophic disaster.

Overall, FEMA has made substantial progress in one of the ten key areas, moderate progress in seven areas, and modest progress in two areas. FEMA would benefit from increased oversight of key preparedness areas to ensure that implementation of initiatives is sustained. However, concerns that are common to DHS-OIG's review of the critical components include: (1) the need for more effective coordination with state, local, and tribal governments; (2) the need for information technology systems that are updated and integrated agency-wide; (3) too few experienced staff to handle the increasing workload; and (4) funding that is not adequate to maintain initiatives, meet the costs of disasters, and recruit, train, and retain staff.

Today, I will focus my remarks on the results of the work DHS-OIG conducted and the recommendations for the agency. There are ten critical areas that the report addressed:

- Overall Planning
- Coordination and Support
- Emergency Communications
- Logistics
- Evacuations
- Housing
- Disaster Workforce
- Mission Assignments
- Acquisition Management
- Mitigation

FEMA continues to make progress in leading the federal effort in responding to catastrophic disasters. FEMA can build on this progress by maintaining its momentum in continuing to develop and implement the critical components of the ten key preparedness areas.

## BACKGROUND

In responding to natural or manmade emergency situations, current doctrine dictates that the government agencies and organizations most local to the situation act as first responders. When state and local governments become overwhelmed by the size or scope of the disaster, state officials may request assistance from the federal government, so federal agencies must always be prepared to provide support when needed. In 1979, President Carter issued an Executive Order that created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and merged many of the separate disaster-related federal functions.

FEMA's statutory authority comes from the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 and the Stafford Act. FEMA's statutory authority to provide disaster assistance comes from the *Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act*, as amended (P.L. 100-707) (Stafford Act), which was signed into law in 1988 and amended the *Disaster Relief Act of 1974* (P.L. 93-288). To access federal assistance under the Stafford Act, generally, states must make an emergency or major disaster declaration request that is reviewed by FEMA for presidential approval. The Stafford Act also permits FEMA to anticipate declarations and pre-stage federal personnel and resources when a disaster threatening human health and safety is imminent, but not yet declared.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Public Law [P.L.] 107-296) (Homeland Security Act) realigned FEMA and made it part of the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS). In 2006, the President signed into law the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act. The act significantly reorganized FEMA and provided it substantial new authority to remedy gaps that became apparent in the response to Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

Between January and May 2010, FEMA responded to more than 40 presidentially declared emergencies and disasters. From January 1980 through December 2009, the average number of events to which FEMA responds each year has risen from 25 to about 70.

FEMA spends an average of \$4.3 billion each year on responding to disasters. Most of the money is spent on direct disaster assistance programs such as Individual Assistance (e.g., temporary housing), Public Assistance (e.g., debris removal and repair of damaged public property), and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (e.g., retrofitting buildings to make them resistant to earthquakes or strong winds). These programs are intended to address the short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of a disaster on individuals and communities.

In December 2009, FEMA implemented a new organizational structure designed to help it achieve its emergency management mandate more effectively by strengthening key functions that had been previously fragmented across multiple organizational divisions.

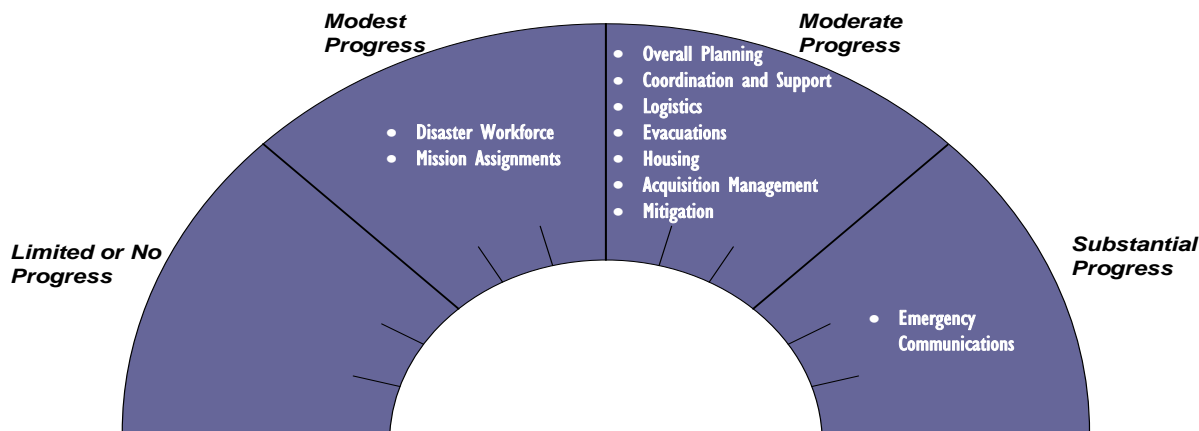
Since 1993, FEMA has been called upon to help support many routine natural disasters that historically would have been handled entirely by state and local governments. At the same time, some state and local governments cut funding to their own emergency management programs, thereby rendering themselves less prepared to handle routine disasters like floods, fires, or

storms. As a relatively small federal agency, many of FEMA’s staff are “dual-hatted.” During nondisaster times, their primary roles may be to support planning and preparedness efforts. When a disaster hits, however, they may be working in the field on response and recovery. As more disasters are declared and disasters stay open for longer periods of time, more FEMA staff resources are diverted from planning and preparedness efforts.

DHS-OIG has prepared a report to assess FEMA’s readiness to respond to the next catastrophic disaster, entitled, “*FEMA’s Preparedness for the Next Catastrophic Disaster – An Update.*” Through the review of reports, including those of the DHSOIG, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and congressional testimony, DHS-OIG was able to identify ten key areas critical to successful catastrophic preparedness efforts. In collaboration with FEMA officials, DHS-OIG identified two to four critical components within each key area. DHS-OIG assessed FEMA’s progress in each of the areas using a four-tiered scale: substantial progress, moderate progress, modest progress, and limited or no progress. Overall, as shown in the following figure, FEMA has made substantial progress in one of the ten key areas, moderate progress in seven areas, and modest progress in two areas.

## Scorecard for Selected FEMA Preparedness Areas

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### OVERALL PLANNING (Moderate Progress)

FEMA’s Protection and National Preparedness (PNP) is responsible for leading America’s efforts to enhance preparedness to prevent, protect from, respond to, and recover from natural and manmade disasters. It strives to ensure that the Nation is prepared through a comprehensive cycle of planning, organizing, equipping, training, and exercising.

