



STATE OF FLORIDA

DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

RICK SCOTT
Governor

BRYAN W. KOON
Director

Bryan W. Koon, Director

Florida Division of Emergency Management

“Weathering the Storm: A State and Local Perspective on Emergency Management”

June 10, 2011

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Richardson, and distinguished members of the Committee thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you today. The Division of Emergency Management (“the Division”) is Florida’s lead disaster preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation agency. Under the direction of the Executive Office of the Governor, the agency oversees the state’s efforts to ensure Florida is prepared to respond to an emergency situation. The Division’s primary mission is to maintain the operational readiness of Florida’s emergency management systems, and to support disaster response efforts at the county and municipal level. The Division further facilitates the delivery of all federal domestic security grants from the Department of Homeland Security and disaster recovery aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

During emergency situations, the Governor may activate the State Emergency Response Team (“the SERT”); Florida’s unified command body for emergency events. The SERT ensures communication with local authorities, coordinates state response efforts, and facilitates federal disaster recovery funding for individuals and governments. The SERT is comprised of representatives from state agencies, Cabinet-level departments, the Florida National Guard, including a full-time National Guard Liaison housed within DEM, and non-profit organizations. The Governor serves as the head of the SERT, and is responsible for appointing the State Coordinating Officer to oversee emergency response activities. Division personnel, individual state agencies and Cabinet-level departments staff the State Emergency Operations Center with support personnel to assist with the overall response efforts. During emergency events, the Governor typically designates the Director of the Division as the State Coordinating Officer. The State Coordinating Officer is the Governor’s senior disaster advisor, and leads the SERT during State Emergency Operations Center activations. Per the Federal Stafford Act, Florida Statutes (Chapter 252), and Gubernatorial Executive Order, the State Coordinating Officer is granted authorities to ensure the safety of Floridians during disasters. With the Governor’s approval and emergency authority, the State Coordinating Officer can order the full mobilization of the state’s resources, including deploying personnel, expending funds from the Budget Stabilization Fund for response activities, directing the Florida National Guard, and opening evacuation routes. The State Coordinating Officer’s role also includes ensuring the successful coordination of response efforts between federal, state, county, and municipal governments. After disasters, the Director also fills the role as the Governor’s Authorized Representative for the receipt of federal disaster reimbursement funds.

The foremost operational tenet of the SERT is that all disasters are local. Except when formally requested by county and municipal governments, the state serves only to coordinate state and federal resources with affected local partners. Though the SERT provides necessary logistical, planning, operational, and financial support, elected and appointed county and municipal officials maintain complete operational control of their jurisdictions. The SERT conducts practice exercises throughout the year to train for events, as preparation for potential emergencies is crucial to the success of future response missions.

Since the devastating 2004-2005 hurricane seasons, which saw seven hurricanes and two tropical storms make landfall in Florida, the SERT has responded to numerous major disasters. These federally-declared disasters range from tropical storms, flooding events, wildfires, and tornadoes. Most recently, the SERT assisted the federal response to the catastrophic earthquake in Haiti and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The potential natural and man-induced dangers to Florida are ever-present, and require the entire state's emergency management team to maintain continuous operational readiness.

I was appointed to serve as the Director of the Division in February 2011. Prior to this appointment, I served as the lead emergency manager of Walmart, a position that allowed me to help coordinate the company's response efforts to several disasters. I also previously served in the United States Navy as a Watch Officer in the White House Situation Room. In this capacity, I developed continuity of operations and continuity of government plans for federal government agencies.

Overview of the Division of Emergency Management

Like the phases of the emergency management cycle (preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation), the Division is divided into four bureaus: the Bureau of Preparedness, the Bureau of Response, the Bureau of Recovery, and the Bureau of Mitigation. There is also the Office of the Director, which administratively houses key senior staff and the Office of Policy and Financial Management. Division employees manage the State Watch Office, the 24-hour notification point for all statewide emergency, hazardous materials, and severe weather reports.

Recent action by the Florida Legislature incorporated the Division into the Executive Office of the Governor. By law, the Governor is the final authority on all important disaster response decisions. Florida's Governor has the additional statutory and constitutional power to declare states of emergency and formally request assistance from the federal government.

