

**The Honorable Hal Rogers
Opening Statement
Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriations**

***FEMA: Operations and Disaster Preparedness
Is the Agency on the Right Track?***

Witnesses:

**Chief David Paulison,
FEMA Administrator**

**David Miller, Legislative Committee Chairman,
National Emergency Management Association**

**Larry J. Gispert,
President, International Association of Emergency Managers**

**Matt Jadacki,
Deputy IG, DHS**

10:00 AM – Thursday – March 13, 2008

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome back to Chief Paulison and greetings to our other distinguished guests.

It was a little over two and half years ago that FEMA was literally on life support. In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, words like “broken”, “failure”, “dysfunctional”, and “mismanaged” were used to describe what is *supposed* to be our nation’s preeminent preparedness and emergency management agency.

But now, FEMA is in the midst of a major recapitalization, in terms of both personnel and capabilities. The Congress has given you the direction through the

Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. It has also given you the means by way of a significant influx of both annual and supplemental appropriations. Now, it is up to the men and women of FEMA to make this resurrection a reality.

And, we are seeing hints of progress, evidenced by FEMA's largely positive response to the recent southern California wildfires and the tornados that devastated Arkansas, Tennessee, and western Kentucky. Positive signs, for sure, but also a sobering reminder that our nation is constantly under the threat of natural disasters as well as acts of terrorism.

Which brings us to today's hearing, which is posing the question of whether "*FEMA is on the right track?*" A fair question, perhaps, but a wise man named Will Rogers once cautioned such an approach when he said, "*even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there*".

And, so, today, Chief Paulison, I find myself asking you a question I asked you just two days ago: *what's your plan?* What's your plan for moving forward and turning what you describe as the "FEMA Vision" into *real* capabilities? What's your plan for connecting the millions of dollars worth of infrastructure and information technology improvements as well as hundreds of additional employees into a more functional preparedness and emergency management organization? Difficult questions to answer, I know, but answers that should link funding to results, and that is the touchstone of this Subcommittee.

Now, I fully recognize and truly value the important mission of FEMA and its vital role in our homeland security. But we could literally throw *billions* at the

FEMA Vision initiative and not *necessarily* be more prepared. So, today I am interested in understanding your progress at re-building FEMA and what the enhanced operating capability will look like in terms of staffing and capital investments. Today, I am interested in understanding how far the FY 2009 budget request moves FEMA towards the Post-Katrina vision we all supported.

No one ever said the rejuvenation of FEMA would be easy, but that does not relieve you of the responsibility to provide this Subcommittee a plan that clearly demonstrates how the funding you are requesting will materialize into *real* improvements for what has been a beleaguered agency.

We are your partners in this endeavor, and I can assure you that no one wants to see you succeed more than this Member, as well as the other Members of our Subcommittee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to today's discussion.

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