This assessment of Overall Planning focuses on FEMA’s efforts to:

- Develop a strategy to guide the integration of prevention, response, and recovery efforts;
- Complete assessments of capabilities and readiness at the national, state, and local levels;
- Enhance community disaster preparedness; and
- Enhance catastrophic disaster preparedness at all levels.

FEMA's PNP has yet to complete the development and implementation of a strategy and guidance for the integration of prevention, response, and recovery efforts. In April and October 2009, the GAO reported that PNP had not developed a strategic plan. In the interim, PNP used its annual operating plan, which aligns with FEMA's strategic plan, to guide its integration strategy. However, the GAO report noted that the annual operating plan does not have key elements of an effective national strategy, such as how to gauge progress.

FEMA officials indicated that PNP is in the process of developing a strategic plan that will strengthen the integration of each of the directorate's divisions and include specific goals, timelines, milestones, and measurements of progress. PNP plans to develop a new version of its strategic plan and begin implementation by the end of December 2010. However, the timeline for completing the strategic plan will hinge primarily on the completion of the new Presidential Policy Directive on National Preparedness, which is currently in draft, and the recommendations of the National Preparedness Task Force.

FEMA used its Cost to Capabilities initiative and the Gap Analysis Program to conduct capabilities and readiness assessments. The Cost to Capabilities initiative was intended to optimize the impact of homeland security grant dollars on preparedness efforts, and the Gap Analysis Program was designed to improve operational readiness by reducing response and recovery capability shortfalls throughout all levels of government.

FEMA conducted gap analyses in 2008 and 2009 for FEMA Regions I, II, III, IV, and VI. Once the gaps were identified, FEMA worked closely with the states to mitigate the shortfalls. For example, in May 2009, a state in FEMA Region I reported that it would be unable to meet transportation and evacuation needs if a Category 3 hurricane made landfall. FEMA is working with the state to provide technical assistance in developing and refining its evacuation plans.

In July 2009, the FEMA Administrator issued a moratorium on new information requests from state, tribal, and local governments. This suspension of data collection applies to the Cost to Capabilities initiative and the Gap Analysis Program. The FEMA Administrator directed PNP to gather all the reporting information required by directorates and develop a consolidated process that eliminates duplication and minimizes the burden on state, local, and tribal partners. A Reporting Requirements Working Group was formed in August 2009 and a proposal to streamline reporting requirements is due to the FEMA Administrator in fiscal year 2010.

PNP is also leading an effort to update the status of catastrophic planning in all 50 states and 75 of the Nation's largest urban areas. This update was undertaken at the direction of Congress and was due in April 2010. As of May 2010, FEMA was finalizing the report.

Although FEMA emphasizes the importance of individual and community preparedness, significant challenges remain. DHS-OIG 2008 report rated FEMA's progress in this critical area

as moderate, as efforts were underway to coordinate and integrate community disaster preparedness through the Citizen Corps Program and the Ready Campaign. However, in January 2010, GAO reported that FEMA has been unable to measure performance effectively for these programs. FEMA is in the process of developing a corrective action plan to address GAO's concerns.

FEMA has made progress enhancing catastrophic preparedness, particularly at the regional level. FEMA officials told DHS-OIG that several regional planning initiatives have been undertaken since 2008, including the Hawai'i Hurricane Plan, the San Francisco Bay Area Earthquake Plan, the Northwest Nevada Earthquake Plan, and the Florida Hurricane Plan. Planning initiatives currently underway include the Southern California Earthquake Planning Initiative, the Guam Typhoon Planning Initiative, the Gulf Coast Hurricane Planning Initiative, and the New Madrid Seismic Zone Catastrophic Earthquake Planning Initiative.

PNP is also working to complete FEMA's first National Preparedness Report, which will describe federal, state, and local preparedness levels and identify nationwide trends that can inform decision makers on what actions are needed to further enhance our Nation's preparedness for 4 of the 15 National Planning Scenarios: Improvised Explosive Device, Improvised Nuclear Device, Pandemic Influenza, and Hurricane. The draft report is in the clearance phase with OMB. In May 2010, PNP conducted the 2010 National Level Exercise to test its catastrophic planning efforts. The exercise tested the response capabilities to an improvised nuclear device detonation.

### **COORDINATION AND SUPPORT (Moderate Progress)**

To determine FEMA's readiness to support communities and states in response to a future catastrophic disaster, we assessed FEMA's efforts to:

- Implement the National Reform Framework (NRF) and specific operations plans;
- Clarify the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of the Principal Federal Official (PFO) and Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO); and
- Provide law enforcement access to FEMA records in support of Emergency Support Function-13 (ESF-13), *Public Safety and Security*.

The NRF guides how the Nation conducts all-hazards response focusing on how the federal government is organized to support communities and states in catastrophic incidents. The NRF was implemented in March 2008, but federal operations plans that describe detailed resource, personnel, and asset allocations necessary to respond to incidents representing the gravest dangers facing the United States have not yet been completed.

The NRF describes planning as the cornerstone of national preparedness and a critical element to respond to a disaster or emergency. It also lists 15 National Planning Scenarios that represent a minimum number of credible scenarios depicting the range of potential terrorist attacks, natural disasters and related impacts facing our Nation. Operations plans for these scenarios are particularly important because they identify detailed resources, personnel, assets and specific roles, responsibilities, and actions for each federal department and agency responding to an

incident or emergency. DHS-OIG's recent audit of federal incident management planning efforts determined that although planning has progressed for certain scenarios, much work remains to complete operations plans for all 15 scenarios.

FEMA has made progress in clarifying the roles of key senior federal officials who typically may be deployed with a federal incident management team. The NRF describes the roles of both the PFO and FCO and their responsibilities and authorities during an incident. It underscores that the PFO does not have directive authority over an FCO or any other federal or state official. Rather, "the PFO promotes collaboration and, as possible, resolves any Federal interagency conflict that may arise." It also underscores that the FCO is specifically appointed by the President to coordinate federal support in the response to and recovery from emergencies and major disasters by executing Stafford Act authorities, including commitment of FEMA resources and the mission assignment of other federal departments or agencies. It is important to note, however, that the DHS Secretary retains the authority to appoint a representative who functionally reports through the FCO; however, the NRF has not yet been updated to reflect this clarification. Additionally, FEMA Administrator Fugate, in testimony on May 6, 2010, declared that DHS will follow existing federal law and no longer appoint PFOs in disasters and emergencies that fall under the Stafford Act. Further, the department will not object to keeping the prohibition against such appointments in law. In August 2010, FEMA reported that it is no longer referring to incident commanders or team leaders as PFOs.

