

Contact: Dawn Shiley
IAEM Communications Manager
703-538-3542
Cell: 571-481-8657



IAEM Headquarters
201 Park Washington Court
Falls Church, VA
22046-4527 USA
Ph. 703-538-1795
Fax 703-241-5603
E-mail info@iaem.com
www.iaem.com
www.EMEX.org

News Release

IAEM-USA Calls for Restoring FEMA to Independent Agency Status

November 19, 2008 (Overland Park, Kan.) The U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) is calling for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to be restored to its former status as an independent agency reporting directly to the President. IAEM-USA also urges that the Director be designated as a member of the President's Cabinet. This position was adopted by association's leadership during IAEM's 56th Annual Conference attended by more than 1,500 emergency managers.

"We adopted this position with a unanimous vote of our Board of Directors," said IAEM-USA President-Elect Russell Decker, CEM. "This is the right time to do the right thing."

Numerous experts in emergency management and homeland security – including former FEMA Director James Lee Witt – have suggested that now is the time to remove FEMA from the bureaucracy within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

"FEMA can regain its status as one of the most successful and admired federal agencies, as it was early in this decade, but it will take a concerted effort from the new administration, support from Congress, and participation from stakeholders at all levels," said Witt. "The first, and probably most important, step is to immediately begin the process of moving FEMA out of the Department of Homeland Security."

IAEM-USA believes that mixing the DHS mission of preventing future terrorism events and the FEMA mission of disaster consequence management (mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery) has significantly detracted from both missions. The re-establishment of FEMA as an independent agency reporting directly to the President, with a Director designated as a member of the President's Cabinet, would allow federal, state and local government partners to better serve the American public during future disasters. The fundamental division of work would return to the paradigm of crisis management (protecting the nation by preventing and catching those who would commit an act of terrorism against the United States) and consequence management (dealing with the impact of any disaster – whether natural, technological or terrorism-related). IAEM-USA believes that a nimble, strong and independent FEMA with strong state and local partners would greatly contribute to the safety of our citizens and the resiliency our communities.

*The **International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM)** has more than 4,200 members including emergency management professionals at the state and local government levels, tribal nations, the military, colleges and universities, private business and the nonprofit sector in the United States and in other countries. 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. Our membership includes emergency managers from large urban areas as well as rural areas. 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.*

###