



International Association of Emergency Managers

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IAEM Press Release ***FEMA Reform***

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Sept. 18, 2006 (Falls Church) – Since Hurricane Katrina revealed the extent of the deconstruction of our national emergency management system, the practical solutions recommended by emergency management field practitioners and numerous congressional investigations remain unimplemented.

The time to end this indecision is now – before the next disaster strikes.

That's why the International Association of Emergency Managers urges the House and Senate Appropriations Committees to include the authorizers' compromise Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Bill as part of HR 5441, the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill for FY 2007.

"The results of a weakened emergency management system have been made clear to all," said Mike Selves, President Elect. "It is time to restore FEMA's resources and authority before another catastrophic event happens."

IAEM applauds the hard work of the authorizers in arriving at this far-reaching compromise.

Some of the key provisions in this bill from IAEM's perspective are as follows:

- Maintains the FEMA name and identity. FEMA has many dedicated and hardworking employees and was once one of the most respected agencies in government and with leadership and the help of Congress it can be again.
- Requires the FEMA Administrator to have a demonstrated ability in and knowledge of emergency management and homeland security.
- Elevates the level of the Administrator to Deputy Secretary at Executive Level II.
- Directs the Administrator of FEMA to serve as the principal advisor to the President, the Homeland Security Council and the Secretary of Homeland Security for all matters relating to emergency management.
- Rejoins preparedness in FEMA. This is vital. Preparedness is what emergency managers do every day. It is an integral part of the emergency management system. A coach would not want two teams—one which did all the training and exercising and a separate one that just waited to play the championship game.
- Gives some protection to emergency management functions in FEMA, such as that given the Coast Guard to prevent people and resources being siphoned off into other parts of the agency.
- Limits the role of the Principal Federal Official. Although we would prefer that the position of Principal Federal Official be abolished since it leads to confusion and bureaucratic layers, the limiting of the role is a great improvement.
- Strengthens FEMA Regional Offices.
- Authorizes the Emergency Management Performance Grant at \$175 million over the FY 2007 appropriated amount.
- Contains language to raise the caps on repair and replacement assistance for housing for disaster victims. This corrects an unintentional problem created in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and is a much needed change. It will allow disaster victims to return to their homes faster and will save in payments for other accommodations.
- Contains a provision to provide a sliding scale for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program which will provide more mitigation opportunities than currently available to reduce future losses. A recent Congressionally-mandated study concluded that a \$1 spent on mitigation saves \$4.

After months of discussion and debate the time has come to take action, and we applaud Congress for doing so. We believe that much remains to be done to make sure our national emergency management system completely whole again, however this compromise action represents a significant step

About IAEM

IAEM is a non-profit organization representing 2,700+ emergency management and homeland security professionals for communities, state and federal disaster officials, private sector, non-governmental organizations and others involved in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from all types of disasters including acts of terrorism. IAEM (www.iaem.com) is dedicated to promoting the goals of saving lives and protecting property during emergencies and disasters.