

STATEMENT

OF

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“PROGRESS REPORT: HURRICANE SANDY RECOVERY – ONE YEAR LATER”

Submitted
By

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Introduction

Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member Rahall and Members of the Committee, I am Elizabeth Zimmerman, Deputy Associate Administrator of the Office of Response and Recovery of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I am grateful for the opportunity to be here today.

When Hurricane Sandy made landfall, battering dozens of states along the East Coast with strong winds and record storm surges, FEMA was there. We were on the ground before and during Hurricane Sandy supporting our state and local partners, and we will be there for as long as it takes to help the survivors and their communities rebuild.

To help communities rebuild, FEMA works through its programs and within its authorities to find creative ways to meet needs. To date, more than \$1.4 billion of Individual Assistance (IA) has been approved for individuals and households, as well as over \$3.2 billion in Public Assistance (PA) for state and local governments impacted by Hurricane Sandy. The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved an additional \$2.4 billion in low-interest disaster loans. The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 also included \$16 billion in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program-Disaster Recovery funding provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

It is important to note that FEMA acts in support of its partners on the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels during disaster recoveries. Disaster response and recovery begins at home, and is a responsibility that is shared among our whole community partners – federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments as well as non-governmental entities and individuals – and is guided by the National Response Framework (NRF) and the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF). We value our partners for the unique talents and resources they bring to survivors and recovery efforts, and will continue to work with them to strengthen our communities.

This testimony will discuss our response and recovery efforts related to Hurricane Sandy, as well as how FEMA is helping communities build back stronger and more resiliently.

Pre-staging Commodities, Capabilities and Employees

The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) gave FEMA the authority to pre-stage initial response resources in preparation for response operations and prior to a disaster declaration. We are grateful to Congress, and in particular to members of this Committee, for those authorities, which have made us even more effective in carrying out our mission of helping communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters.

In the days before the storm hit, the Agency worked with threatened communities to update incident response plans and pre-stage supplies to support response efforts, in addition to working with our public and private partners to assist citizens and first responders as they prepared for the

storm. On October 28, 2012, one day before the storm made landfall, President Obama signed emergency declarations for Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York, making federal support available to save lives, as well as to protect property, public health, and safety. On October 29, 2012, the President signed disaster emergency declarations for Delaware, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. These declarations allowed FEMA to provide resources directly to the state, tribal, and local governments affected by the storm.

Before the storm made landfall, FEMA and its emergency management partners also prepared for the establishment of shelters, Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs), and Joint Field Offices (JFOs) in the affected areas.

To ensure resources were available quickly throughout the region, FEMA established Incident Support Bases in Massachusetts and New Jersey, as well as five federal Staging Areas in New York – pre-staging commodities, generators and communications vehicles. Pre-staged commodities available to survivors included: 892,000 liters of water; 561,000 meals; 11,900 blankets and cots; 183 generators; 30 infant and toddler kits, which each support up to 10 infants or toddlers with items such as diapers, baby food and formula; two Durable Medical Equipment (DME) kits; and two Consumable Medical Equipment (CME) kits.

This level of preparedness is no accident. Over the past several years, FEMA has worked closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial governments across the country – including those directly in Hurricane Sandy’s path – to develop catastrophic, worst-case scenario plans that are flexible and scalable for incidents of all magnitudes.

The day before the storm made landfall, FEMA had also deployed 1,032 personnel in anticipation of the hurricane’s impacts.

As a result of these efforts, the Agency was able to support a prompt, coordinated response that brought to bear the full resources of federal, state, local, and tribal governments, in conjunction with our private sector partners.

Response

In Hurricane Sandy’s immediate aftermath, more than 23,000 people sought refuge in temporary shelters and more than 8.5 million customers lost power. The storm flooded numerous roads and tunnels, blocked transportation corridors, deposited extensive debris along the coastline, and displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

In response, the President expedited disaster declarations, speeding federal response and recovery support to affected states, localities, and tribes in the immediate aftermath of the storm. FEMA coordinated the federal government’s response to the storm and support for the critical emergency needs of the affected states.