To remedy information-sharing problems encountered following Hurricane Katrina and to facilitate law enforcement access to FEMA disaster recovery assistance files for investigating fraud, locating missing children, and identifying the whereabouts of sex offenders and fugitive felons, FEMA executed agreements with the Department of Justice, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation and U.S. Marshals Service. Additionally, in November 2007 FEMA appointed a law enforcement advisor to the Administrator to fill a position created by the Post-Katrina Emergency Reform Act (Post-Katrina Act) who will provide FEMA with a law enforcement perspective on agency plans and policies and support FEMA's growing interaction with law enforcement associations. Although FEMA's law enforcement advisor was aware of the recent agreements with the Department of Justice, he said he would not be involved in any future policy review unless specifically asked by FEMA's Office of Chief Counsel.

FEMA has made progress in improving law enforcement access to its disaster recovery assistance files by updating its system-of-records notice. FEMA officials told DHS-OIG that they are 90% complete with establishing the protocols, procedures, and processes for providing appropriate law enforcement access to FEMA disaster recovery assistance records, to include Interagency Security Agreements with the Department of Justice and others needing access. FEMA anticipates that standard operating procedures will be in place by the end of this fiscal year.

Federal operations plans for all 15 National Planning Scenarios are still needed because they guide other preparedness activities and contribute to the unity of effort by providing a common blueprint for activity in an emergency. Additionally, FEMA should update the NRF to remedy confusion about the role, authority, and responsibilities of the PFO and to ensure that all NRF stakeholders are aware of the intent of Congress. Finally, it is important that the FEMA law

enforcement advisor and his staff be kept aware of and regularly consulted on the execution of future law enforcement agreements and FEMA's implementation of protocols, procedures, and processes to provide access to appropriate law enforcement entities.

## **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS (Substantial Progress)**

Three organizational components within DHS are responsible for emergency communications: (1) the National Protection and Programs Directorate's Office of Emergency Communications; (2) the Science & Technology Directorate; and (3) FEMA's Response Directorate's Disaster Emergency Communications Division. In the past, there was confusion over which of these three elements led DHS' efforts in this area. In July 2009, Secretary Napolitano designated the Office of Emergency Communications to lead DHS' efforts to advance interoperable emergency communications. Notwithstanding the recent designation, FEMA has important responsibilities in this area.

FEMA's Office of National Preparedness and Protection, Grants Program Directorate is responsible for administering the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program. Consequently, we updated the criteria from the 2008 report to assess FEMA's progress in the following critical areas:

- Coordinate communications support for state, local, and tribal responders during Stafford Act incidents;
- Manage the deployment and operation of communications assets; and
- Manage emergency communications grants.

FEMA's Disaster Emergency Communications Division of the Response Directorate has been actively coordinating federal communications support for state, tribal, and local responders. The Division is working with the National Communications System to revise the overarching ESF-2 procedures. Once the revision has been finalized, the division will revise its internal standard operating procedures to align with the ESF-2 procedures. FEMA officials said that coordination between the two offices is a continuous process with frequent meetings.

FEMA recently entered into an interagency agreement with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to provide incident-area impact analysis in the immediate aftermath of an incident. FEMA can mission assign the FCC to deploy equipment and technicians to disaster areas to identify commercial, public safety, and critical infrastructure communications outages. Using this information, ESF-2 can coordinate the restoration of these communications systems. Identifying these outages is vitally important in ensuring that public welfare and evacuation information is disseminated to the disaster area in a timely and accurate manner.

FEMA has developed 11 communication-related pre-scripted mission assignments with the FCC, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Department of Defense, the National Communications System, and the U.S. Forest Service. The U.S. Coast Guard has agreed to provide mobile communication teams to support first responders and to coordinate initial operations in response to a disaster. The U.S. Forest Service will provide telecommunications equipment and personnel to support response



operations. These pre-scripted mission assignments provide FEMA with the communications equipment and personnel necessary for rapid response to an incident.

Working with federal, state, tribal, and local responders, FEMA helped to establish in each of its ten regions the congressionally mandated Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups, which are headed by local responders and consist of their federal, state, and local counterparts. The working groups assess the status of local emergency communications systems and report annually to federal stakeholders. FEMA told DHS-OIG that nine regions have completed their annual reports. When all reports are complete, FEMA will compile the submissions into a national report. FEMA is also assisting regional and state jurisdictions to develop emergency communications plans that allow FEMA to be better prepared to pre-position and deploy needed communications assets during catastrophic incidents. To date, 27 states and 4 regions have emergency communications plans.

FEMA has participated in multiple emergency communications exercises. FEMA officials said that they recently participated in an interoperable radio exercise with the U.S. Secret Service; a joint exercise with the Transportation Security Administration and the U.S. Army using the Military Affiliate Radio System as a backup in case of widespread devastation, as occurred after Hurricane Katrina; and an exercise with the U.S. Coast Guard. FEMA will also participate in the 2011 National Level Exercise focusing on a catastrophic earthquake in the New Madrid Seismic Zone.

FEMA has effectively deployed communications assets to the state and local emergency community through the Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) detachments. MERS detachments are comprised of trained professionals and specialized equipment, including interoperable high frequency, very high frequency, ultra high frequency, and 700/800 megahertz communications systems, as well as satellite systems. MERS communications assets can establish or reestablish connectivity with public safety wireless systems and command and control networks.

FEMA has made progress in managing emergency communications grants to enhance state and local capabilities. From FY 2004 through FY 2008, the last year for which complete figures are available, DHS awarded more than \$3 billion in grants to enhance state and local interoperable communications efforts. In addition, FEMA is administering, on behalf of the Department of Commerce, the Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grant Program, which is funded through proceeds from the auction of analog television frequency spectrum. This grant program, totaling almost \$1 billion, is designed to improve state and local public safety agencies' emergency communications.

