

Opening remarks
Chairman Mary L. Landrieu
Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriations
Current status of emergency management in the US and the important role
communications systems play in a disaster
June 8, 2011

Good afternoon. I call the Subcommittee to order.

Today I welcome two panels of witnesses to discuss the current status of comprehensive emergency management in the United States, and the critical role communications systems play in a disaster.

Since Hurricane Katrina and the attacks on September 11, policies and laws have been rewritten and significant investments have been made in an upgraded emergency management system, including first responder capabilities, communications systems, and recovery and relief. Significant change has happened at the local, State, and federal levels of government, and in the private and non-profit sectors as well.

In the United States, emergency management – be it preparedness, response, or recovery – starts at the level of government closest to the people. If a local government is overwhelmed, the State provides support. If the State gets overwhelmed, the federal government provides support. This requires advanced coordination and communication to save lives and property and to recover and rebuild smartly and quickly.

While we will look at emergency management as a whole today, I also want a special focus on communications during a disaster. The ability of emergency response personnel to communicate in real time prior to, during, and immediately after a disaster is critical to establishing command and control at the scene of an emergency and to maintaining situational awareness. However, in numerous after action reports, communications deficiencies have been revealed. Unfortunately, this issue was amplified during 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

Further, technological developments are forging an evolution in the way government communicates, as well as how we communicate with citizens during a disaster. Keeping up with this evolution is a challenge to the emergency management community.

The massive earthquake, and resulting tsunami, in Japan in March; and the recent unprecedented flooding, tornadoes, and wildfires here in the United States are reminders that this federal government must continue to be a reliable partner with State and local governments as well as with private partners to make sure every community is as prepared as possible.

In tight budgets and difficult economic conditions it is more important than ever to allocate dollars carefully and wisely.

With that, I will welcome Mr. Craig Fugate, the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Rand Beers, the Under Secretary of the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD).

Administrator Fugate, in your testimony you emphasize that it takes the whole community - not just government - to ensure effective emergency management. I appreciate the important improvements FEMA has made in ensuring the needs of children are taken into account during disasters – from disaster plans at juvenile justice centers to pre-staging infant formula, baby food and diapers – important change has taken place.

Under Secretary Beers, your Directorate has taken a first big step in testing our interoperable communications in urban areas and in ensuring that communications training, and technical assistance is available to first responders. With new technologies emerging everyday, this Committee is interested in your strategy to stay afloat.

Despite progress, we still have a lot to do. FEMA has not fully institutionalized the changes mandated by the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006. The National Disaster Recovery Framework has not been completed; an effective risk and preparedness assessment system is not in place; and FEMA disaster management information systems remain woefully inadequate. NPPD is working to ensure State and local governments and the federal government stay ahead of evolving technologies and infrastructures.

Before turning to Senator Coats, I must return to the issue of the Disaster Relief Fund shortfall that I raised with Secretary Napolitano in an earlier hearing. If Congress approves the President's request for the DRF, there will be a shortfall of between \$2 billion and \$4.8 billion in the Fund for fiscal year 2012. Without additional funding, it is likely that the Fund will be exhausted as early as January

of 2012. Recovery efforts in 50 States, including those hard hit by recent flooding and tornadoes, will cease.

The House bill has attempted to make up for a portion of this shortfall, however it came at a great cost to homeland security and first responder grants, which were cut by \$2.1 billion (52 percent) compared to FY 2010 and by \$1.4 billion (40 percent) compared to FY 2011. The House also cuts the Coast Guard and FEMA. **It makes no sense to cut funding for the agencies that must prepare for and respond to future disasters, to pay for the cost of past disasters.**

Following Senator Coats' opening remarks, Vice Chairman Lautenberg and each other Member will be recognized for up to three minutes of opening remarks based on order of arrival. After we hear from the Administrator and the Under Secretary, each Member will be recognized in order of arrival for up to five minutes of questions. I now recognize Senator Coats for any opening remarks he may wish to make.

[Following opening remarks by Members, the first panel will be recognized for opening remarks, followed by questions]

I would like to recognize our panelists, in the following order, for their opening statements: Mr. Craig Fugate from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and Mr. Rand Beers from the National Protection and Programs Directorate.

[Upon completion of questions for the first panel, thank them and welcome the second panel for their opening statements]

I thank our witnesses on the first panel for their contributions today. We will take a one minute break while the second panel gets seated.

[After second panel is seated]

I welcome our second panel. We have an excellent panel of State and local emergency managers and communications officials who handle day-to-day emergency management and communications activities. Each of our witnesses has recently been through significant disasters or major exercises in their communities.

I would like to take a second to introduce Mark Riley from Louisiana. Mark Riley serves as Chief of Staff for the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. He came to the agency in 2007 and previously served for 2 years as the Deputy Director for Disaster Recovery, where he managed \$11 billion in Public Assistance funding and \$1.4 billion in Hazard Mitigation funding for 24,000 projects throughout the State to support recovery from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike. Mr. Riley served for 32 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, where he attained the rank of Colonel and was assigned as Legal Advisor to the Department of Defense General Counsel's Office, U.S. Joint Forces Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Northern Command. He received his undergraduate and law degrees from Louisiana State University and a Master of Law Degree from Georgetown University with a specialty in tax. He and his wife Susan live in Baton Rouge with their four children.

Next, I turn to Senator Coats to introduce Mr. Vice, our witness from Indiana.

[After Senator Coats introduces his witness]

Also let me welcome Mr. Hicks, Director of Morgan County, Alabama Emergency Management and President of the International Association of Emergency Managers; and Mr. Ron Lane Director, Office of Emergency Services, San Diego County, California. We very much appreciate you being here today.

I welcome our panelists, in the following order, for their opening statements: Mr. Mark Riley, Mr. David Vice, Mr. Eddie Hicks, and Mr. Ron Lane. After we hear from each of the witnesses, Members will be recognized in order of arrival for up to five minutes for questions. Mr. Riley, let's start with you.