

**Testimony of R. David Paulison  
Acting Director  
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**Before the United States Senate  
Homeland Security & Government Affairs Committee  
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Good morning Chairman Collins, Senator Lieberman and members of the Committee. My name is R. David Paulison. It is an honor and a privilege to come before you today as the President's nominee to be the Under Secretary for Federal Emergency Management at the Department of Homeland Security and Director of FEMA. I am grateful for the confidence and support placed in me by the President and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. I thank them, and thank you, for giving me the opportunity to be here today to outline my vision for a strong and robust Federal Emergency Management Agency. As I thank you and others, I would be remiss if I didn't take this time to thank perhaps my most ardent supporter, my wife Kathy. She has joined me here today, and has been a rock to me in all my years of serving in emergency management.

I have served as the acting director of FEMA since last September. In coming before you today, and asking for your support to continue leading FEMA, I make a solemn promise to you and the American people. It is my vision here and now, and for the future, to strengthen FEMA. To strengthen its people, its processes, and its capabilities, in order for it to be the preeminent national level agency for emergency management, answering the call to serve the nation and its citizens in times of need.

During times of disasters, be they natural or manmade, this nation's emergency response capability has been faced with enormous challenges in recent years. From the flooding in Houston from Tropical Storm Allison, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, back-to-back unprecedented hurricane seasons in 2004 and 2005, and a myriad of other disasters that have impacted this nation, the people who dedicate their lives to emergency management have responded. At times faltering, but always with the vision of putting the lives and welfare of disaster victims first. It is with this same outlook of putting others first, where I will continue my efforts, along side the dedicated people of FEMA, to accomplish our current priorities and build on the future.

These priorities include preparing not only our agency, but preparing the nation, be it for the upcoming hurricane season or any disaster. We will engage constructively with state emergency management officials, federal counterparts, the Department of Defense, and non-government organizational partners to maximize communication and coordination for all-hazard disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities. We will build within FEMA a twenty-first century competency in operations, logistics, procurement and communications. We will do all of this, and at the same time, restore the pride and spirit of FEMA employees and the nation's trust in our abilities.

I believe that along with the dedicated employees of FEMA, if confirmed, we will accomplish these goals by adhering to the tenets of leadership, partnership, investment, and a solid business approach.

- Leadership: We will set clear and unambiguous goals, communicate and listen effectively, make informed decisions and demonstrate personal and professional integrity in all that we undertake.
- Partnership: We will build meaningful, collaborative and mutually productive relationships with major constituencies at the federal, state and local level as well as with non-government organizations and appropriate private enterprises.
- Investment: We will devote additional resources in terms of funding, people, technology and ingenuity to build the necessary capabilities and competences to meet our mission mandate and the expectation of the American public.
- Business Approach: We will strengthen our mission effectiveness and operational efficiency, establish pragmatic measures and benchmarks, and hold ourselves accountable for our performance.

As FEMA benefits from the continued integration into the Department of Homeland Security, the agency has acquired many valuable resources that will strengthen our ability to respond to disasters of any kind. One such benefit is the close working relationship that I have developed with Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

In working with Secretary Chertoff, we are strengthening this agency by bringing together an experienced senior leadership team at FEMA. The new senior leadership team brings over 100 years of combined experience to the agency. Admiral Harvey Johnson, whose leadership skills have been honed in the U.S. Coast Guard has joined FEMA as deputy director. We have made progress in recruiting new regional directors who have extensive experience in emergency management, including Art Cleaver in Region I, Stephen Kempf in Region II, and William Peterson in Region VI. We have also brought Deidre Lee to our team, who brings extensive experience in acquisitions with GSA as our deputy director of operations.

In developing this strong leadership team within our agency, FEMA will set clear and unambiguous goals, communicate and listen effectively, make informed decisions and demonstrate personal and professional integrity in all that we undertake.

A strong, capable senior management team is a top priority for FEMA, but we also must ensure that we have a deep bench to draw from in the future and I have committed to achieving 95 percent staffing of FEMA's positions for this hurricane season. With the new leadership in place, and as we increase the staff, I will steward this agency by establishing and following through on priorities aimed to revolutionize and upgrade FEMA's core areas to make it a 21<sup>st</sup> century organization with all the available and necessary technology and capabilities.

With what is predicted to be another active hurricane season just days away, much has already been accomplished towards strengthening and retooling FEMA. Since September of last year, I have led FEMA through a period of much-needed re-tooling to gear up for the next major hurricane or disaster. Our top three areas of improvement are in: 1) situational awareness and communications, 2) logistics and commodity management and 3) victim management and assistance.

Having real-time, on-the-ground information in the 24 hours immediately before and after a disaster, especially a hurricane, is the best method for us to support first responders and help save lives. One of the ways we are improving our situational awareness is by enhancing our technology to include satellite phones, high-frequency and land mobile radios and other mobile and disaster communications equipment to better equip our response teams. Our teams also will liaison with state and local emergency operations centers to establish unified incident command with state and local officials and report information from the local level.

Along with increased situational awareness during the immediate response phase, we have also enhanced our logistics and commodity management capabilities to more efficiently and quickly supply state and local authorities with the disaster commodities and assets needed in their areas.

The first thing we did to improve our commodity management, was to simply increase our commodities. We have 300% more meals, 150% more water and nearly 400% more ice on-hand than we did before Hurricane Katrina. We also have enough tarps and blue roof sheeting to cover 90,000 roofs and protect 80,000 households.