These disaster declarations allowed FEMA to quickly organize a massive and coordinated federal, state, local, and tribal response to Hurricane Sandy, guided by the National Response Framework, and within seven days 17,000 federal responders were on the ground, including more than 5,000 FEMA employees – representing one of the largest personnel deployments in FEMA’s history. Those 17,000 staff also included 1,100 DHS Surge Capacity Force personnel, composed of employees who volunteered from across the Department and its components, marking the first time deployment of this resource. Efforts were also made to ensure the safety and health of first responders and recovery workers who must work in extremely dangerous and unpredictable environments in order to restore services and meet the critical needs of the community.

The Agency coordinated with its partners to provide federal resources to the response effort, and to develop innovative programs to address power restoration, transportation, fuel distribution, and housing needs. To ensure federal coordination, FEMA and its federal partners tapped into an online crisis management system to communicate and plan the response effort.

The Agency moved to meet long-term survivor needs, working with state, local, tribal governments, partners from the public, the disability community, and private partners to respond quickly. In response to the storm, FEMA provided 20 million liters of water, 16 million meals, nearly two million blankets, and roughly 80,000 cots for survivors and responders, including the resources that were pre-staged prior to the storm making landfall.

At the peak of the response, 716 shelters were open with a population of nearly 27,000 in 16 states. FEMA, in collaboration with our interagency partners, moved to transition survivors out of shelters and into long-term housing solutions as quickly as possible.

FEMA also developed and implemented new ways to deliver services more efficiently. Following the storm, FEMA analyzed satellite and aerial imagery to determine what areas were inaccessible and expedited short-term rental assistance to residents that needed it most. In addition, FEMA employees – supplemented by DHS Surge Capacity Force and FEMA Corps members – went door-to-door, in some areas using tablet computers, to help residents sign up for disaster relief without leaving their homes, even if they had lost power and internet access.

FEMA also established the Energy Restoration Task Force to better coordinate federal, state, local, tribal, and private sector efforts to restore power to the impacted areas as quickly as possible. The Task Force assisted in supplementing a massive private power restoration effort. Electric utilities from across the nation executed mutual aid agreements to deploy more than 70,000 workers to the impacted areas – the largest ever dispatch of utility workers.

Today, FEMA supports the U.S. Department of Energy, institutionalizing these lessons learned in emergency management from Hurricane Sandy and ensuring key energy issues are addressed quickly.

Recovery: Individual and Public Assistance

The recovery from Hurricane Sandy is guided by the NDRF, which was fully implemented following the storm. The NDRF is a guide that describes how the whole community works together following a disaster to best meet the recovery needs of individuals and families, communities, states, and tribes. Published in September 2011, the NDRF established a coordination structure for all of the interagency partners, called the Recovery Support Functions, to work together to solve problems, improve access to resources, and foster coordination among governmental and private stakeholders. The six Recovery Support Functions are led by the Departments of the Interior, Commerce, Health and Human Services, HUD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. FEMA appointed a Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator (FDRC) to work closely with each affected state and provide leadership for the Recovery Support Function agencies as they support state and local recovery efforts.

When a major disaster strikes, the first steps agencies take are health and safety related – controlling damage, minimizing casualties, and meeting immediate needs of displaced survivors, including feeding, sheltering, reunification services, assistance to survivors with access and functional needs, as well as to survivors with household pets. FEMA also provided tele-registration services in 56 languages and distributed more than one million multilingual fliers, helping to ensure key messages reached a variety of audiences.

FEMA established a multi-agency task force that coordinated the delivery of sheltering and feeding resources – utilizing community-based local, state, and federal resources to their fullest potential. When these needs have been met, the focus shifts to helping survivors and businesses obtain vital information on recovery plans and available assistance from all potential sources – including non-governmental.

