



International Association of Emergency Managers
Suggestions for Organizing for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
Presented 03-18-2009 to Study Team for Presidential Study Directive #1

The United States Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) appreciates the opportunity to meet with the PSD-1 study committee. IAEM-USA is the nation's largest association of professional emergency managers. It represents primarily county and local government emergency management practitioners from urban and rural areas; city, county, regional, and tribal governments; university and college campuses; and health care facilities.

There are two points within PSD-1 (inserted below in *italics*) that are of special interest to us, since all disasters begin and end at the local level.

Ensure a seamless capability within the White House to coordinate planning for the Federal Government's response to domestic incidents of all kinds.

The coordination of planning is essentially outlined in the National Preparedness System (120 Stat. 1424) as outlined in the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) (PL 109-205). The President is responsible for the preparedness of the nation, and the Administrator of FEMA is directly charged with executing this duty on behalf of the President.

Retain within the White House the capacity to coordinate Federal, State, local, and tribal efforts to respond to natural disasters, including as a result of hurricanes, floods, fire, and other incidents, if necessary.

In a large disaster the role of the President is critical and the President will be held responsible.

It is important to make sure that the President gets the solid professional emergency management advice needed to carry out his responsibilities and that the FEMA Administrator who carries out the mission clearly has the authority to speak on behalf of the President. We believe that the best way to achieve this is to have a highly qualified Administrator of FEMA who is a direct report to the President.

On their own, neither the Secretary of DHS nor the Administrator of FEMA has the direct authority to task other assets – for example, Department of Defense. Only the President has direct command authority (through the Robert T. Stafford Act, as amended). This underscores the importance of why the person who is most knowledgeable about disasters and emergencies (i.e., the Administrator of FEMA) must not be separated by multiple layers of reporting from the seat of legal authority – the President.

Closely coupling the good, professional emergency management advice of the Administrator of FEMA with the direct command authority of the President is one obvious way to avoid the failures evidenced in Katrina. And catastrophes, by their very nature, require the attention of the President to resolve – regardless of their cause.

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