

Statement for the Record

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National Response Plan

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

I am David Paulison, Administrator of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I look forward to working with this Subcommittee and Congress to ensure that our Nation is prepared for all hazards. In recent years, we have faced an unprecedented series of disasters and emergencies. Terrorist attacks, catastrophic hurricanes, devastating wildland fires, widespread flooding, earthquakes, threats to critical infrastructure, and the potential of a pandemic outbreak all require a unified approach to domestic incident management. The lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, in particular, confirmed the importance of the National Response Plan, and revealed the need to clarify the plan's structure, doctrine, and language so that it would more clearly guide the integration of response efforts across all levels of government, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations.

I am pleased to report that the Department of Homeland Security, in partnership with the Federal family, as well as non-Federal stakeholders, is developing a National Response Framework (Framework) to take the place of the National Response Plan (NRP) and improve our Nation's all-hazards preparedness, response, recovery, and capabilities and better serve and protect our citizens. Like the NRP, the Framework will be a living document, one that is dynamic and flexible, and ever evolving to constantly address the new challenges we will face in the future. You have heard me speak about a New FEMA that is forward leaning, responsive, and professional - this National Response Framework must also incorporate that doctrine.

Background

Every day there are emergencies in the United States that require action by emergency responders. Whether those responders come from different parts of the same local jurisdiction or from other jurisdictions or State and Federal agencies, they need to be able to communicate and to work together effectively. The historic events of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina point to the need to continue efforts to develop and maintain a common approach to incident management. In the past, Federal planning has focused primarily on how Federal agencies relate to one another during emergencies. Those plans did not fully focus on integrating levels of government to manage incidents or fully reflect working relationships before, during, and after a crisis. Following the 9/11 attacks, greater efforts were made to understand and implement common incident management principles and to develop common planning frameworks.

In Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, *Management of Domestic Incidents*, the President directed the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management by developing a National Response Plan and a National Incident Management System (NIMS). The NIMS, originally released by the Department in March 2004, established standard incident management

processes, protocols, and procedures that allow responders to work together more effectively. The NRP, as initially released by the Department in December 2004 and modified in May 2006, used the comprehensive framework of the NIMS to provide the structure and mechanisms for the coordination of Federal support to State, local, and tribal incident managers and for exercising direct Federal authorities and responsibilities.

The Revision Process

Following the response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, DHS reviewed numerous independent investigative reports and concluded that the NRP, as written, required revision. DHS/FEMA established a layered oversight structure to assist in the review and revision process. The oversight structure consisted of a senior level Steering Committee, an interagency Task Force, a Writing Team, and 12 Work Groups. In addition to reviewing numerous Katrina after-action reports, DHS/FEMA conducted stakeholder meetings to gain consensus insight into the top issues to be addressed in the review. The majority of concerns pertained to clarification of the structures, doctrine, and language of the plan to better integrate response efforts across all levels of government, and the private sector organizations.

From these sources, DHS/FEMA identified 17 key issue areas for consideration during the review. These key 17 issues were then assigned to the Work Groups for discussion and the development of suggestions for modifications to the document. Stakeholders representing nearly 700 Federal, State, tribal, local and private sector organizations took part in the NRP review work group meetings. DHS/FEMA used the suggestions of these groups as the baseline for a more user-friendly document that is easier to read and better reflects a national approach to domestic incident response.

The draft Framework was sent to stakeholders on September 10, 2007, for a 30-day public review and comment. All supplemental documents will be open for comment for a 60-day period. Comments on the draft are due October 11, 2007; comments on the supplemental documents are due November 9, 2007. Meetings are being held throughout the next two weeks with numerous stakeholder groups to present the draft, engage in interactive discussions and answer questions about the draft. A website has been established and FEMA is accepting comments. The documents are available electronically at www.regulations.gov and www.fema.gov/nrf.

The National Response Framework Replaces the Former National Response Plan

Although the word “plan” was part of the NRP’s title, in reality, the document was never really an operational plan; rather it provided the framework for national incident management. Therefore, after consulting with stakeholders and consistent with the new homeland security strategy, DHS/FEMA has adopted the term “framework” to more accurately reflect the function and purpose of the document. The updated title, National Response Framework, represents a natural evolution of national response principles.

The purpose of the Framework is to establish a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident response across all jurisdictions around common response principles.

The Framework provides a foundation for understanding existing structures, further develops processes, and clarifies roles and responsibilities. The Framework provides the structure for a comprehensive approach to national response. Whereas, previous versions focused heavily on Federal activities, the Framework emphasizes that most incidents are managed locally and all incidents should be handled at the lowest jurisdictional level possible. For that reason, the Framework describes the roles of individuals, communities, States/tribes, and the Federal government, from the perspective of each, and a common integrated approach to incident management. These roles are based on the principles of NIMS, engaged partnerships and unity of effort. As such, the National Response Framework begins where most incidents do, at the local level, and scales levels of response to the level of national involvement.