Individual Assistance

FEMA's Individuals and Households Program (IHP) has provided assistance to more than 182,000 disaster survivors in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Forms of assistance included financial assistance for eligible home repair or replacement, personal property loss, as well as medical and funeral expenses resulting from the disaster.

Through the IHP, FEMA has approved over \$1.4 billion including more than \$1.2 billion for housing assistance and over \$200 million in assistance for other needs. Housing in many communities was significantly impacted due to the widespread effects of Hurricane Sandy, which presented a considerable challenge given that many of those communities were in densely populated areas where housing resources are scarce. FEMA deployed several programs to accomplish the overarching goal of helping people move back into their homes or, as appropriate, identify alternative housing solutions, as quickly as possible.

First, to address the high cost of living in the region, FEMA increased the amount of rental assistance available to survivors in New York and New Jersey to 125 percent of the published Fair Market Rent rate, increasing the assistance by 25 percent to account for unique circumstances. This increase made an additional 3,000 rental resources available to survivors across New York and New Jersey.

Second, FEMA convened a Hurricane Sandy Catastrophic Disaster Housing Task Force to support the state-led task forces' efforts to plan for survivors' temporary and long-term housing needs on November 6, 2012. Task force areas of activity included the identification and assessment of existing federal housing resources and the use of geospatial analysis to model damaged housing areas and map available resources.

Third, due to the high cost of available rental resources, the length of lease agreements required in many New York counties and other factors, FEMA and HUD entered into a Sandy-specific interagency agreement to deliver the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP). DHAP, which was designed based on lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina, Ike, and Gustav, aimed to assist survivors in finding intermediate affordable housing solutions as they rebuilt their lives.

Fourth, FEMA authorized an emergency pilot program to enable survivors to shelter themselves in their damaged homes. The pilot program, Sheltering and Temporary Essential Power (STEP), paid for those temporary and necessary repairs that helped restore power, heat, and hot water to primary residences prior to permanent repairs, such as securing broken windows and covering damaged roofs. As a result of the program, thousands of survivors were able to return to their homes prior to making these permanent repairs, also helping FEMA to address housing needs in the densely populated areas that the storm impacted.

Public Assistance

The PA program awarded grants to assist state, local, and tribal governments, as well as certain private nonprofits, with response and recovery efforts. As of November 5, 2013, FEMA has obligated over \$3.2 billion in Hurricane Sandy PA grants.

In addition to assistance for emergency protective measures and debris removal, FEMA's PA program provides funding for the repair, restoration, reconstruction, or replacement of infrastructure that is damaged or destroyed by a disaster.

As of November 5, over 3,400 PA projects have been approved and more than \$2.1 billion has been obligated in New York. In New Jersey, over 5,000 PA projects have been approved and over \$950 million has been obligated. Eleven additional states were declared for Public Assistance due to the effects of Sandy and have been obligated approximately \$150 million in assistance.

Given the significant structural damage that Hurricane Sandy left in its wake, debris removal – which is funded through FEMA’s PA program – was paramount in getting hard hit communities on the road to recovery as quickly as possible.

To enable and incentivize more rapid recovery, FEMA implemented a rule that allowed for reimbursement of salaries for state and local employees performing Sandy debris removal work over a 30 day period following the storm. This rule contributed to the success of debris removal in the affected areas, with more than 95 percent of debris removed within approximately three months of the storm hitting New York and New Jersey.

To date, FEMA has approved 2,371 projects in these two states alone to help remove storm debris and restore disaster-damaged roads, bridges, and other infrastructure.

FEMA is working through its PA program to support communities in other ways as well, providing financial reimbursement to local governments through Expedited Payments, which help local communities recover more quickly. FEMA obligates a portion of the federal share of the estimated cost of work under Category A (Debris Removal) and Category B (Emergency Protective Measures), as estimated during the preliminary damage assessment.

Additionally, FEMA is supporting local governments whose budgets became strained as a result of the storm, offering Community Disaster Loan Program (CDL) funding for affected communities. The CDL program provides federal loans to local governments that are having difficulty providing government services because of a loss in tax or other revenue following a disaster. Thus far, FEMA has provided 60 loans totaling \$174 million to communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy.