To measure the effectiveness of grants, in 2008 FEMA developed a Cost to Capability initiative. Following an agency-wide moratorium on new requests for information from state and local governments, this initiative was suspended in November 2009. Therefore, there is currently no system in place to measure the impact of grants. However, FEMA's Reporting Requirements Working Group is developing a data collection system intended eventually to measure the effectiveness of several programs, including communications grants.

## **LOGISTICS (Moderate Progress)**

The Logistics Management Directorate (LMD) is the agency's major program office responsible for policy, guidance, standards, execution, and governance of logistics support, services, and operations. Its mission is to plan, manage, and sustain the national logistics response and recovery operations in support of domestic emergencies and special events.

FEMA has identified areas for improving its end-to-end supply chain and established the Total Asset Visibility (TAV) program to implement processes and automate the flow of commodity information. FEMA management is focused on improving the logistics core competencies to a level that will respond effectively and efficiently to a catastrophic disaster. We assessed two critical areas to measure FEMA's progress to:

- Establish total asset visibility through the Logistics Supply Chain Management System (LSCMS); and
- Establish a national supply chain strategy.

FEMA began to implement the TAV program in FY 2005. Since implementation, TAV has undergone two phases of development. TAV-Phase 1 was a pilot program that involved improving the visibility of select assets for two FEMA regions and distribution centers supporting the hurricane-prone Gulf Coast states. At the end of FY 2009, FEMA transitioned from TAV-Phase 1 to the LSCMS (TAV-Phase 2). LMD implemented a number of LSCMS milestones during the current fiscal year, including:

- Wireless Enterprise Procurement - wireless package;
- Warehouse Management - functional design; and
- Trading Partner Management - development.

According to FEMA, every element of LSCMS is fully functional but not completely implemented. The entire application is scheduled to be implemented by the end of calendar year 2010. LSCMS is expected to be interoperable with federal, state, county, municipal, tribal government, and nongovernmental organizations' disaster management supply chain processes and systems. The final product and implementation will encompass all aspects of FEMA operations, including inventory management, requisitions, order management, fulfillment, shipping, transportation management, situational awareness and reporting, and retrograde processes.

New LSCMS initiatives include change management, training, acceptance, and accountability. Officials said that FEMA is addressing change management across all ten regions by increasing communications throughout FEMA and by providing role-based training.

During a disaster, when state and local governments' capabilities are exceeded, the state may request FEMA's assistance. The specific type and quantity of commodities and support assets

needed will vary, but experience indicates that some common needs include water (usually bottled), emergency meals, cots, blankets, tarps, and generators.

FEMA has determined that pre-positioning commodities is neither logistically prudent nor an effective use of taxpayer funds. FEMA has focused on eliminating potential waste by:

- Changing LMD business practices and procedures;
- Strengthening public and private sector solutions and relationships with partners such as the Defense Logistics Agency, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, American Red Cross, and General Services Administration (GSA); and
- Implementing a continuous process review and developing standard operating procedures at all FEMA Distribution Centers.

FEMA personnel said that two of the primary challenges to improving the LSCMS business process are retaining sufficient staff and implementing change management across all ten regions. Although LSCMS has been available, the primary methods of information transfer continued to be email, phone calls, and spreadsheets. Customer satisfaction surveys from 2008 and 2009 show low systems usage among logistics professionals in the field.

FEMA has improved its logistics systems and processes; however, LSCMS is not yet fully implemented and may not be fully effective until disaster response personnel have adopted all aspects of the new business process, as discussed in DHS-OIG's recent report *FEMA's Logistics Management Process for Responding to Catastrophic Disasters*, July 2010.

### **EVACUATIONS (Moderate Progress)**

Emergency evacuations are the responsibility of state and local governments. However, if state and local emergency management systems become overwhelmed, FEMA has several specific responsibilities. DHS-OIG 2008 report assessed two specific initiatives involving evacuations: (1) the Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation Capability Enhancement Initiative; and (2) the Gap Analysis Program. For this report, DHS-OIG expanded its focus to include FEMA's full responsibilities and authorities outlined in the Post-Katrina Act. DHS-OIG reviewed FEMA's efforts to:

- Augment state, tribal, and local emergency evacuation plans and operations; and
- Establish the capability to implement a federally supported or federalized evacuation.

DHS-OIG assessed FEMA's progress in this area, focusing on the Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation Capability Enhancement Initiative, the Gap Analysis Program, the Catastrophic Disaster Planning Initiative, and evacuation planning workshops sponsored by FEMA. Through these initiatives and others, FEMA has worked with at least 35 states and territories on evacuation planning since 2008.

FEMA launched the Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation Capability Enhancement Initiative in 2007 to develop an organized plan for evacuating the Gulf Coast region and to have state-to-state agreements in place for transporting and sheltering evacuees. Evacuations in response to Hurricane Gustav in 2008 demonstrate that FEMA's efforts are having an impact. During the

response, 15,000 Louisiana residents were transported by bus to shelters in evacuee host states; 2,025 were relocated by rail to Tennessee; and 5,050 were flown to Arkansas, Kentucky, or Tennessee.

The initiative has continued with the expanded goal of developing regional hurricane operations plans and federal support plans for several states. FEMA officials provided the Texas and Louisiana Federal Support Plans, the Arkansas Aviation Operations Plan, the South Carolina Motor Coach Evacuation Concept of Operations Plan, and the FEMA Region VI 2009 Hurricane Contingency Plan as evidence of progress in this area.

The Gap Analysis Program was designed to improve operational readiness by reducing response and recovery capability shortfalls throughout all levels of government. The 2008 Gap Analysis, which included an analysis of evacuation capabilities in 19 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, indicated that 5 states have no gaps and would not require federal assistance. FEMA is working with other states to mitigate gaps that were identified. For example, one state needs federal assistance to evacuate 17,000 residents with special medical needs. FEMA, the Department of Defense, and the state developed a draft Air Evacuation Plan to mitigate this gap.

The 2009 Gap Analysis is not as informative as the 2008 analysis, because data collection was suspended in response to a moratorium issued by the FEMA Administrator, as discussed in previous sections. FEMA officials said that states can now use their tool of choice to assess capabilities. FEMA is continuing to use previously collected data to determine evacuation staffing estimates, and FEMA's regional planners continue working with the states.

FEMA's Catastrophic Disaster Planning Initiative is designed to conduct analyses and develop plans for mass evacuation, sheltering, and response to catastrophic disasters. In April 2009, GAO reported that FEMA had engaged in significant planning efforts regarding threats that are specific to certain regions, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, through this initiative, but that planning efforts were ongoing and had not been concluded.

