

**Testimony
of
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before the

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Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate**

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Are We Prepared?

Chairman Gregg, Ranking Member Byrd, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony on the subject of emergency preparedness.

My name is Ellis Stanley and I am the Vice-Chair of the Government Affairs Committee and former President of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM). I am also the General Manager of the City of Los Angeles' Emergency Preparedness Department. My 32 years of experience in emergency management cover jurisdictions from Brunswick County and Durham (city and county), North Carolina to Atlanta/Fulton County, Georgia to the second largest city in our nation – Los Angeles, California. My experiences have covered emergency management from rural counties to metropolitan cities.

The most important and critical component for strengthening our national preparedness and response to disasters is federal funding. As the tragedies of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina well illustrated, weaknesses in preparedness can undermine even the best resourced responses to disaster. These lessons echo what we have learned in Los Angeles through experience with earthquakes, floods, and fires. That is why Los Angeles has focused a significant amount of federal funds that it has received through UASI into planning and prevention. And while these funds are generally more focused on the threat of terrorism, it is not lost on us that much of the equipment, training, and exercises that we use UASI to finance have a *dual-use* – to assist in our preparedness against threats from natural hazards as well.

The City of Los Angeles conducts over thirty (30) exercises annually and even more training sessions not only for the city departments but for our mutual aid/urban area

partners as well, to include private sector and non-governmental organizations. We've developed an ERT Challenge program for our CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program that helps to keep trained community responder skills sharp. We've conducted Emergency Management workshops for all of the Los Angeles Urban Area partners as well as develop an Urban Area Response Plan. For this reason, the City of Los Angeles strongly supports continued funding for the UASI program for FY2007.

In representing IAEM's Government Affairs Committee as well as the City of Los Angeles, I am committed to provide information spanning the concerns of our association's membership – which are primarily, although not exclusively – the city and county emergency managers across our great nation.

Let's tackle directly the issue of how prepared we are. I think the statement best summarizing our position on this topic comes from my colleague in Maine and Chairman of the IAEM Government Affairs Committee, Bob Bohlmann who said, "We are better equipped than we have been in the past, but we may not be better prepared."

Mr. Bohlmann was making reference to the fact that we have successfully concentrated on the need to provide equipment to better prepare our nation for response to disasters. Now, however, we need to turn our attention to the equally important task of re-establishing an effective emergency management system which links federal, state and local partners in the integrated emergency management process – consisting of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Funding Issues

We would like to personally thank you for including \$220 million for Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) in the Senate version of HR. 5441, the bill making Appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for FY 2007. IAEM certainly hopes that the Senate will prevail in the conference with the House. This funding is vital for improving mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery – the entire emergency management process.

This funding is the single most effective use of federal funds in providing emergency management capacity to state and local governments. No other source of homeland security funding is based on a consensus building process determining outcomes and specific deliverables backstopped by a quarterly accountability process. This program, which is cost shared, provides the funding for the emergency managers who perform the role of the "honest broker" at the state and local level and who establish the framework for preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. EMPG is used for personnel, planning, training, and exercises at both the state and local levels. It also supports the people who have had the added responsibility of administering homeland security funding programs and additional planning efforts since 2001. Some of the additional

mandates include: updating our local plans to reflect the new National Response Plan, training and adoption of the new National Incident Management System (NIMS), requirements in the National Preparedness Goal and Target Capabilities List, updates of emergency evacuation plans, and participation in National Plan Reviews as mandated by Congress.

Functional Issues

At the Federal level, it is time to begin building on what we have rather than continuing to reinvent the process. We are pleased that Chairman Collins' bill was amended to maintain the FEMA name. FEMA, which has many dedicated and hardworking employees, was once one of the most respected agencies in government and with leadership and the help of Congress it can be again.

Preparedness is what emergency managers do every day and is a process we are constantly working to improve. It is an integral part of an integrated system and we are pleased that the legislation which passed the Senate rejoins preparedness under FEMA as a critical element of this system.

There are key steps that could be taken to improve the integrated emergency management process at the Department of Homeland Security – and that would increase the level of partnership between those at the federal government, state governments and local governments responsible for the day-to-day emergency management processes.

1. The Director of FEMA needs the maximum amount of access to the White House possible – especially in times of disaster.