Office of the Director

The Director oversees the state's disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities. These responsibilities include coordinating efforts with the federal government, other state agencies, county and municipal governments, and private organizations that have a role in emergency management. The Director oversees the Division's extensive work with the private sector to prepare Floridians for emergencies and to respond to disaster situations. The Director also serves as the co-chair of the State Emergency Response Commission and the co-chair of the Domestic Security Oversight

Council. As the State Administrative Agent, the Director reviews and approves all of Florida's applications for Department of Homeland Security Grants. After receipt of the grants, the Director also oversees the obligation of funds to state and local units of government.

Office of Policy and Financial Management

The Office of Policy and Financial Management oversees the agency's daily fiscal operations, including: Division-wide operating budgets, travel expenses, and state and federal grants. The Division's budget is primarily funded by federal grants, of which approximately 95% passes through to local entities. Federal funds received as a result of open disaster declarations through the Public Assistance and Hazard Mitigation Grant Programs, in addition to domestic preparedness funding, non-disaster mitigation grant funding and emergency management performance and interoperable communications grant funding account for over 90 percent of the Division's budget. Excluding funding directly related to federally declared disasters and the requisite state match, which represents almost 90 percent of the FY 2010-11 appropriations, the remaining state dollars in the Division's budget are derived from surcharges on residential and commercial insurance policies in the state, fees received from Florida facilities which use or store hazardous materials in the state, funds provided from Florida's nuclear power companies, and an annual Hurricane Catastrophe Fund (CAT Fund) allocation for statutorily directed hurricane loss mitigation activities. The Division is appropriated no General Revenue. A large portion of the Division's state funding, and all recurring dollars, are dedicated as match for federal awards.

The Division's Domestic Preparedness section is responsible for all Department of Homeland Security grant programs in Florida. Since 2001, Florida has received over \$1.4 billion from the federal government to enhance the state's domestic security and preparedness capabilities to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist events and other disasters. In addition to disbursing funds designated for Florida's domestic preparedness, the Section monitors all programs and agencies that receive Department of Homeland Security funding. The Section also ensures that Florida is compliant with the National Incident Management System.

Bureau of Preparedness

The Bureau of Preparedness oversees a variety of functions within the Division, including: hazardous materials and nuclear facility oversight, Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act implementation, state Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government planning, the updating of the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, and the review and certification of county Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans. The Bureau also coordinates the training, exercises and support to county emergency management agencies in preparing to respond to disasters.

The Technological Hazards Section serves as staff support to the State Emergency Response Commission, which administers the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act, Florida Hazardous Materials Emergency Response and Community Right-To-Know Act, and the Florida Accidental Release Prevention and Risk Management Planning Act. The Section also works to reduce and prevent accidental

chemical releases, limit the severity and consequences of chemical releases, and improve the coordination, communication, and emergency response capabilities between regulated facilities and local emergency preparedness and response agencies. The Section has the further responsibility to prepare for and respond to any event at one of Florida's three nuclear power facilities and the nuclear facility in Alabama on the state border.

Florida is home to five commercial nuclear reactors located at three sites. Two additional reactors are located in Alabama near the state line. The Division has the overall responsibility for coordination of the response to a nuclear power plant emergency. The Division also ensures that communities near nuclear power plants are prepared for an emergency, performing annual exercises that are conducted and designed to test each response organization's response capabilities. In addition, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the FEMA conduct evaluated exercises for each nuclear plant every two years. These evaluated exercises measure a response organization's efforts against an established list of criteria designed to ensure key response actions are met.

The Natural Hazards Unit spearheads the updating and revision efforts of the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. In addition, the Unit is responsible for reviewing and certifying the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans for all sixty-seven counties, an action mandated by statute. During the review process, the Unit ensures that each county has policy initiatives compliant with all regulations and directives and, if not, assists the appropriate local personnel in ensuring their Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan is up to standard. The Unit is also responsible for Continuity of Operations Planning and Continuity of Government Planning for the Division and for reviewing and approving similar policies of state agencies. The unit also ensures that statewide evacuation studies and data are accurate and up-to-date.

