



Statement for the Record
By H. Edward (Eddie) Hicks, CEM ®, President
U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers
on the
FY 2012 Appropriations for the Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Homeland Security
for the
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
May 27, 2011

Chairman Landrieu, Ranking Member Coats, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am Eddie Hicks, the Director of Emergency Management for Morgan County, Alabama. I serve as the President of the U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) and am providing, on their behalf, this statement on critical budget and policy issues for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I have been a local government emergency manager for 31 years. I also served three terms as President of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers. We support funding the Emergency Management Performance Grant at \$350 million, the Emergency Management Institute at \$11.9 million, and PreDisaster Mitigation at \$84.9 million in the budget for FEMA.

IAEM is our nation's largest association of emergency management professionals, with 5,000 members including emergency managers at the state and local government levels, tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, private business and the nonprofit sector. Most of our members are U.S. city and county emergency managers who perform the crucial function of coordinating and integrating the efforts at the local level to prepare for, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from all types of disasters including terrorist attacks. We deeply appreciate the support this subcommittee has provided to the emergency management community over the past few years, particularly your support for the Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG) as well as strengthening FEMA.

Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG)

We respectfully urge that the Subcommittee approve the President's request of \$350 million for EMPG, but reject combining it with other accounts. EMPG is fundamentally different than the post September 11, 2001 Homeland Security Grants because of its 50% Federal and 50% state and local matching requirements and established performance measures. It also pre-dates the Homeland Security grants by over 50 years. We also request that language be included continuing to make it clear the funding is for all hazards and can be used for personnel.

The program is authorized at \$950 million for FY 2012 in Public Law 110-53.

EMPG which has been called “the backbone of the nation’s emergency management system” in an Appropriations Conference Report constitutes the only source of direct federal funding for state and local governments to provide basic emergency coordination and planning capabilities for all hazards including those related to homeland security. The program supports state and local initiatives for planning, training, exercise, mitigation, public education, as well as response and recovery coordination during actual events. All disasters start and end at the local level, which emphasizes the importance of building this capacity at the local level. Funding from EMPG frequently makes a difference as to whether or not a qualified person is present to perform these duties in a local jurisdiction.

The legislation creating EMPG is purposefully broad to allow jurisdictions to focus their attention on customizing their capabilities. Therefore it is important that FEMA guidance not try to make one size fit all but is written so as to allow maximum flexibility in meeting the specific capability requirements within each local jurisdiction.

Funding from EMPG has always been important to local government emergency management offices, and is even more vital during the current economic downturn. The programs of many of our local emergency managers have faced or will be facing budget reductions resulting in reduced staffing, reduced training, reduced public outreach, and reduced support to volunteers. Some elected officials are considering reducing their commitment from a full time emergency manager to a part time emergency manager, or moving the emergency management functions as added duties to other departments. This has the effect of actually reducing emergency management services – and potentially preparedness – in many areas of the country at a time when disasters and emergencies threaten more people and property than ever before. Simply receiving the entire 50% Federal match of their contributions would make a big difference in maintaining their programs. It should be noted that many local emergency management programs have historically provided significantly more than the 50% match that is required for their EMPG allocations.

Emergency Management Institute (EMI)

We respectfully urge the Subcommittee to increase the funding for the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) to \$11.9 million. The FY 2010 enacted amount for EMI was \$9 million. It is our understanding that the request amount for FY 2012 for EMI is \$9 million although it is not specifically mentioned in the President’s request. We urge you to again specifically designate funding for EMI in your Committee Report and to require FEMA to include a specific request in the budget documents.

The \$2.9 million increase over FY 2010 would support speeding the development and implementation of the Foundational Academy; continued updating and development of the field (G) and on-campus (E) courses; and, the development of other vital programs especially an Executive Emergency Management Program for State, local and tribal emergency managers.

Our disasters and emergencies are becoming more complex, and our State, local and tribal emergency management officials continue to assume additional duties and responsibilities.

To meet these emerging challenges, new and updated training from EMI is imperative. Lessons are being learned which must be incorporated into our professional body of knowledge. We are extremely encouraged by the renewed focus and efforts to update and enhance training programs over the past year with the funding support of Congress. We continue to support the highly successful Emergency Management Higher Education Program at EMI which has produced significant improvements in the preparation of emergency managers at over 232 college and university programs.

Disaster Mitigation (PDM)

We support the President's Budget Request of \$84,937,000. A Congressionally mandated independent study by the Multi-Hazard Mitigation Council, a council of the National Institute of Building Sciences, showed that on the average, a dollar spent by FEMA on hazard mitigation (actions to reduce disaster losses) provides the nation about \$4 in future benefits.

Strengthening FEMA

IAEM-USA continues to strongly support the full implementation of Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), PL 109-205, and we urge the Subcommittee to continue insisting on its implementation. The momentum returning FEMA to long-established principles of emergency management – all hazards, integrated, all phases (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) – must continue. The FEMA Administrator should be clearly responsible for the coordination of the Federal response to disasters and have the maximum amount of access to the White House as the legislation clearly requires. We are still reviewing Presidential Policy Directive-8, but are pleased that it included language that the directive shall be implemented consistent with relevant authorities, including PKEMRA and its assignment of responsibilities with respect to the Administrator of FEMA (PPD-8, page 5).

We remain concerned that FEMA functions should not be duplicated in other parts of DHS. For example, the DHS Office of Operations Coordination, created shortly after the enactment of PKEMRA, appears to be assigned functions that duplicate or compete with those of FEMA such as coordinating activities related to incident management and response.

FEMA Response in Alabama

Morgan County, Alabama – my jurisdiction – was one of the 41 counties impacted by the Alabama tornadoes that happened on April 27, 2011. We were fortunate that we did not receive the same level of destruction which occurred in many other counties however we still have sufficient damage to have been included in the declaration. Alabama has a total of 67 counties.

We have an Emergency Management system in Alabama – a system of strong local programs working with a strong state program, coupled with a restored, more confident and nimble FEMA that is making a real difference in the lives of our citizens. The foundation of this strong local capability is the exercising, training, planning, and experienced personnel provided through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). One thing we would like to remark on is the restoration of a past practice of assigning a FEMA person to serve as a "County Liaison" for

one or more counties included in the declaration. This person serves as a conduit to brief us on the latest developments related to the federal portion of the recovery. In turn, this person can also field questions or resolve issues related to the federal recovery. We think this is a potential “best practice” Some of our citizens who lost their homes have already been in temporary (mobile home) housing for a week or more – and this is just over a month after our tornado event. This is a nimble response by FEMA, and it represents a real improvement from the past.

Principal Federal Official (PFO)

We would urge the Subcommittee to include bill language prohibiting the funding of any position designated as a PFO for a Stafford Act event. IAEM has consistently opposed the appointment of PFOs. It leads to confusion. Instead, our members want the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) to have unambiguous authority to direct and manage the federal response in the field. It is absolutely critical for state and local officials to have one person empowered to make decisions and coordinate the federal response in support of the state.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we urge the Subcommittee to continue to build emergency management capacity by funding EMPG at \$350 million. We urge increasing funding for the Emergency Management Institute to \$11.9 million. We urge elimination of the PFO for Stafford Act events.

We urge the Subcommittee to continue its efforts to strengthen FEMA and to insist on the full implementation of the provisions of PKEMRA.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

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