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News Release

FEMA Administrator Paulison Receives IAEM-USA's Highest Award

November 17, 2008 (Overland Park, Kan.) The IAEM-USA 2008 National Security Award today was presented to R. David Paulison, Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Administrator Paulison was selected for this rare award for his "unselfish and dedicated leadership that has significantly contributed to a strong U.S. civil defense and emergency management program as part of U.S. national security," stated IAEM-USA President Larry Gispert during the award presentation.

The award is the highest honor bestowed by the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) U.S. Council upon a citizen of the United States. Only 25 individuals have been selected for this award in the past 56 years. "Administrator Paulison joins the esteemed ranks of President Ronald Reagan, President George H. W. Bush, Governor Tom Ridge, Marilyn Quayle, and Senator Strom Thurmond," noted IAEM-USA First Vice President Russ Decker, CEM.

Appointed by President George W. Bush, Administrator Paulison reports directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security. The Administrator may also be called upon by the President to serve as a member of the Cabinet in the event of natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other man-made disasters. Serving under the Administrator are two Deputy Administrators, nine Assistant Administrators and 10 Regional Administrators.

Administrator Paulison has more than 35 years of experience in emergency management. He began his career as a firefighter and paramedic, rising to serve as Fire Chief in Miami-Dade, Florida. Since 2001, he has held a number of senior positions within the federal government, including the Director of the Preparedness Division of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate and the U.S. Fire Administrator. In 2006, he was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as Director of FEMA and, with the 2007 Reorganization, continues to lead FEMA as Administrator.

As a career firefighter, the Administrator began as a rescue firefighter and climbed the ranks of rescue lieutenant commander, district chief of operations, division chief, assistant chief and then deputy director for administration before becoming the Miami-Dade Fire Chief. He is a certified paramedic and, as fire chief, oversaw the Miami-Dade Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. His emergency management experience includes Hurricane Andrew and the crash of ValuJet Flight 592. He is also past president of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

A native of Miami, Florida, Administrator Paulison earned a bachelor of arts from Florida Atlantic University and completed the Program for Senior Executives in State and Local Government at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. In 2004, he received the Mason Lankford Fire Service Leadership Award from the Congressional Fire Service Institute. Additionally, he has received the LeRoy Collins Distinguished Alumni Award and has been inducted into the Miami-Dade Community College Hall of Fame. Administrator Paulison was selected as Fire Chief of the Year by his colleagues from the State of Florida in 1993 and holds positions in several professional associations.

The International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) is a non-profit organization consisting of more than 4,000 emergency management professionals from local, state and federal governments, the military, private industry, and volunteer organizations. IAEM has consistently promoted the goals of saving lives and protecting property during emergencies and disasters since its founding in 1952 as the U.S. Civil Defense Council.