To aid in the recovery, FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers also worked with state and local governments to reopen 97 percent of public beaches from New Jersey through Connecticut by Memorial Day 2013 – sending a strong message to thousands of Americans that the shore was open for business.

FEMA is also aggressively applying the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) programs as they relate to Public Assistance, which I will discuss shortly.

Recovery: Sandy Task Force

The Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force was established to provide an additional level of cabinet-level coordination and synchronize the efforts of federal agencies to support local communities as they rebuild.

Under the leadership of the Secretary of HUD Shaun Donovan, the Task Force developed, and published on August 19, 2013, a rebuilding strategy that lays out a series of recommendations that will ensure unified federal assistance to the Sandy-impacted region – and that will encourage resilient rebuilding approaches for communities across the country.

As a member of the Task Force, FEMA has worked closely with its federal partners, and within the NDRF, to complement Recovery Support Functions (RSF) and FDRC field efforts to leverage solutions to interagency issues. An advisory group comprised of state, local, and tribal elected officials from the most heavily-impacted jurisdictions was established to advise the Task Force, and ensure that the rebuilding and recovery effort reflected the input of those communities. Thirty-four elected officials or their designees provided input and local perspectives for the Rebuilding Strategy. A scaled-back element of the Task Force's Program Management Office will continue to function within the construct of the NDRF, with HUD leadership and with FEMA staffing support. It has four primary objectives:

1. Coordinate across agencies on financial management policy;
2. Track financial and performance information about the 60 programs funded in the supplemental appropriation;
3. Present analyses of these data to the public; and
4. Support the oversight community in their efforts to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.

As part of its role in the Task Force, FEMA is working closely with HUD to identify housing resources, provide the best housing support to disaster survivors, support underserved communities with any required new standards, and serve as a crucial base of knowledge and guidance in disaster housing missions. FEMA looks forward to continuing to work with the Task Force in its mission to help survivors recover from Hurricane Sandy.

Recovery: The Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA)

In January 2013, Congress passed and President Obama signed SRIA into law, authorizing several significant changes to the way FEMA delivers disaster assistance. SRIA is one of the most significant pieces of legislation impacting disaster response and recovery since the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 and builds upon the Robert T. Stafford Emergency Relief and Disaster Assistance Act.

The Act, and the additional authorities it provides, aided the ongoing recovery efforts associated with Hurricane Sandy, as well as in the recent floods in Colorado.

SRIA's various provisions are intended to improve the efficacy and availability of FEMA disaster assistance and make the most cost-effective use of taxpayer dollars.

To date, thirteen of the seventeen provisions FEMA is tracking in SRIA and the accompanying Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 have been completed, implemented as pilot programs, or made otherwise available for immediate use. These provisions include:

- **Public Assistance Alternative Procedures for Permanent Work:** This pilot program provides substantially greater flexibility in how applicants can formulate and execute public assistance projects. For instance, this pilot will allow FEMA to accept project cost estimates that have been verified by licensed engineers, and the agency can fund an entire

project based on these estimates rather than actual costs. Applicants may also combine projects or pursue alternate projects without penalty. The alternative procedures are designed to expedite assistance, increase flexibility, lower administrative costs, and speed recovery.

- **Public Assistance Alternative Procedures for Debris Removal:** This package of incentives is designed to speed debris removal and encourage pre-disaster debris planning, including sliding scale cost share adjustments for rapid debris removal; a one-time, two percent additional cost share adjustment if an acceptable debris management plan is in place before the disaster; reimbursement for force account labor used in conducting debris removal; and retention of proceeds from recycling debris by the applicant. FEMA first implemented these procedures following the devastating tornadoes in Oklahoma in May 2013, and the statutorily-authorized pilot was implemented nationwide on June 28, 2013. With these incentives in place, in Oklahoma, more than 40 percent of the debris was removed within the first 30 days, allowing the community to start rebuilding more quickly.