An effective, unified national response requires layered, mutually-supporting capabilities. The Framework seeks systematically to incorporate public sector agencies at all levels and private sector businesses. Private sector for-profit and not-for-profit businesses and organizations serve vital roles in incident management which have been more prominently recognized in the new document. The private sector not-for-profit organizations in particular, contribute to response efforts through engaged partnerships with each level of government to assess potential threats, evaluate risk and take actions as may be needed to mitigate threats and effectively respond when incidents occur.

Unique Characteristics of the National Response Framework

The new document is being written for senior elected and appointed leaders, such as Federal agency heads, State Governors, tribal leaders, mayors or city managers –those who have responsibility to provide for effective incident management. At the same time, it will inform emergency management practitioners of basic response principles, explaining the operating structures and tools used routinely by first responders and emergency managers at all levels of government. In order for the nation to be prepared for manmade and natural disasters, its leaders and emergency responders must both have a baseline familiarity with the concepts and mechanics of the Framework, as well as a common understanding of each others' unique, but vital roles in the national response.

The Framework also focuses on the preparedness, response and short-term recovery phases of incident management. It expands upon its flexible, scalable, and adaptable coordination structure and guides the full range of activities that shape an organized and efficient response. The Framework is designed to cover complex requirements in anticipation of or in response to threats, acts of terrorism, major disasters, and other emergencies.

Preparedness and Planning are Essential to Effective Response.

Effective incident response involves an integrated combination of planning, training, exercising, and organizing prior to an incident in order to build, sustain, and improve operational capabilities. The new Framework will acknowledge the importance of planning and preparedness activities and addresses actions taken by all stakeholders to identify the personnel, training, and equipment needed for a wide range of potential incidents and to develop jurisdiction-specific plans for delivering capabilities when needed for an incident.

The Five Elements of Response Doctrine

Our national response doctrine defines basic roles, responsibilities and operational concepts for incident management across all levels of government and with the private sector. The overarching objective of this doctrine is saving lives, meeting basic human needs and reducing the loss of property. Our national response doctrine comprises five key principles including:

- Engaged partnership-- Leaders at all levels must communicate and actively support each other to develop shared goals and align capabilities so that no one is overwhelmed in times of crisis.
- Tiered response-- Incidents must be managed at the lowest possible jurisdictional level and supported by additional response capabilities when needed.
- Scalable, flexible and adaptable operational capabilities-- As incidents change in size, scope and complexity, the response must adapt to meet requirements.
- Unity of effort through unified command-- Effective unified command is indispensable to all response activities and requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each participating organization.
- Readiness to act-- Effective incident response requires readiness to act, balanced with an understanding of risk.

The Structure of the National Response Framework

The new Framework is designed to be a living document that is supplemented and supported by an on-line tool, the National Response Framework Resource Center. The Framework is organized to provide clarity and ease of use and contains the following information:

- ***Chapter I: Roles and Responsibilities.*** This chapter sharpens the focus on *who* is involved with emergency response management at the community, State, tribal and Federal levels and with private sector businesses and organizations.
- ***Chapter II: Response Actions.*** This chapter describes *what* we as a nation collectively do under the Framework: prepare and respond.
- ***Chapter III: Incident Management.*** This chapter explains *how* the National Incident Management System concepts and structures are applied to achieve our incident management objectives.
- ***Chapter IV: Planning: Cornerstone of a Broader Preparedness Strategy.*** This chapter emphasizes the importance of planning within the broader national preparedness strategy and briefly summarizes the elements of a national planning system.

- **Chapter V: Additional Resources.** This final chapter summarizes the content and plan for the online **National Response Framework Resource Center**, a new FEMA web site that will deliver state-of-the-art support for the *Framework* with additional support tools shaped by and particularly addressed to the incident management community.

Conclusion

Our Nation must be prepared to meet all challenges. DHS recognizes that all disaster events, regardless of magnitude, can be devastating to the people and communities affected. The National Response Framework establishes a comprehensive, national all-hazards approach to domestic incident response that brings together all levels of government and private-sector businesses and organizations. This Framework integrates our Nation's response plans, capabilities, and preparedness activities around common principles. It describes the structures, processes, and defined roles and responsibilities, and the mechanisms for integrating the system across all jurisdictions to aid informed decision making and direct support to meet response objectives. The National Response Framework will allow FEMA and its Federal colleagues to be more agile and responsive partners with the States and the public following a disaster.

Thank you for the opportunity to explain the National Response Plan revision process, and I look forward to any questions you may have.