Aside from increasing our commodities, we have also implemented a new commodity tracking initiative, called Total Asset Visibility, or TAV. This will provide FEMA with an improved ability to manage inventory of certain commodities and to track the location of trailers carrying commodities such as water, ice, emergency meals, plastic sheeting, tarps, generators, cots, blankets, and material handling equipment. We have completed implementation of Phase I of the TAV program in our Atlanta and Fort Worth Logistics Centers. This tracking will provide real-time status to FEMA and the states being assisted and will result in more effective and efficient delivery of relief supplies to disaster victims.

FEMA also has agreed to work with the Defense Logistics Agency to ensure surge stockpile, procurement, delivery and management of emergency meals, water, tarps, plastic sheeting, medical equipment and essential pharmaceuticals.

Third of the areas we are greatly improving for the hurricane season is victim management and improved customer service. I believe one of the things that made FEMA successful in responding and supporting more than 1,600 disasters over its 27 years was its ability to serve disaster victims in a timely and compassionate manner. This is something that we must maintain and expand.

During the 2005 hurricane season, FEMA took more applications, and delivered more assistance in a shorter period of time than during any other hurricane season in our history. I am proud of the good people who work at FEMA and for their tireless effort to help those whose lives were altered by these storms. A long road to recovery remains ahead of those who were impacted by the Gulf Coast hurricanes and we will continue to be there to help.

Last year, the agency's data processing centers collected a record three million applications for assistance. In comparison, this is almost triple the number of applications FEMA took during all of 2004 when four hurricanes hit the Florida coast. And prior to 2004, FEMA had never taken more than a million applications for any single year.

FEMA has made great strides, and continues to improve efforts in enhancing the agency's customer service. FEMA's abilities to receive and process requests for assistance, protect against fraud and abuse, and adjust to changing needs of disaster populations during significant recovery periods are being enhanced. FEMA will have the capacity to handle 200,000 assistance calls per day and anti-fraud technology has been installed to track disaster claims.

We have looked at ways to upgrade our mobile registration capacity to register victims in shelters and increase our call center capacity. Some disaster victims may have already seen a revamped website at [www.FEMA.gov](http://www.FEMA.gov) and we also are looking at methods to improve our capacity to accept more registrations online and wherever disaster victims may be.

We will have an increased home inspection capacity from 7,000 per day to 20,000 inspections per day this summer, which will help homeowners get the much-needed assistance quicker. Lastly, we have retained a contractor to continue assisting us with identity verification and limiting fraudulent claims of federal disaster assistance.

In assisting state and local governments, FEMA is expediting the pace of debris removal. Hurricane Katrina left over 100 million cubic yards of debris in its wake over a span of 90,000 square miles. In order to streamline the debris removal process and ensure quick reimbursement for services, FEMA is establishing solid contracting practices to help communities quickly begin recovery operations.

All of these upgrades I have mentioned are geared not only for the upcoming hurricane season, but also for the long-term growth of FEMA. These enhancements in technology, especially, are aimed at making FEMA a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization that is flexible, transparent and efficient to maximize our performance. This will take continued improvements within FEMA's operations, logistics, procurement and communications areas to meet the demands placed on this agency going forward.

While I hope to continue spearheading FEMA's re-tooling efforts, if confirmed, I will also encourage and usher in a new level of partnership among federal, state and local governments. We will build meaningful, collaborative and mutually-productive

relationships with major constituencies at the federal, state and local levels as well as with non-government organizations and the appropriate private enterprises.

I will do so by constructively engaging state emergency management officials to share best-practices and methods of improving our all-hazards approach to disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. I will also continue what Secretary Chertoff has already begun, which is work closely with other federal departments including Defense, the National Guard, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Departments of Transportation, Health and Human Services and Housing and Urban Development. These are all federal departments that play a key role in one or more phases of emergency management that FEMA must partner with for success.

I mentioned the need for FEMA to become a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization with improved capabilities and technology and I believe we must also become a more-integrated organization with improved coordination and communication with our federal, state and local partners. With that said, I would make FEMA adhere to a more business-like approach to the way we handle our priorities and objectives. In the past, FEMA was more vertically-integrated in that we had capabilities to do a number of disaster-specific functions. FEMA must now become more horizontally-integrated by building partnerships both within the Department of Homeland Security and other federal departments tasked with mission assignments, and also across state, local, nonprofit and business organizations that have a role in disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts.

Strengthened partnerships will compliment our heightened objective focus, mission effectiveness and operational efficiency by establishing pragmatic measures and benchmarks that we will then hold ourselves accountable to when determining our performance. This approach has worked in the business world for decades and has also worked in other federal departments that have experienced a similar dramatic change in operational requirements and capabilities.

In all that I have addressed here today for strengthening FEMA and building it to become the preeminent national level agency for emergency management, all of this can not be accomplished without the agency's number one asset: the employees of FEMA.

The employees at FEMA are public servants to the highest degree and they bring years of expertise in emergency management, logistics, response, recovery, mitigation and procurement. FEMA is a very proud agency with fine individuals who take great pride in their work and this agency. If confirmed, I will stand before the employees of FEMA and ask them to allow me to work hand-in-hand with them to move us past any negative perceptions that remain from when we faltered. Together, I know we will build back the full trust of the American people, and in doing so make the pride of FEMA employees even stronger than it already is.

I have laid out a personal mission and a list of priorities here before you. As I conclude, I would like to remind the committee that I started my career with a heart for public service

and serving others. My commitment to serving others remains strong and I am deeply humbled and grateful for the opportunity to lead and represent this agency. I will do my best to fulfill America's call to leadership at FEMA.

Again, thank you Chairman Collins, Ranking Member Lieberman and members of the Committee. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.