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Subcommittee on Economic Development,
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INTRODUCTION

Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart, and other distinguished members of the subcommittee

I am Jonathan Sarubbi, Regional Administrator, for the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I am joined today by Kenneth Wall, Acting Director for FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC).

Thank you for inviting us to appear before you today to discuss emergency management in the National Capital Region (NCR). Let me begin with a brief overview of Region III and my role as the Regional Administrator. Mr. Wall will follow with a brief overview of NCRC and its work in the National Capital Region (NCR).

I. OVERVIEW

Region III

As the Regional Administrator, I oversee FEMA's all-hazards preparedness and emergency management efforts in Delaware, the District of Columbia (the District), Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. These efforts include development, implementation and execution of FEMA's programs and initiatives, and work with State, District, local, and private sector partners to build a strong, capable, and responsive Region.

Helping me to carry out my duties are nearly 114 dedicated full-time employees along with more than 450 intermittent Disaster Assistance Employees, commonly known as disaster reservists. The regional office is structured into five major components or divisions which include Disaster Assistance, Disaster Operations, Mitigation, National Preparedness and Management. A Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) from U.S. Army-North, is co-located with us in Philadelphia. The DCE is a full-time, seven-person element that interacts daily with Region III personnel and leadership to provide expertise and support to our planning, response, and recovery efforts.

Let me also briefly share with you the scope of disaster assistance provided by FEMA to the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia since 2000. FEMA has responded to and assisted with the recovery from 18 major disaster declarations and 6 emergency declarations. In so doing, we have provided assistance to 132,011 residents, disbursing nearly $510 million in Federal assistance.

The District alone had four major disaster declarations and three emergency declarations, totaling $15.5 million in federal disaster assistance. Under the Individual Assistance Program, which provides disaster-related housing and other needs assistance to individuals and families, $4.9 million has been awarded, while $10.6 million was awarded through the Public Assistance

Program. Public Assistance provides supplemental aid to States, communities and certain private nonprofit organizations for the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged public facilities, and for emergency protective measures.

Office of National Capital Region Coordination

The NCR is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the United States, encompassing 12 local jurisdictions across Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The NCR is home to more than five million residents and 20 million tourists annually, and -- uniquely -- is the seat of the national government with more than 270 Federal departments and agencies representing all three branches of government.

In section 882 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, Congress created NCRC to "oversee and coordinate Federal programs for and relationships with State, local, and regional authorities" within the NCR. Congress further directed NCRC to coordinate with Federal, State and local officials and the private sector to enhance domestic preparedness and also to provide information and technical support to its State and local partners. Transferred to FEMA in 2007 with other preparedness elements, NCRC reports directly to the FEMA Administrator.

NCRC builds strong partnerships to enhance regional preparedness, working in collaboration with many partners in the NCR. NCRC interacts daily with Federal, State, local, regional, and private sector/nonprofit homeland security partners. For example, the Director of NCRC represents DHS and FEMA on the NCR Senior Policy Group (SPG), comprised of the homeland security advisors and chief emergency managers of Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia (representing their political leadership). The SPG plays a key role in sustaining a coordinated regional approach to homeland security and strengthening integrated decision making and planning.

The SPG is just one example. NCRC actively engages with chief administrative officers (CAOs), public health officials, first responders, emergency managers, leaders from the private sector and non-profit communities, and many other Federal, State and local partners in support of all hazards preparedness.

Working with our NCR partners, NCRC provides support in building capacity to respond to an incident. For example, NCRC and other SPG members developed the NCR "First Hour Checklist" to guide coordinated actions during the initial response to an incident in the NCR. This resulted from the NCR's experience in Hurricane Isabel in 2003, during which NCRC facilitated communications between Federal, State and local entities and the Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority, the SPG and CAOs to support information sharing and coordinated decision-making, for example on workplace, transportation and school closures.

Regional-level capability development also includes significant efforts in the areas of interoperability and risk analysis to support decision-making on the part of NCR leaders. With NCR partners, NCRC also plans, leads or participates in exercises, drills and events (e.g., NSSEs, state funerals, demonstrations) that occur with frequency in the NCR, bolstering information sharing and integrated planning.