IAEM firmly believes in the need to retain the FEMA name and identity in conjunction with the Senate-proposed structure.

2. FEMA should clearly be responsible for coordination of the Federal response to disasters.

To be successful, FEMA needs to be given the authority to do its job. Many of us applauded how well the Coast Guard performed in Katrina—they were an agency with a mission and were given the authority to perform it. FEMA should be given the same.

Failure to provide a clear and direct line to Federal resources and expertise in a disaster will lead to critical confusion and delays. This increases the potential for a response that isn't adequate to the disaster. We've seen a definite withering of the relationships between the Federal Government and State and Local Governments that has been helped along by unclear and ambiguous relationships. These need to be crystal clear and they need to originate with and pass through FEMA.

3. Adequate funding, resources and personnel need to be provided for FEMA in such fashion that they cannot be reallocated without legislative action.

A level of protection similar to that provided for the U.S. Coast Guard needs to be provided for FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security.

4. All of the key leadership positions in FEMA need to be filled with experienced, qualified and knowledgeable personnel.
5. A culture of empowerment established and maintained within FEMA that promotes the maximum level of autonomy and supports the independent actions necessary to deal with the consequences of a disaster.

State and local emergency managers have great difficulty dealing with policies as “moving targets” during the response to and recovery from a disaster. In order to be credible representatives of the Federal Government, officials within FEMA should have the maximum level of autonomy possible in order to take appropriate independent actions necessary during the response to and recovery from a disaster.

6. The Principal Federal Officer (PFO) position should be abolished, as it leads to confusion and contributes to the difficulties I have mentioned above.

The role of the PFO remains unclear in comparison with the Federal Coordinating Official (FCO). We agree with both the House and Senate Committees that this position should be abolished.

7. The FEMA regions should be strengthened.
There continues to be discussion of creating a new DHS regional structure. FEMA has an existing regional structure and the resources required in creating and maintaining a duplicate DHS regional structure should instead be devoted to strengthening and integrating the emergency management process in the existing structure. As an example of the need for greater integration, the recently created regional Preparedness Officers seem to be operating independently from the current FEMA regional directors. Our members are already experiencing confusion and uncertainty as a result of this. We believe these officers should be fully integrated into the existing FEMA regional structure. Or, in the alternative, the duties of the Preparedness Officer should be incorporated into existing FEMA regional personnel – for example, the FEMA Regional Director.

8. State and Local emergency managers must be provided the opportunity to have significant, continual, and meaningful participation in the policy development process.

The involvement of key stakeholders in the decision-making process leads to greater “buy in” on decisions, and better decisions overall. All levels of government are partners in the operation of integrated emergency management. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to make sure that those who have responsibility for day-to-day emergency management operations in our cities, counties and states are consulted on matters of

policy, its implementation, and operations. This means more than consulting with Law Enforcement, Fire, and Emergency Medical Services – they are important, but they do not represent the entire emergency management picture. Actual day-to-day emergency managers – responsible for mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery during a disaster – have yet to be adequately represented in Department of Homeland Security decisions. The emergency managers we’re describing are those responsible for the entire integrated emergency management processes in our local jurisdictions during a disaster. Please notice that the complete spectrum of emergency management activities is represented in this system – and that preparedness is not artificially divorced from the rest of the emergency management process.

Another great example of the need to involve genuine local emergency managers in decision-making processes was the National Plans Review. Had all the stakeholders – including local emergency managers – been involved in the review of this decision, there would have been more opportunity to discuss some of the assumptions underlying the National Plans Review (NPR). The assumption implicit in the NPR that every jurisdiction in the United States needs to create a jurisdiction-wide evacuation plan is simply unwarranted and not based in reality. Inclusion of local emergency management stakeholders in this discussion would have brought this to light immediately. As my colleague in Johnson County, Kansas and IAEM President Elect Mike Selves points out, “One size does not fit all.” Therefore, it is not only necessary to include day-to-day emergency managers in the review of these decisions, but to make sure those emergency managers represent both small rural jurisdictions as well as urban jurisdictions.

Successful Preparedness Initiatives

In response to interest expressed regarding improved preparedness, I would like to share with you some positive developments in the emergency management community.

There are a number of successful recent emergency management ventures. These include the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), and the Certified Emergency Manager credential (CEM).

