

**STATEMENT OF
U.S. REP. NICK J. RAHALL, II
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
hearing on
“A REVIEW OF THE PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE TO
AND RECOVERY FROM HURRICANE SANDY”**

December 4, 2012

I am pleased to join in welcoming all of today’s witnesses to this morning’s hearing on Superstorm Sandy.

I also want to recognize and thank those who selflessly gave their time to help others in need before, during, and after the Storm. Federal, State and local emergency responders, National Guardsmen, and numerous volunteers, who themselves often reside in the path of oncoming storms, say goodbye to their loved ones for whatever time necessary, so that they can help prepare for and respond to disasters. Their dedication and commitment is truly commendable.

Superstorm Sandy inflicted brutal damage up and down the East Coast, but it also severely impacted inland states such as West Virginia, where the Hurricane and a nor’easter collided, leaving, in some areas, up to six feet of snow. Roofs collapsed because of the accumulated snow, destroying businesses. Roads were impassable for days, cutting off emergency assistance to households. Power outages were long lasting and widespread; property was destroyed, and lives were seriously disrupted, and even lost.

Last week, President Obama issued a major disaster declaration for 18 counties in West Virginia, including seven counties in southern West Virginia. It took nearly a full month before the full extent of the Public Assistance program was granted to these counties. West Virginian families, however, are still waiting for a decision on whether Individual Assistance will be made available. It has been nearly five weeks now, and still no response. Our citizens need and deserve timely answers, especially when such disaster assistance is so critically needed.

In the FEMA reauthorization bill passed earlier this year by the House, at my request a provision was included to require FEMA to update its rules regarding the issuance of individual disaster assistance. Clearly, Sandy is yet another reminder that such updates are very much needed in order to ensure more timely and responsive assistance.

Over 300,000 West Virginia customers were left without power after Superstorm Sandy. This comes just months after more than twice as many West Virginia customers lost power, some for several weeks, following the June

derecho. While I appreciate FEMA's updated guidance on the eligibility of generator purchases for critical facilities under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, I encourage FEMA to determine whether even broader eligibility is appropriate and to clarify how FEMA intends to determine the cost-effectiveness of generator requests. I hope FEMA will consider the full range of potential costs of power outages at public facilities, in order to ensure generators can be made more readily available using hazard mitigation grants.

Thank you.