These established working relationships allow NCRC to contribute to broader FEMA efforts to maintain and enhance its relationships with State and local partners. During a response to a natural disaster within the NCR, NCRC is able to augment Region III and support the Federal Coordinating Officer by providing enhanced situational awareness and consequence analysis capabilities; coordination with NCR partners; and, agency representatives at operations/communications centers to facilitate information sharing. In the event of a natural disaster in the NCR, NCRC stands ready to support FEMA's core mission and the initiatives of Region III and our Federal, State and local NCR partners.

II. INCIDENT RESPONSE

How would FEMA respond to a natural disaster? To explain, I will address the National Response Framework (NRF), local disaster response, the disaster declaration process and the concept of unified coordination.

Local Disaster Response

In January 2008, FEMA released the NRF, the successor to the National Response Plan. The NRF establishes a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident response and incorporates many NRP elements and lessons learned.

The NRF is not FEMA's plan —it is the framework that guides the Nation's combined response resources, from the individual all the way to the Federal government, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The National Incident Management System (NIMS), is a key component to the NRF. NIMS represents a core set of doctrines, concepts, principles, terminology, and organizational processes, such as the Incident Command System, that enables effective incident management across all levels of response—from the local fire chief to the Department of Homeland Security's National Operations Center.

In accordance with NIMS, disasters are managed locally. When an incident occurs, local governments will always be the first to respond. If the magnitude of the incident is beyond the capability of the local jurisdiction, State assistance may be requested. If the State or District cannot meet those needs, they can request assistance through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC allows States and the District to ask for whatever assistance they need for any emergency, from earthquakes and hurricanes to acts of terrorism. This mutual aid agreement allows States to join forces and help one another whenever disaster threatens.

Disaster Declaration Process

Should a State, or the District, suffer from any natural catastrophe (including any hurricane, tornado, severe storm, or earthquake), or regardless of cause any fire, flood, or explosion, the State, or the District, may be eligible for Federal disaster assistance. If State resources have been overwhelmed by the event, Federal assistance may be requested. At the request of the District's mayor or State's governor, a joint FEMA and State/District Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) takes place to determine the impact and magnitude of damage and the resulting unmet needs for individuals, businesses, the public sector, and the community as a whole. In addition to representatives from FEMA and the State/District, the PDA teams may also, as appropriate,

include local government and other Federal or State/District agency representatives. PDA findings are used by the District's mayor or State's governor as the basis for the request for a presidential declaration and also are used by FEMA in developing the Regional Administrator review, analysis, and recommendations. The governor or DC mayor may request a disaster declaration based on a determination by the governor or mayor that the response is beyond the combined capabilities of the State, or District, and impacted local governments.

The request is submitted through the FEMA Region III Regional Administrator to the President. If the incident is of significant severity and magnitude to warrant a major disaster or an emergency declaration, the President may declare that an emergency or major disaster exists. The declaration process can be conducted expeditiously in a catastrophic situation. When a disaster is declared, the President identifies the scope of the assistance programs and the initial jurisdictions eligible for Federal assistance. A major disaster declaration may provide Individual Assistance, Public Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) assistance.

Also, immediately following a catastrophic incident of unusual severity and magnitude the State, or District, may request an expedited declaration. An expedited declaration can allow for the provision of necessary emergency protective measures, limited to Direct Federal Assistance (DFA), without the need to conduct a PDA. DFA is otherwise eligible and necessary emergency work performed by a Federal agency when the State/District/local government lacks the capability to itself perform, or contract, for the necessary work. Generally, other assistance, including Individual Assistance, reimbursement for Public Assistance and HMGP assistance may only be provided once PDAs are complete, unless the level of damage to public and/or private infrastructure is empirically overwhelming, in which case limited Individual Assistance, reimbursement for Public Assistance (emergency work only), and HMGP assistance, may be provided as appropriate.