The debris pilot will last for one year, with the option to extend the pilot if operations warrant. The pilot program will serve as a bridging strategy and data collection effort to inform any development of federal regulations promulgated pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act, which affords interested members of the public an opportunity to participate in the rulemaking and submit comments.

- **The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP):** SRIA amended the statutory provision for HMGP to enable FEMA to: (1) set up a pilot program to enable states to administer certain aspects of the program if specific conditions are met; (2) provide no more than 25 percent of the amount of the estimated cost of hazard mitigation measures before eligible costs are incurred; and (3) streamline environmental and historic preservation review processes. FEMA issued guidance for all of these procedures in the spring of 2013.
- **Federally-Recognized Tribal Governments:** SRIA provided federally-recognized tribal governments the option of requesting an emergency or major disaster declaration directly from the President, through the FEMA Regional Administrator, instead of through a state. Thus far, the President has issued major disaster declarations for five tribes: the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; the Navajo Nation; the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe; the Karuk Tribe; and the Santa Clara Pueblo Tribe. With these declarations, Public Assistance and/or Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding is being provided directly to the tribes.
- **Dispute Resolution/Arbitration:** SRIA mandated FEMA to establish a Dispute Resolution/Arbitration pilot program for Public Assistance disputes. A final rule implementing the program was published in the Federal Register on August 16, 2013. This

program will be available for disputes of at least \$1,000,000, where the applicant bears a non-federal cost share, arising from disasters declared after October 30, 2012, and the applicant has completed a first appeal with FEMA. Requests for arbitration may be made until December 31, 2015. At the same time, FEMA has established a new Public Assistance Appeals Branch at FEMA Headquarters to ensure timely, specific and well-reasoned first and second appeals decisions, and to provide a feedback loop to Public Assistance Program management.

- **Recommendations for Reducing Future Losses:** SRIA required FEMA to submit to Congress recommendations for the development of a national strategy for reducing future costs, loss of life, and injuries associated with extreme disaster events in vulnerable areas of the United States. FEMA provided these recommendations to Congress in September 2013.

In addition to these achievements, FEMA is currently developing specific implementation procedures for each new authority and will continue implementation through a combination of a grantee engagement, potential rulemaking and/or the development of policy or other guidance documents.

Hazard Mitigation and the National Flood Insurance Program

Three additional federal programs are making significant contributions to whole community recovery and rebuilding efforts: the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the Risk Mapping, Assessment and Planning Program (Risk MAP) and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).

NFIP

Established by Congress in 1968, the NFIP was created to provide affordable flood insurance to help lessen the devastating consequences of flooding.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy the NFIP has serviced over 143,000 insurance claims totaling over \$7.8 billion dollars. More than 99 percent of the homeowners who made the decision to protect themselves by investing in flood insurance have received payments that are helping them to rebuild their homes, businesses, and communities.

In New Jersey alone, 99 percent of the 74,000 flood insurance claims made have been closed and over \$3.7 billion paid to New Jersey residents.

The NFIP's ability to respond to the post-disaster needs of its policy holders was demonstrated by the creation of a rapid claims process and a series of programmatic changes that significantly reduced the procedural burden on policyholders. These changes included allowing advance payments of claims prior to inspections and written estimates to preserve health and safety, which

authorized the advance of up to \$25,000 for certain mechanical elements of the building and an additional \$5,000 for necessary doors and windows. The grace period was also extended for payment of NFIP renewal premiums.

In addition, the NFIP established community Flood Response Offices to service policyholders as well as Adjuster Certification Workshops and on-site Adjuster Briefings that educated an expanded corps of Insurance Adjusters on program changes made specifically to meet the needs of communities impacted by the storm.

Risk MAP

FEMA's Risk MAP program provides communities with flood information and tools they can use to enhance their hazard mitigation plans and take action to better protect their citizens.

Two of the principal tools developed and distributed by this program are the Nation's Flood Insurance Rate Maps and the associated Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and Advisory Base Flood Elevation (ABFE) information.