For the first time we have a way to provide a metric for assessing emergency preparedness in our country. We have only to look at the State of Florida, one of the first states in the nation to receive an Emergency Management Accreditation, as a great example of a successful emergency management program.

The preparedness of our communities for natural and human-caused disasters is of vital and growing importance to public health and safety, to the environment and to the economy. State and local emergency management programs -- the entities responsible for planning and coordinating disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery -- play a crucial role in creating safer communities and in reducing losses to residents, businesses, and important infrastructures. In an effort to assure that state and local emergency management capabilities are as strong as they can be, a dozen national

organizations have worked together to create an accreditation process for emergency management programs: the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, or EMAP.

The goal of EMAP is to provide a meaningful, voluntary accreditation process for state, territorial, and local programs that have the responsibility of preparing for and responding to disasters. By offering consistent standards and a process through which emergency management programs can demonstrate compliance, EMAP will strengthen communities' capabilities in responding to all types of hazards, from tornadoes and earthquakes to school violence and bioterrorism. Accreditation is voluntary. Its intent is to encourage examination of strengths and weaknesses, pursuit of corrective measures, and communication and planning among different sectors of government and the community.

The CEM or Certified Emergency Manager program is a certification program for individuals and EMAP assesses organizations/programs. CEM is administered by IAEM with the objective of producing professional emergency managers who can effectively accomplish the goals and objectives of any emergency management program in all environments with little or no additional training or orientation.

EMAC, the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, is a congressionally ratified organization that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid.

Through EMAC, a disaster impacted state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues upfront: liability and reimbursement.

There have also been great strides in the Public-Private preparedness initiative around the country. Organizations such as BENS (Business Executives for National Security), BICEPP (Business and Industry Council on Emergency Planning and Preparedness), DRII, and EMAP, GPP (Global Partners for Preparedness) and more are recognizing the absolute necessity to incorporate the private sector into the planning, training, and exercising process within our communities.

Creating a Private Sector Assistance Compact similar to the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is under consideration and merits our support. There are many reasons why the government should be invested in engaging the private sector in its strategy for homeland security.

More than 80% of information systems are owned by the private sector. Approximately 90% of critical infrastructure is owned by the private sector, including banking, finance, transportation, and intelligence systems, utilities and water supplies, and communication networks. Some of the most valuable institutions, and therefore the most desirable targets, are owned by the private sector.

There are equally great reasons why the Private Sector should also invest. The private sector should be invested and engaged in domestic preparedness programs for reasons stemming from obligation to self-interest.

The clearest reason for private sector involvement in emergency preparedness is to ensure employee safety. After September 11, senior executives and boards recognized a “heightened sense of responsibility” for the safety of their people and consequently addressed the “human factor” of business. Many businesses realized that their greatest asset was their people, and that the greatest loss to the company was not the loss of revenues, but the loss of human life.

Preparedness is an ongoing process. All across the country local and state emergency management offices are taking numerous steps to improve their ability to respond and recover from all hazards.

Los Angeles has many examples of successful emergency management programs to include creating a community preparedness section that works directly with the neighborhoods to assure a strong and coordinated emergency management effort. We are developing a Special Needs Assistance Program that assists in our preparedness, response and recovery process.

The creation of Emergency Network Los Angeles to coordinate and work directly with our community based organizations has proven very successful.

Another example would be the great improvements that the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency made in their evacuation efforts in coordination with their local emergency managers following their experience in Ivan in 2004. Significant problems were identified and corrected. Three major evacuation routes I -59, US 49 and US 98 all converge in Hattiesburg. The new planning corrected the traffic flow around the city. Local emergency managers also worked with the state on details such as determining which exits needed to be open for fuel, which needed to be open for shelters so that small communities lacking in resources would not be overwhelmed, where wreckers should be positioned. Efforts were coordinated with the Red Cross to try to have the shelters opening early as far north as possible so that some space would be left nearer the coast for later evacuees. These and other changes greatly improved their evacuation for Katrina. However, there are more lessons learned from Katrina and additional issues to address such as accommodating emergency vehicles during contra flow of the interstate highways.

In order to capitalize on the numerous successful initiatives by state and local emergency managers we are willing and anxious to partner with the Federal Government in reestablishing a truly coordinated, integrated, and collaborative national emergency management system.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.