A large-scale federally supported evacuation has not been needed since Hurricane Katrina, but FEMA has provided evacuation support to state, tribal, and local governments during recent incidents, including hurricanes Gustav and Ike. FEMA is also finalizing a national system for states to track evacuees. Additionally, FEMA published a Mass Evacuation Incident Annex in June 2008. However, the Operational Supplement to the Annex that is intended to provide additional guidance for mass evacuations has not yet been finalized.

FEMA began developing a National Mass Evacuation Tracking System to track individuals as they arrive at or depart from certain locations, such as shelters. However, funding for system development was cut in 2008 and development did not resume until the spring of 2009. Several states and cities are testing the system, and FEMA officials stated that it will be ready by the 2010 hurricane season. FEMA is offering the system to states free of charge; however, FEMA cannot compel states to use the system.

FEMA has made progress in both critical areas, but its preparedness to support a regional or large-scale evacuation outside the Gulf region remains a concern. FEMA has augmented state and local evacuations planning and operations and enhanced its own capabilities to implement a federally supported evacuation. However, FEMA officials said that they need more staff and funding for the Planning Division, and DHS-OIG is concerned that the Operational Annex to the Mass Evacuation Incident Annex in the NRF has not been completed.

### **HOUSING (Moderate Progress)**

In a presidentially declared disaster, FEMA administers the temporary housing response for individuals and households. In the past, FEMA was criticized for its inability to provide immediate, short-term housing assistance to disaster survivors and to transition people needing it to more permanent forms of housing. As a result of congressional legislation, FEMA developed and released the National Disaster Housing Strategy to guide future disaster housing assistance efforts. DHS-OIG reviewed FEMA's current progress in three critical housing components:

- Develop a National Disaster Housing Strategy;
- Develop plans to purchase, track, and dispose of temporary housing units; and
- Strengthen state and local commitment to house affected citizens.

In response to the Post-Katrina Act, FEMA released the National Disaster Housing Strategy in January 2009. The strategy summarizes FEMA's disaster housing process, including sheltering and housing capabilities, principles, and policies. It outlines a number of potential housing programs that can assist disaster survivors in finding interim housing. In September 2009, we issued a report stating that the National Disaster Housing Strategy is a positive yet interim step forward.

The strategy has several components. First, it requires the creation of a National Disaster Joint Housing Task Force. The task force is charged with developing a Disaster Housing Implementation Plan that translates the strategy's goals into measurable actions and milestones; a Comprehensive Concept of Operations that integrates and synchronizes existing housing capabilities across all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector; and a Catastrophic Concept of Operations that addresses the unique requirements for a large-scale disaster.

OMB approved the Disaster Housing Implementation Plan on March 16, 2010. The Comprehensive Concept of Operations is scheduled to be completed and released immediately following the release of the National Disaster Recovery Framework.

FEMA has also developed a Non-congregate Housing Program that uses hotels and motels or federally owned unoccupied housing units as a sheltering resource. Each option has unique challenges. FEMA has a contract to place disaster survivors in an average of 1,250,000 hotel or motel rooms per night for an extended period. The program allows for sheltering a maximum of 500,000 disaster-affected households after a catastrophic event. However, the program's success depends on leveraging the full capabilities of the federal government along with state and local

governments, the private sector, community members, and the disaster survivors. An additional constraint to this program is the unknown readiness and availability of FEMA-identified hotel/motel sheltering option components. Nationwide, FEMA has identified approximately 46,715 federally owned unoccupied housing units. These units are readily available; however, this option has potential unit habitability and readiness concerns. Disaster survivors must be willing to relocate to areas where housing is available, and states must agree to accept these survivors.

Since 2008, FEMA has developed extensive plans to purchase, track, and dispose of temporary housing units. Because of numerous concerns over FEMA's use of travel trailers after Hurricane Katrina, in March 2009, the FEMA Administrator testified that it would consider the use of travel trailers only as a last resort. However, FEMA would consider a state's specific request for travel trailers during extraordinary disaster conditions when no other forms of interim housing are available. FEMA managers will apply the following conditions: (1) Travel trailers may be authorized only for use on private property; (2) FEMA will not authorize travel trailers for use in group sites; (3) FEMA will authorize travel trailer use for a maximum of 6 months' occupancy, and only when the level of damage to the occupant's predisaster dwelling can be repaired in less than 6 months; (4) FEMA will provide travel trailers that are within formaldehyde levels the state has determined to be acceptable; and (5) FEMA will provide units with air exchange controls that meet or exceed FEMA specifications.

In light of the decision to consider travel trailers as a last resort housing option, FEMA has been assessing new and innovative forms of temporary alternative housing through several programmatic actions. In 2006, Congress appropriated \$400 million for a FEMA-operated 4-year Alternative Housing Pilot Program. Through an interagency agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development, this program is designed to identify and evaluate better ways to house disaster survivors. For example, in Texas, FEMA has developed a housing unit that can be assembled in less than 10 hours and can be stored flat for reuse. A final report to Congress on the Alternative Housing Pilot Program is due December 31, 2011.

In 2008, FEMA awarded provisional contracts to seven alternative housing manufacturers to install temporary housing units for students attending classes at FEMA's National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg, MD. The Recovery Division's Joint Housing Solutions Group continues to monitor and evaluate each unit for future suitability to house disaster survivors.

For FY 2010, FEMA has a baseline inventory of 4,000 ready-for-dispatch temporary housing units. In January 2010, FEMA began an effort to sell more than 101,000 excess temporary housing units through GSA online auctions. When the GSA auction closed on January 29, 2010, FEMA had sold most of its excess inventory; however, bidders are still in the process of removing the housing units. By the end of 2011, FEMA is scheduled to close all supporting storage sites.

In its Disaster Housing Practitioner's Guide, FEMA said that each state should create and maintain a standing disaster housing taskforce. FEMA will assist states by providing best practices information, operational guidance, and a standardized housing plan template that can be tailored to unique disaster housing needs. FEMA sent headquarters-based subject matter experts

to provide technical support when disasters struck American Samoa, Iowa, Louisiana, and Texas. However, FEMA has only limited headquarters and regional staff to fully execute an expert-based disaster housing mission for every disaster. Typically, states do not have disaster housing experts. FEMA officials told DHS-OIG that additional federal funding is needed to develop the federal and state disaster housing expertise.