In both New York and New Jersey, FEMA worked with the FDRC to ensure senior management and partners at the federal, state, and local levels were aware of the development and release of flood advisory data that could significantly influence rebuilding and restoration decisions.

The Task Force is working with state and local partners to evaluate and use advisory data to understand the impacts of rebuilding decisions on insurance rates and to use the data in considering building codes and other intermediate and permanent efforts to recover, reduce and mitigate future risk.

HMGP

FEMA and its partners also recognize the need to work together to ensure the post-storm recovery efforts, and the rebuilding that is taking place across the region, take into account our best understanding of future risks. Thus, these efforts are designed to minimize these risks and ensure the long term safety, resilience and prosperity of the affected communities.

Informed by State and Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, as well as tools provided by the Risk MAP program, the HMGP provides grants to states, local governments and tribes for long-term hazard mitigation projects following a major disaster declaration. The purpose of the program is to reduce the loss of life and property in future disasters by funding hazard mitigation measures during the recovery phase of a natural disaster.

Funding is available to implement projects in accordance with state, local, and tribal priorities and may be used for projects that will reduce or eliminate losses from future disasters – in short, for projects that help us rebuild stronger.

Thus far, the HMGP has provided nearly \$75 million to communities impacted by Hurricane Sandy, helping impacted communities integrate sound building practices and risk analysis in their rebuilding efforts.

In both New York and New Jersey, FEMA hazard mitigation staff is working closely with State Hazard Mitigation Officers to discuss the states' priorities, types of projects available and how best to proceed within that framework. We are also coordinating efforts with several of the other 11 declared States.

In partnership with other members of the whole community, FEMA is also supporting the implementation of hazard mitigation efforts at every available opportunity. For example, FEMA is providing technical assistance, updated maps and guidance to communities along the shore that are creating redevelopment plans, helping them to rebuild stronger based on sound advice and best available data.

Lessons Learned from Hurricane Sandy

Earlier this year, the DHS Office of the Inspector General released its report on FEMA's response to Hurricane Sandy. FEMA was pleased that the Inspector General praised the Agency for how we assisted our state and local partners. Administrator Fugate also asked the Agency's senior leadership team to conduct our own review of FEMA's efforts. In July of this year, FEMA released a Hurricane Sandy After-Action Report that reviewed all aspects of the Agency's preparations for, immediate response to, and initial recovery from the October 2012 storm.

Administrator Fugate established the Sandy Analysis Team to develop the Agency's after-action report. The team compiled an event chronology, analyzed more than 40 FEMA component submissions on lessons learned from the storm, and interviewed more than 200 personnel from FEMA and other federal departments, as well as state and local governments. The Hurricane Sandy After-Action Report identifies the Agency's strengths and, more importantly, provides recommendations to improve FEMA's response and recovery efforts. The report identifies four central themes for improvement:

- **Ensuring Unity of Effort Across the Federal Response:** The severity of the storm underscored several areas for improvement related to FEMA's ability to coordinate federal operations, including integrating senior leader communications into response and recovery operations; coordinating resources through the Emergency and Recovery Support Functions (ESF and RSF respectively); refining the mission assignment process; and using analysis to drive operational decision-making.

Next steps include developing appropriate training, exercises, and outreach programs to foster greater coordination and communication among ESFs and RSFs, making the mission assignment process as efficient and transparent as possible, and improving efficiencies in the way FEMA provides support to large-scale events. Additional

recommendations address implementation of the Agency's Lessons Learned/Continuous Improvement Program (LL/CIP).

In support of this effort, FEMA's National Exercise Division recently supported the National Security Staff in conducting of a Principals' Level Exercise (PLE) for Cabinet members to review their roles, responsibilities, and authorities within the NRF, the NDRF, and the National Continuity Policy (NCP). Conducted prior to the start of the 2013 hurricane season, the exercise examined issues identified during previous incidents, including interagency coordination during the 2012 hurricane season and, in particular, Hurricane Sandy. The discussion-based exercise focused on two central issues: the actions and mechanisms required to ensure a coordinated and rapid delivery of federal support prior to and following a major storm threatening the U.S. mainland and the actions and requirements necessary to ensure continuation of the National Essential Functions (NEFs) and Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs) in each department and agency.

