

**Testimony before the United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

regarding

**The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Preparedness and Response to
ALL Hazards**

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Thank you Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Graves, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management for this opportunity to discuss our nation's preparedness in relation to all-hazard response.

By way of introduction, I am Fred Endrikat; I have been a Philadelphia firefighter for 32 years, and I am currently assigned as the Special Operations Chief for the Philadelphia Fire Department's Special Operations Command. I also serve the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Urban Search & Rescue (US&R) National Response System in concurrent duty assignments as the National Task Force Leader's Representative, Incident Support Team Operations Chief, and Task Force Leader for Pennsylvania Task Force 1.

I have served in various capacities at the local, state, and federal levels in disaster response operations, including a 40-day field assignment as the FEMA US&R Incident Support Team Operations Chief at the September 11th attack and collapse of the World Trade Center in New York City and a 30-day field assignment as the FEMA US&R Incident Support Team Operations Chief for Hurricane Katrina (Mississippi theater of operations) and Hurricane Rita.

I am speaking today as a first responder, but I also have the responsibility and privilege to speak on behalf of the nearly 6,000 members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Urban Search & Rescue National Response System.

FEMA Administrator Paulison and the vision for a New FEMA speak to a "shared responsibility" approach for emergency management. A cornerstone of this shared responsibility is partnerships between federal, state, and local government. The concept of an All-Hazards approach to this shared responsibility is critical to ensure that we are prepared to respond effectively to any significant disaster event, anywhere in our nation.

Prior to the 9/11 attacks, the FEMA US&R task forces were faced with a shift in focus due to our response to the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. This incident made us aware that we needed to be ready for more than natural disasters (as had been the focus of US&R responses up until that point in time). When the 9/11 attacks occurred, the US&R task forces had already begun preparing for a response to a terrorist-type attack. Six US&R task forces had been selected by FEMA to begin to achieve capabilities to respond to Weapons of Mass Destruction incidents. After 9/11, all 28 FEMA US&R task forces were issued identical equipment and training for response to this type of event.

While 9/11 may have shifted the national focus to terrorism, the FEMA US&R Program maintained the all-risk focus that had been previously developed. As evidenced by the FEMA US&R Program's response to Hurricane's Katrina and Rita, and as highlighted by Secretary Chertoff in his Report to Congress last year, the FEMA US&R Program was one of the federal response entities, along with the United States Coast Guard, that was acknowledged for successful response operations.

Immediately after the September 11th attacks, we (understandably) focused our efforts on homeland security and terrorism, and allocated significant funds to increase our capabilities in this one specific area. As a result, we (as a nation) might have unintentionally subordinated our efforts and our capability related to other risks that we continually face.

With limited funding amounts, we end up competing for funds to prepare for individual, specific types of events, when it would be more prudent and cost-effective to approach our funding for preparedness from the All-Hazard perspective. Simply stated, there are too many worthy causes that have been vying for a very finite amount of funds.

Large-scale building collapse rescue operations in a water environment in the collapsed, flooded underground subway tunnels under the World Trade Center require the same operational capabilities, highly-trained personnel, incident management protocol, planning functions, and significant logistical support requirements as collapsed building / water rescue operations in flooded environments in urban, suburban, and rural areas of North Carolina during Hurricane Floyd, or in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina. I believe that our focus should not be on the triggering mechanism that causes a disaster. The stronger our foundation in the concept of All Hazard preparedness, the more likely we will successfully and safely resolve any incident that we respond to.

All disasters start as local-level events, and as the response element builds in scope and complexity, each event presents very similar challenges in all phases of the emergency management cycle (preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation). The preparedness cycle (and it's relationship to the other phases) is key.

As we prepare to respond to any type of disaster, far-reaching benefits will be achieved by consistently training together, sharing information, and building relationships at all levels of government and all tiers of response (from first-responders to fourth-tier stand-alone, self-sufficient resources). Integrating common doctrine, a common concept of operations, similar equipment and techniques for individual response disciplines, and interoperable communications

through all these tiers of response in the preparedness phase will allow for the most effective service delivery to our citizens during the response (and subsequent) phases.

Preparedness activity between FEMA and various levels of government is an example of this type of interaction. The benefit of the FEMA National US&R System to the first responder can be demonstrated by the fact that state, regional, and local first responders utilize the FEMA US&R National Response System's training curriculum, equipment standards, and policies as benchmarks in preparation for response to local emergencies. These rescue teams have realized that FEMA has developed a best-practices model that they have incorporated into their training and operations.

I would respectfully ask that the Committee consider the continued support of successful programs like the FEMA US&R National Response System. Corresponding adequate funding would ensure a robust All-Hazard emergency management system for Federal, State, and local governments, through all tiers of response. I thank you for the privilege of appearing before this committee.