Also, the Housing Strategy states that when it is necessary to build temporary group housing sites, state and local government are responsible for identifying public land that is suitable for a group site or, when publicly owned land is unavailable, for identifying other sites for FEMA to lease. In this case, FEMA emphasizes the role of state and local governments in providing shelter for their residents. Given the current budget climate, some state and local governments may not fulfill these responsibilities; FEMA will need to encourage the state and local role in developing and implementing housing solutions.

### **DISASTER WORKFORCE (Modest Progress)**

The need for a trained, effective disaster workforce is one issue mentioned consistently in reports regarding FEMA's response to Hurricane Katrina. FEMA's disaster workforce consists mainly of reservists who serve temporarily during a disaster. The shortage of qualified staff for key positions responding to Hurricane Katrina negatively impacted the effectiveness of FEMA's response and recovery operation. DHS-OIG reviewed two critical areas identified as weaknesses after Hurricane Katrina to assess FEMA's efforts to:

- Adopt a Strategic Human Capital Plan; and
- Manage the disaster workforce and integrate workforce management tracking systems.

In May 2008, FEMA published the "Strategic Human Capital Plan 2008–2012," which established FEMA's plans for staffing standards, a restructured workforce composition, new core competencies, and professional development. This is FEMA's first official plan for managing, strengthening, and building a forward-leaning workforce. The strategic plan includes five key strategic initiatives aimed at recruiting and maintaining a strong, competent, and credible workforce:

- Understanding the composition and character of the workforce;
- Rightsizing the agency;
- Building core competencies;
- Training and professionally developing the workforce; and
- Building the culture of the new FEMA.

DHS-OIG 2008 report stated that FEMA completed an assessment of its legacy Disaster Assistance Employee program and published the report *FEMA: A New Disaster Reserve Workforce Model*. The report included 25 recommendations, and FEMA management identified 9 recommendations that would produce the greatest positive near-term effects. The remaining 16 recommendations would be incorporated as a result of completing the first 9 or implemented over a longer period.

In September 2008, Disaster Reserve Workforce Division staff established an ad hoc working group with counterparts in the Transportation Security Administration and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to develop a concept of operations for the Surge Capacity Force described in section 624 of the Post-Katrina Act. The first draft of the concept of operations was completed in December 2008. Senior FEMA and DHS management have not approved the draft plan.

The study *FEMA: A New Disaster Reserve Workforce Model* recommended that FEMA establish a director-level office to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of professional operations and address disaster reserve workforce challenges. In response to this recommendation, FEMA launched the Disaster Reserve Workforce Division (DRWD) in FY 2008. A key aspect of DRWD's mission is to assist in credentialing and deploying FEMA's full-time workforce and Disaster Reserve Workforce. As of March 2009, the Disaster Reserve Workforce consists of 21 cadres located in all 10 FEMA regions and at FEMA headquarters. FEMA has 7,995 registered disaster reservists, of whom 1,322 are immediately deployable.

In June 2008, DRWD launched an agency-wide credentialing effort, which resulted in the creation of FEMA's Credentialing Program. The program is responsible for the design and implementation of a plan to standardize the recruiting, training, and credentialing of FEMA's Disaster Reserve Workforce. In April 2009, FEMA developed the Agency-Wide Disaster Workforce Credentialing Plan, which contains the required processes that all cadres must implement in order to ensure that FEMA applies a consistent and fair process to credential each cadre member. The Credentialing Program consists of 21 cadres. FEMA reported the following results:

- Eleven cadres have a complete and approved Cadre-Specific Plan (CSP). Five of these eleven cadres have migrated to the existing credentialing framework;
- Six cadres have a complete CSP that awaits approval; and
- Four cadres have begun the initial planning in order to credential their disaster workers under the FEMA Qualification System.

FEMA estimates that half of the Disaster Reserve Workforce will be credentialed by the second quarter of FY 2012 and all will be fully credentialed by FY 2013. Half of the full-time workforce will also be credentialed by FY 2013 and the rest by FY 2014.

Even with the credentialing plans in place, training of newly hired disaster professionals continues to be a major challenge. FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) has developed training courses consistent with the requirements in the credentialing plans but is still relying on the old model of training staff during deployment. FEMA attributes this to EMI's training schedule, which is booked one year in advance. To further address training, FEMA is developing an orientation program and related materials to instruct newly hired disaster staff on standards of conduct, ethics, Equal Employment Opportunity, and other topics. FEMA expects to complete and disseminate the Disaster Assistance Employee orientation program by the end of FY 2010.



DRWD uses the Automated Deployment Database (ADD) to identify and maintain a record of the personnel deployed during disasters, with Web ADD serving as its online interface. However, the use of Web ADD was suspended because it did not adequately monitor employee deployment readiness, length of deployment, or location, limiting FEMA managers' ability to supervise the Disaster Relief Workforce. The inability to manage deployment information hinders the ability of FEMA staff to manage deployment and disaster activities.

Training courses consistent with the Credentialing Program will not be offered until FY 2011, and the new-hire orientation program is still under development. Deployed staff will have to rely on field training until EMI offers the new training courses.

### **MISSION ASSIGNMENTS (Modest Progress)**

FEMA is responsible for coordinating the urgent, short-term emergency deployment of federal resources to address threats and for stewardship of the associated expenditures from the Disaster Relief Fund. FEMA uses mission assignments (MAs) to request disaster response support from other federal agencies.

In DHS-OIG's 2008 report, of all the preparedness areas reviewed, this area needed the most improvement. At that time, FEMA had initiated an ambitious project to reengineer the processes, relationships, and resources involved in managing MAs. An intra/interagency Mission Assignment Working Group (MAWG) was formed to review MA processes and procedures and develop recommendations for the management of MAs. This group developed processes, policies, and procedures that have increased FEMA's MA effectiveness.

DHS-OIG reviewed three critical components to assess FEMA's efforts to:

- Improve guidance for mission assignments (i.e., regulations, policies, and operating procedures);
- Improve staffing and training; and
- Enhance management of mission assignments.

FEMA has developed an intranet website for MAs that provides documents and guidance necessary to execute MAs during an emergency. It includes various reference materials, such as policies and procedures, MA authorities, and forms needed to execute MAs.