- **Being Survivor-Centric:** Leadership at FEMA adopted a "cut the red tape" posture to better serve survivors and communities, but opportunities remain, including meeting survivors' needs during initial interactions with FEMA; ensuring all survivors have equal access to services; and reducing the complexity of the public assistance program.
- **Fostering Unity of Effort Across the Whole Community:** Sandy highlighted the need for FEMA to improve coordination with tribal governments and clarify how the agency interacts with local governments in disasters affecting large urban areas.

Recommendations include anticipating cities' resource requirements and understanding their capabilities, coordinating directly with local jurisdictions when it supports a forward-leaning response, promoting better integration between states and large urban governments, including encouraging local and tribal participation in the Unified Coordination Group where appropriate, and preparing response teams to handle incidents where state, local and tribal jurisdictions require clarification of the roles and responsibilities or have differing priorities during an incident.

- **Developing an Agile, Professional, Emergency Management Workforce:** In response to Sandy, FEMA completed one of the largest personnel deployments in its history. FEMA is committed to supporting disaster survivors and their communities through the most effective and efficient means possible. In support of this commitment, FEMA has sought to expand, improve, and diversify its disaster workforce. One example of a successful improvement is the DHS Surge Capacity Force (SCF), which is comprised of employees who volunteered from various DHS components that are activated during catastrophic or large scale events when required. Currently the SCF has nearly 4,000 volunteers, all of

whom receive basic FEMA disaster assistance training prior to deployment. Sandy marked the historic inaugural activation of the SCF, with more than 1,100 SCF volunteers deploying in support of response and recovery efforts. The contributions of the SCF volunteers and other FEMA personnel in the areas of Community Relations and IA resulted in more than 182,000 survivors receiving more than \$1.4 billion in assistance.

Further, beginning in April 2013, FEMA undertook a one-year pilot project to restructure its Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs) to provide increased capability by representing more FEMA programs and interagency representatives and by leveraging the hiring flexibilities provided by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. In order to boost its capacity to support disaster-affected states, tribes, and territories, FEMA re-structured and established two National and one Regional Pilot IMATs. The re-structured IMAT Pilot teams have been expanded to include 34 positions on the National teams and 15 positions on the Regional team. These teams completed a rigorous 12 week training program and are prepared to deploy now. These teams will represent 13 different FEMA offices with the potential for including up to nine representatives from ESFs and interagency partners. ESF partners have begun assigning personnel to these teams. This broad range of program representation at the field level will provide FEMA and its federal partners with increased capability to support its state and local partners in helping disaster survivors. At the completion of the one year pilot period, FEMA will review the pilot IMAT team performance in consultation with DHS, the National Security Staff (NSS), and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and determine whether the program should be revised or expanded.

FEMA is continuing implementation of the FEMA Qualification System, improving plans and processes to support the logistical and administrative needs of a large deployed workforce, and improving continuity of operations and devolution plans to account for large-scale deployments.

FEMA has established a senior-level Continuous Improvement Working Group to track implementation of the recommendations and next steps included in the report. Fifty-six percent of the report's recommendations already have been implemented, with 90 percent expected to be completed by year's end.

Conclusion

Responding to and recovering from any disaster is a whole community effort that relies on the strength of federal, state, local, and tribal governments as well as non-governmental entities and individuals, in addition to FEMA – and Hurricane Sandy is no exception.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Congress for the PKEMRA, which made us even more effective in our efforts to help states and communities respond to Hurricane Sandy, as well as for SRIA, which is making a positive impact on the recovery process in affected regions.

While we are pleased by what has been accomplished so far in this whole community effort, there is still much work left to do.

We look forward to continuing to work with this Committee, Congress, and our partners to help the impacted communities recover.

Thank you, I look forward to your questions.