

**BRUCE BAUGHMAN**  
**DIRECTOR, ALABAMA STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

**TESTIMONY**  
**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

**ON**

**HOW FEMA HAS WORKED WITH ALABAMA**

**THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**JUNE 4, 2007**

Good Morning Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member King. I am the Director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency, I have over 36 years experience in Emergency Management over four in my current job, twenty- nine with FEMA and the federal government and four with the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency. I am here to talk to you today about how FEMA has worked with Alabama during both recent declared disasters and in the preparation of the upcoming hurricane season. Earlier this year as a result of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act FEMA launched what they are calling “new” FEMA, and they re-committed to establishing stronger regions and a more customer-focused organization in regards to working with states impacted by disasters. I feel they have upheld their commitment. My staff and the people of Alabama saw it first hand immediately following the March 1<sup>st</sup> tornadoes. The first tornado struck at 12:30pm and by 3:00pm that same day, FEMA Region IV Administrator Phil May was on the phone asking what type assistance we might need. Administrator May has a Southern Linc radio provided to him by our office to make sure we are in constant contact, and not just during times of disasters, but on a day to day basis. Transitional Recovery Officer Robert Ives was also dispatched to our EOC just hours after the storm devastated Alabama. I also worked with Alabama’s Federal Coordinating Officer, Gracia Szczech in the recovery phase, and she and her staff vowed to stay in our state until the survivors of the devastating storm got the assistance they needed. FEMA’s quick response proves the term “new” FEMA isn’t a slogan, but an actual commitment to the people in our state.

### **Alabama/ FEMA Preparation for Hurricane Season**

Based on Colorado State University hurricane predictions there is a 74% chance a hurricane will make landfall on the U.S coastline and a 49% chance a major hurricane will make landfall on the Gulf Coast. Governor Riley asked FEMA Administrator David Paulison to preposition much needed emergency commodities in our state such as water, food, ice, cots, blankets, pillows, hygiene kits, tarps and personal comfort kits. We worked with FEMA to establish our projected 72 hour consumption rate for the above mentioned commodities. Not only did FEMA listen to our request, but they responded by making sure we have what we need in Alabama, or either committing to getting it here in a timely manner, as it's needed. FEMA is currently in the process of negotiating a 100,000sq foot warehouse in Montgomery that will store some of the pre-positioned items.

On April 16, 2007, Alabama Governor Bob Riley, his cabinet members and private industry representatives participated in Governor's annual Hurricane Workshop. FEMA Region IV Administrator Phil May along with pre-designated FEMA response and recovery staff also attended to see what the state has established as our operational priorities for a landfall event. This was our opportunity to discuss the operational requirements of a major hurricane prior to and after it makes landfall, as well as the preparation that takes place throughout the year at our agency. We are also working with FEMA Region IV on identifying gaps in our evacuation plans. We have had a series of meetings between FEMA, state, and local agencies to pre-identify what the locals will need from the state and in turn what the state will in need in the way of support from FEMA to successfully evacuate the citizens of the coast of Alabama and other impacted states. We are also working in conjunction with FEMA Region IV to identify other operational gaps that might exist such as communications and emergency power. We are a participating state in FEMA's Gulf Coast Mass Evacuation planning initiative. This is an initiative to better coordinate a mass multi state evacuation. Alabama continues to work closely with FEMA Region IV in preparing for the 2007 hurricane season.

### **AEMA Preparedness and Hurricane Timeline**

On May 17, 2007 we conducted a working level Hurricane exercise in our EOC, where we bring all the state agency representatives and run through emergency actions related to a major hurricane. This simulated event gives us an opportunity to make sure every agency is aware of their role during and prior to a disaster. My agency also conducts regional exercises with our coastal region to ensure that preparedness measures are being met. The state

has pre-determined operational priorities for both post and pre landfall. These priorities are also shared with FEMA. We are conducting local elected official's briefings throughout the state to ensure proper interface with local governments during emergencies.

Our current procedures and priorities begin at 96 hours out from a potentially dangerous storm in the Gulf, the EOC activates at level 3. At that time we are activating resource contracts for food, water and ice. Also at this activation level we are beginning our twice-daily situation updates. FEMA, the National Hurricane Center and the states are updating one another on the latest trace of the storm and what actions are being taken. At this time the counties begin voluntary evacuation. We understand the important role the media plays in conveying what's going on to the public, so at this time we hold twice daily media briefings. We start opening shelters and making sure there are generators at those facilities. The Alabama Mutual Aid System is now on alert, and this system consists of 54 teams throughout the state. About 5,200 members of the mutual aid system responded to Louisiana, Mississippi and the coast of Alabama during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Recently we dispatched four of these teams and 350 state personnel to assist the stricken communities following our recent outbreak of tornadoes. They assisted in search and rescue, traffic control, debris removal and other emergency measures.

At 72 hours out, the EOC is activated at level 2 and we receive our FEMA Emergency Response Team, and establish a unified command and begin joint action planning. County liaisons are deployed and back-up communications are on stand-by and ready to be deployed as needed.

At 48 hours from the hurricanes' anticipated landfall, the EOC is fully activated and staffed. The Governor will issue an Emergency Proclamation, pre-positioned commodities are also being moved, and our mandatory evacuation plan is implemented, which includes four zones in Mobile County and Baldwin Counties. 24 hours from land fall the evacuation should be complete. More than 130 shelters have been identified with a capacity of more than 44, 000. That number includes 23 two-year community colleges identified throughout the state.

### **The Conclusion**

In closing, I understand the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA reorganized as a way to better serve the communities not only in Alabama, but across the United States, but I feel that FEMA must strengthen its

regions and equip them with the tools to do the job. What I have found in all my years in emergency management, it's not so much how you organize but, it's the people you have in your organization, and FEMA has good people; and that makes the difference if you are successful in the time of a disaster.

Address:

Bruce P. Baughman

5898 County Road 41

Clanton, Alabama 35046

Phone: 205-280-2210