The "Pre-Scripted Mission Assignment Catalogue" contains 237 pre-scripted MAs. An additional 64 are under development. Pre-scripted MAs provide standard "statements of work" and cost estimates developed before an actual emergency or disaster and are used to quickly execute MAs with other federal agencies. The pre-scripted MAs cover capabilities that are outside an agency's regular or emergency authority, and involve known or frequently used resources.

Not all MAs have pre-scripted language, as each disaster has unique requirements. FEMA developed a standard operating procedures manual for MAs that outlines policies, procedures,

and processes used to collaborate with other federal agencies and organizations when responding to disasters. This manual is under revision; the previous version was never issued as final.

In FEMA's latest reorganization, MAs were assigned to the Facilities, Assets, and Contracts Management Branch in the Response Directorate. This Branch not only develops and manages pre-scripted MAs, but also is responsible for the Response Directorate's contract oversight, space and office move management, and equipment and supplies purchase management. While FEMA has increased its MA staffing in the past few years, it relies heavily on contractors to supplement staff during periods of high activity.

FEMA has developed employee task books for three MA positions (MA Manager, MA Specialist, and MA Action Tracker). These task books are posted on FEMA's NRF site. FEMA's training institute offers several courses that are designed for FEMA MA workers and for federal partners often tasked through MAs. However, due to budget constraints, recent course offerings have been cancelled.

Previous reviews have recommended that FEMA establish and invest in MAs as a program area rather than a collateral functional process or duty that comes into play only during an incident response. The development of an MA program office, with a dedicated full-time staff and management team, established budget, and officially delegated authorities and responsibilities, would substantially improve all aspects of the MA process.

Managing and accounting for MA resources is crucial to managing the federal response to an incident. FEMA has established MA guidance but still faces challenges in its IT systems. FEMA has developed but not implemented an electronic action request form. MA officials say they are having difficulties finding funding for updating any systems useful in tracking MAs. FEMA currently uses the Enterprise Coordination and Approvals Processing System (eCAPS). Because of the proprietary nature of information presented in eCAPS, FEMA's partners do not have access to this system. Once funding is made available, MA officials hope to move to a system that will allow more flexibility, while securing data. Additionally, other offices with disaster response functions use their own information systems, which do not interface with those used in MA and other offices. MA officials say the need for an integrated IT system hampers their progress in developing into a truly effective enterprise.

FEMA management support will be required to implement the MAWG's processes, policies, and procedures. A significant investment of personnel, training, time, and budget resources will be required to begin the reengineering efforts. Most importantly, MA needs to have reliable IT systems that are integrated with its federal partners' systems, so that information is efficiently and effectively shared. After the revised infrastructure has been put into place, an MA program office will need resources to sustain the effort

### **ACQUISITION MANAGEMENT (Moderate Progress)**

FEMA's acquisition function was heavily tasked in responding to hurricanes Katrina and Rita and suffered from several shortcomings. These shortcomings included a need for predisaster contracts, untrained staff, and insufficient planning for postaward monitoring and oversight. In

recent years, FEMA management has focused on developing the acquisition function to a level that can respond effectively and efficiently to another catastrophic disaster. To assess FEMA's progress in this area, DHS-OIG reviewed three critical components:

- Have predisaster contracts in place;
- Recruit, train, and retain sufficient acquisition staff; and
- Provide for postaward oversight.

Awarding contracts before a disaster gives FEMA time to run a full and open competition in order to ensure the best value to the government. Without predisaster contracts in place, FEMA is forced to award contracts on a noncompetitive basis or to less qualified vendors in order to support a prompt response. FEMA's Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (OCPO) has developed a series of contracts for each of the FEMA directorates needing specific contract support during a disaster.

OCPO officials stress the importance of the quality, rather than quantity, of predisaster contracts. Lessons learned from major disasters guide decisions on which contracts are no longer needed and the best sources for goods and services. For example, FEMA strives to avoid competing with cities and states for resources that are available via existing contracts, or for assets that are part of a limited pool, such as ambulances and buses.

OCPO has also created an Acquisition Program and Planning Division, which functions as the primary link between acquisitions and the program areas that generate requirements, to assist with predisaster contracts. This has proven successful, as the program areas now have dedicated contracting support. OCPO needs to issue formal guidance requiring FCOs, contracting officers, and purchase cardholders to use the predisaster contracts when acquiring goods and services.

Currently, OCPO has 214 positions authorized, 137 of which are filled. Finding qualified candidates and filling open positions continues to be a challenge throughout the government. While FEMA and other agencies needing acquisition staff in the GS-1102 job series have received direct hire authorization, all are recruiting from the same pool of candidates for both trainee and experienced staffs. The acquisition staffing shortages have led some agencies to offer higher pay for journey-level staff. This has caused accelerated turnover as staff change agencies for promotions. DHS has implemented an intern program in acquisitions to increase GS-1102 staff. FEMA has benefited from this program but still needs additional contracting personnel.

Because of competition among agencies that post their openings on usajobs.gov, OCPO is considering using monster.com for posting acquisition openings, especially for regional positions. A problematic software system that caused delays in hiring has been discontinued, and a few new hires are on board and others are expected to be working soon.

Contracting responsibilities do not end with the issuance of an award. In fact, one of the most important aspects of the job, contract monitoring and oversight, begins after the award has been made. A lack of postaward oversight has been a continuing problem for FEMA.

OCPO's Acquisition Policy and Legislation Division has issued directives and standard operating procedures to provide additional guidance to staff on contract maintenance and monitoring. Policies exist that detail the contents of contract files, outline the process for transferring contract files from one contracting officer to another, and call for internal reviews of contract files.

In September 2009, the FEMA Administrator signed a management directive establishing a COTR Tiered Certification Program, which has resulted in better contractor performance and increased value for taxpayers. The number of trained COTRs has increased from 700 to 1,450 since DHS-OIG's last report.

A topic FEMA highlighted in 2008 was the upcoming transition to PRISM as the system of record for contract management. FEMA officials said many existing contracting documentation problems would be corrected once FEMA adopted PRISM as its system of record for contract management. At that time, FEMA was using ProTrac. The PRISM transition did not occur because of a contract protest outside of FEMA's control. Until PRISM can be installed, FEMA continues to use an upgraded version of ProTrac. This version provides FEMA with additional tools to improve contract management, but despite improvement to the available IT systems, FEMA still experiences contract management issues.