FEMA also has procedures in place that allow for the provision of Federal assistance when a major disaster declaration is not warranted. When the State or the District is immediately threatened by a natural or man-made incident that could result in significant impact, an emergency declaration may be requested in advance of the incident. This declaration would supplement State/District and local efforts to save lives and to protect property and public health and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe. Available assistance is typically limited to emergency protective measures, such as life saving and life sustaining actions, including DFA. DFA may include Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, general public and medical evacuation support, or commodities; some elements of DFA are supplied by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Unified Coordination

FEMA is responsible for coordinating the overall Federal support to a disaster response, which invariably involves multiple departments and agencies employing a broad range of assets and individual statutory authorities that can rapidly and efficiently address critical assistance and support needs.

Among its first steps in a disaster, FEMA Region III would activate the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) and deploy a regional Advance Emergency Response Team (ERT)

and/or Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) to the State or District Emergency Operations Center and/or a designated field location to establish an Interim Operating Facility.

During an incident in the NCR, the ERT will obtain early-stage situational awareness with continued coordination and support from the NCRC. The National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) could also make plans to standup at FEMA headquarters depending on the projected scope and potential impact. (A full NRCC with all ESFs may be activated or only a partial NRCC with a limited number of functions included.)

At the RRCC in Philadelphia, FEMA coordinates the delivery of Federal assets through 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). Each ESF has a lead Federal agency and several support agencies. The major focus following a disaster is to begin actions to fulfill life-saving and life-sustaining needs based on the priorities and requests of the District or the State.

In my role as the Regional Administrator, I serve as the Disaster Recovery Manager (DRM) for daily regional business; however, I delegate this DRM authority to the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) to exercise my authority for a particular emergency or major disaster while leading an ERT or directing the Federal response and recovery activities in the affected jurisdictions. In the NCR, there are pre-designated experienced FCOs assigned to the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia for hurricane season.

The Joint Field Office (JFO) is one of the principal NRF organizational elements designed to implement the comprehensive approach to domestic incident management. It is the primary Federally-managed facility for the co-location of representatives of multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional entities that share responsibility for Federal response and recovery activities surrounding an incident. The JFO is initially supported by the RRCC. Once the JFO has assumed the responsibility for direction and control of the Federal support mission, the RRCC will demobilize.

The JFO is led by the Unified Coordination Group, which includes specified senior leaders representing State and Federal interests. Within the Unified Coordination Group, the FCO is the primary Federal official responsible for coordinating, integrating, and synchronizing Federal response activities. To oversee District and State response and recovery efforts, the mayor appoints a District Coordinating Officer and the governor appoints a State Coordinating Officer in their respective JFO's– both are part of a specific Unified Coordination Group.

Overall, it is most important to understand that FEMA and other Federal agencies work in partnership with local, District and State officials and respect the lead role they have in the initial assessment and response to an emergency.

Regional Response to Disasters

A few examples of how Region III responds to disasters include our responses to Hurricane Isabel on September 18, 2003 and, more recently, Tropical Storm Hannah in August 2008.

Hurricane Isabel struck the mid-Atlantic region, resulting in six simultaneous disasters for five Region III States and the District of Columbia. Due to the magnitude of Isabel, Region III

staffed, rostered and coordinated six different response teams and set up joint field offices. Turnkey operations (in which other FEMA regions provided operational support) were employed, and Region III staffs were embedded in all the regional operations that were assigned to handle Isabel: FEMA Region VII for Maryland; Regions IX and VI for the District of Columbia; Region IX for West Virginia; and Region X for Delaware.

During the response, the District immediately called on the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, receiving emergency management staff from New Mexico, Mississippi and South Carolina to assist in its emergency center operations and in the areas of public information and public assistance. Isabel was the Region's biggest operation in its total impact on the States and the District.

We were particularly active monitoring and responding to Tropical Storm Hanna. In order to prepare for the potential effects of the approaching storm, we forward deployed an FCO and FEMA liaison to the emergency operations centers of the District and Maryland. An FCO and ERT were deployed to Virginia. We were able to plan along side the States and the District, maintain situational awareness and anticipate initial response needs. If supplies and resources were warranted to supplement State and local efforts, we were in place to respond.

