



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

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April 19, 2007

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SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management

FROM: Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management Staff

SUBJECT: Hearing on FEMA's Emergency Food Supply System

PURPOSE OF THE HEARING

On Friday, April 20, 2007 at 9:00 a.m., in room 2253 Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management will hold a hearing on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) system of food distribution in response to an emergency.

BACKGROUND

On April 14, 2007, the *Washington Post* reported that 13.4 million prepared meals, held in reserve by FEMA for the purpose of distribution during emergency or natural disaster, went unused or spoiled during the 2006 hurricane season.¹ The same *Washington Post* article revealed that the vast majority of these meals, or 13 million meals valued at \$70 million, were donated to a hunger relief agency that provides food to homeless shelters and food banks. An additional 400,000 meals, valued at \$2.2 million, spoiled due to storage in trailers without proper temperature controls.

Forecasts for the 2006 hurricane season predicted between 13 to 16 major storms, with 8 to 10 projected to become hurricanes, and at least four to become major hurricanes. During the 2005 hurricane season, which included response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, FEMA faced severe criticism for its sluggish response in providing food and water to victims. For the 2006 season, FEMA bought and stored approximately 13 million meals to add to its existing inventory of about

¹ "FEMA Doubles Estimate of Lost Meals to 13 Million," *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2007.

two million meals. According to FEMA, this inventory of pre-packaged meals was positioned to support a rapid response to victims of these predicted storms and hurricanes.

However, the 2006 season produced only one relatively mild storm, Hurricane Ernesto. The vast majority of the meals held in reserve by FEMA had expiration dates within the 2006 hurricane season and would not carry over to 2007. As a result, FEMA decided to donate these 13 million meals to Second Harvest, a community-support organization to assist those in need.

FEMA recently notified the Subcommittee of a partnership it has entered into with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). DLA provides supplies, technical services, and logistics support to branches of the United States military as well as to several civilian agencies. This partnership is intended to ensure a continuous inventory and delivery of fresh meals to those requiring assistance during a national disaster, and to address the expiring inventory and spoilage problems FEMA experienced during the 2006 season.

Consistent with the requirements of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2007 (P.L. 109-295, Title VI, section 636 Logistics), the Administrator of FEMA is required to “develop an efficient, transparent, and flexible logistics system for procurement and delivery of goods and services necessary for and effective and timely response to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters and for real time visibility of items at each point throughout the logistics system.” In light of FEMA’s recent actions, the Subcommittee will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of FEMA’s food storage and delivery system, as well as its planning for the provision of food in the event of a disaster during this hearing.

WITNESSES

Mr. R. David Paulison (invited)
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency

Mr. Larry Glasco
Deputy Director
Logistics Operations and Readiness
Defense Logistics Agency