While FEMA has made progress in a number of areas and has improved its acquisition management function, many concerns remain. FEMA said many more predisaster contracts are in place. However, some Joint Field Office officials and contracting personnel still contract separately for the same goods rather than using the established contracts.

OCPO officials acknowledged that hiring continues to be a major concern. The vacancy rate is almost 36%, although the rate is unusually high because of recently authorized positions and past problems with a software program. Even though OCPO has hired a number of contracting employees, a FEMA official said new contracting personnel often have less than three years' experience. It is critical that FEMA have an effective training regimen for these new employees.

### **MITIGATION (Moderate Progress)**

FEMA's Mitigation Directorate manages a range of programs designed to reduce future losses to homes, businesses, schools, public buildings, and critical facilities from natural disasters. It also provides building design guidance for mitigating multihazard events and promotes state and local multihazard mitigation planning.

To assess FEMA's progress in this area, DHS-OIG reviewed the following critical components:

- Develop an integrated National Hazard Mitigation Strategy;
- Improve local hazard mitigation planning process; and
- Improve hazard mitigation operations and outcomes.

DHS-OIG's October 2009 report stated that a coordinated risk-based, all-hazards mitigation strategy mandated by the Post-Katrina Act had yet to be developed. DHS-OIG recommended

that FEMA use the established network of mitigation partners along with enhanced collaboration with DHS components, other federal agencies, and private sector stakeholders to develop and implement a risk-based, all-hazards mitigation strategy. FEMA is striving to accomplish this by working through the White House sponsored Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group to address pre- and post-disaster all-hazards mitigation.

FEMA has effectively promoted mitigation planning, and as of March 2009, 50 states, 6 territories, 33 tribal governments, and 18,000 local jurisdictions had approved local mitigation plans, covering approximately 77% of the Nation's population.

The challenge going forward is to improve the quality and impact of this mitigation planning enterprise and, ultimately, to reduce disaster losses and expenditures below what they would have been otherwise. The long-term nature of most mitigation planning makes it hard to measure effectiveness, and FEMA is working with DHS Centers of Excellence and independent researchers to develop better measurement frameworks and tools.

State and local hazard mitigation officials continue to report large gaps in the capacity and will of communities to plan and implement mitigation strategies. One consequence of the lack of local capacity is a costly reliance on external consultants to develop and write hazard mitigation plans. Further, the intent of local planning is to engage local stakeholders in the planning process, because they are in the best position to identify and address local risks and vulnerabilities.

FEMA faces a number of challenges in its efforts to improve hazard mitigation operations and outcomes. The most important challenge is the scope and complexity of the mitigation landscape—literally thousands of entities and individuals must work together in a loosely coordinated effort to achieve nationally significant results. A second major challenge is that FEMA is limited by statute to the promotion of effective mitigation and does not have the authority to compel property owners to mitigate floods or other hazards. This is true even when hazard mitigation appears desperately needed, as in the case of repetitively flooded properties that drain resources from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

In the face of these systemic challenges, however, FEMA has achieved a number of mitigation successes, strengthening resilience in communities across the United States. Most important, the NFIP currently has more than 5.6 million policies in force, protecting property owners against building and contents damage from flooding.

Although it has achieved significant successes in its 42-year history, the NFIP also faces a number of systemic challenges that pose financial and operational risks to FEMA and the American taxpayer. These challenges, which we, the GAO, and others have discussed in depth include: (1) extreme vulnerability to catastrophic disasters (post-Katrina claims payouts exceeded the total amount of all claims paid in the history of the NFIP from 1978 to 2004); and (2) a lack of consensus and funding among FEMA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and levee districts regarding how and when to upgrade and accredit levees.

Opportunities for improvement are generally known to primary mitigation stakeholders at the federal, state, and community levels, but will require focused, systematic effort to achieve. The key for FEMA will be to integrate these diverse stakeholders into the effort, and to coordinate and access the full range of mitigation resources. There are a number of opportunities for improvement, including the following:

- Continue working with the Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group, the National Emergency Management Association, and other stakeholders to develop an integrated national hazard mitigation strategy.
- Continue standing up the NFIP Reform Working Group to involve multiple stakeholders in shaping the future NFIP.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

FEMA is under increasing pressure to provide more assistance to state, local, and tribal governments whose diminishing resources in tough economic times are quickly overwhelmed by large and catastrophic disasters. It is more important than ever that FEMA be prepared to assist state, local, and tribal first responders.

FEMA has made progress in all of the areas DHS-OIG reviewed, although in some areas this progress has been modest. In a number of other preparedness areas, FEMA identified corrective actions, but implementation has not yet begun. FEMA would benefit from increased oversight of key preparedness areas to ensure that implementation of initiatives is sustained.

The following concerns are common to DHS-OIG review of the critical components:

- The need for more effective coordination with state, local, and tribal governments;
- The need for IT systems that are updated and integrated agency-wide;
- Too few experienced staff to handle the increasing workload; and
- Funding that is not adequate to maintain initiatives; meet the costs of disasters; and recruit, train, and retain staff.

FEMA is an agency that is in a constant state of flux. With so much change, it is often difficult for staff to determine the agency's current priorities. Plans, initiatives, draft guidance, and working groups often, understandably, take a back seat to disaster response and recovery, and momentum toward finalization and implementation of key initiatives is slowed or lost. In light of FEMA's increased involvement in routine disasters, coupled with the recent economic downturn, which has resulted in some state and local governments reducing their emergency management funding, DHS-OIG remains concerned about whether FEMA has sufficient staff focused on planning and preparedness efforts.

DHS-OIG and the GAO have made many recommendations in its audits of FEMA operations that involve the key preparedness areas mentioned in this report. Many of these recommendations remain open. DHS-OIG will continue to work with FEMA to ensure that

corrective action plans are developed and that progress is made in fully implementing report recommendations.

DHS-OIG's 2008 report, *FEMA's Preparedness for the Next Catastrophic Disaster*, made recommendations that touched on most of the critical areas discussed above. DHS-OIG recommended: (1) improving the agency's overall awareness of its readiness for a catastrophic disaster; (2) developing and sustaining systems to track the progress of major programs, initiatives, and other activities; and (3) regularly sharing reports on the status of such activities with key stakeholders. DHS-OIG reiterates the recommendations, which remain open, and will continue to work with FEMA to ensure that progress is made toward better preparedness for the next catastrophic disaster.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the Committee members may have.