Region III utilizes a team referred to as the ERT-A Light. The team consists of a pre-designated FCO and key staff positions that are familiar with the State or District emergency staff, the emergency operating locations, and their emergency response capabilities. This established relationship allows faster response coordination, situational awareness, and ability to provide requested assistance.

III. REGION III-WIDE PREPAREDNESS ACTIVITIES

Because disasters can strike at any time, the better prepared the Federal and State governments can be ahead of time, the more efficient and seamless the response and recovery. We are now leaning forward by working even more closely with our State and local partners to anticipate their needs and to work with them to fill them quickly. A key to understanding and being ready is to know the capabilities and shortcomings.

Gap Analysis

One major initiative that is at the core of FEMA's preparations for hurricane season is our Gap Analysis Program (GAP), which has enhanced understanding of the mutual capabilities we have with our States and the District. During the past two years, working in collaboration with our State and local partners, we have enhanced our response for the initial 72 hours of a disaster and early stages of recovery at the local, State, District and Federal levels. The analysis has focused on seven critical areas: emergency communications; transportation and evacuation; commodities; search and rescue; fuel and emergency power; debris clearing; and mass care and emergency assistance and interim sheltering. Currently, our Search and Rescue subject matter experts are working with the District to coordinate Region III Search and Rescue efforts, and the efforts of our debris subject matter experts who are reviewing debris management plans within the NCR. These are a just a few examples of the many activities taking place on a daily basis.

In a related effort, the Region's Individual Assistance Branch has been working with the District, Maryland, and Virginia and the American Red Cross to strengthen each entity's sheltering preparedness measures and to allow FEMA a better understanding of potential requests in an event where a Category 3 hurricane impacts their respective jurisdictions.

Exercises and Other Activities

During the 2008 Hurricane Season, Region III held a highly successful Pre-Declaration Tabletop Exercises with State senior leaders in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, the District and Pennsylvania to exercise a new Disaster Assistance Policy, which enables States to receive an emergency presidential declaration in anticipation of a hurricane or other imminent disaster. These exercises were attended by State emergency management directors, homeland security advisors, governor's chiefs of staff, senior operations and planning personnel, and senior military advisors.

Operation Hotwire, a functional exercise held on October 23, 2008, examined operations and life safety and sustaining capabilities during a prolonged regional loss of power. Bringing together government officials and private sector electrical power providers, the exercise examined a number of concerns during a natural disaster, including the ability of Emergency Operation Centers to maintain communications, the regional resource allocation process during a major power outage, and the public health/mass care ability to respond. The collaborative exercise after-action review process identified numerous areas for improvement in position-specific training, information technologies and standard operating procedures. Implementation of these remedial actions will help streamline our disaster response and recovery processes.

We are also supporting regional catastrophic planning efforts through grant funding such as the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program (RCPGP). All five of our states and the District have partnered in this $11 million grant to support six projects: regional public compliance/behavioral analysis, public preparedness, transportation, mass care, resource management, and modeling and simulation. The behavioral analysis in particular is the cornerstone of this grant application. Its early and ongoing outcomes will be used as planning assumptions for the other projects regarding motivational factors behind public reaction as well as adherence to recommendations and mandates. Performing up to date, regional-and-scenario-focused behavioral studies will allow stakeholders to be better able to develop plans directed towards Public Preparedness, Transportation, and Mass Care as they relate to the planning priority of Mass Evacuation and Sheltering.

In the area of community preparedness, I lead a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) consisting of 22 state and local emergency managers throughout the mid-Atlantic region who meet regularly to discuss issues pertaining to emergency management, and we maintain strong relationships with other stakeholders including our Citizen Corps. There are representatives from 210 councils throughout the NCR.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, should a natural disaster affect the National Capital Region, FEMA has established a clear and comprehensive plan of action to mobilize a coordinated and well organized response and recovery.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to answering your questions.