The Bureau of Preparedness also oversees and delivers the statewide training and exercise program. The Training Unit coordinates the delivery of courses in the field for primarily county and municipal responders. The Exercise Unit serves the training needs of Division staff and members of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) which includes representatives of the state agencies and other organizations that staff the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). It also maintains and coordinates the State Training and Exercise Planning Plan to coordinate efforts locally, regionally and at the state level.

Bureau of Response

The Bureau of Response provides swift, effective response during an emergency or catastrophic incident. During SERT activations, the Bureau is responsible for assisting the Governor, the State Coordinating Officer, and the Federal Coordinating Officer lead Florida's complex interagency response effort. There are four sections within the Bureau: the Operations Section which contains the State Watch Office and the Meteorological Support Unit, the Logistics section, the Infrastructure Section, and the Regional Coordination Section

The State Watch Office is the 24-hour notification point for all emergencies, hazardous materials and severe weather reports that impact or occurs within the state. It also serves as the initial point of contact for county agencies requesting state assistance for situations

beyond their response capabilities. The primary mission of the State Watch Office is to provide warning to the appropriate individuals, local governments and state agencies of impending danger or existing hazardous situations. The State Watch Office provides notifications and warnings to county dispatch centers, other state agencies, nuclear power plants, and federal agencies regarding emergency situations and the relaying of official requests for outside assistance. The State Watch Office also coordinates with the National Response Center for petroleum-related incidents, per federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act legislation and state regulations. The State Watch Office monitors open-source media (e.g.—Cable news networks, online publications, local newspapers) for any breaking news and incidents. The State Watch Office was recently renovated to enhance the Division's ability to respond to emergency events. Additional technological upgrades expanded the communications capabilities of the SERT, allowing interoperable communications between state, federal, county, and municipal emergency management and first-responder agencies. Also within the Operations Section, the State Meteorological Support Unit serves as liaisons between the Emergency Management community and atmospheric and physical science organizations to ensure that the Division and State Emergency Response Team has the weather data needed to make decisions and carry out missions. The Meteorology Unit provides a daily weather hazard threat analysis, briefing products, and coordinates training and outreach activities to promote hazardous weather awareness and safety

The Division established the Regional Coordination Section to ensure the timely presence of state personnel during emergency events outside of the Tallahassee area. The Regional Coordinators serve as the Division's liaisons to county and municipal governments for all phases of emergency management. Each Regional Coordinator lives and works in his or her respective region. There are seven total regions in the state, and the close proximity of Division staff to potentially affected communities provides a faster response time for the state to serve local requests for assistance during disasters. Regional Coordinators often guide field operations for response and recovery efforts and execute capability assessments of local emergency management programs.

The Logistics Section facilitates the statewide management of resources designated for disaster response and recovery. Florida's Unified Logistics system has been acclaimed as one the nation's best practices in State Logistics Management. The State maintains 200,000 square feet of emergency resources at the State Logistics Response Center in Central Florida amounting to over 980 semi-trailer loads of commodities and equipment for immediate response within 6-hours anywhere in the state. More importantly, the State maintains a State Resource Management System for total asset visibility on all resources ordered, shipped, received, cross-docked, and returned through near real-time satellite technology and a transportation management network managed by the State Movement Coordination Center. The Logistics Section also oversees the Statewide Communications Interoperability Program comprised of various state and local interoperable communications platforms and systems that can be deployed to address unique emergency communications missions.

Bureau of Recovery

The Infrastructure Section staffs the Infrastructure Branch during activation of the State Emergency Operations Center. The Infrastructure Branch assists state and local

government agencies and SERT private sector partners with access to state and special district agency transportation and public works response assets, telecommunications response assets and industry contacts, electric and natural gas industry response assets and contacts, and fuel industry response assets and contacts.

Bureau of Recovery

The effects of natural and man-induced disasters can cripple a community's socioeconomic infrastructure. The Bureau of Recovery contributes to county and municipal efforts to rebuild communities through state and federal grants. The Bureau is responsible for the management and administration of the Stafford Act relief programs. The Public Assistance ("PA") Program provides Federal assistance on a cost-sharing basis to eligible State Agencies, local government Applicants, Indian tribal governments, and certain private non-profit organizations which suffer damages or costs for: 1) debris removal; 2) emergency protective measures; and 3) permanent restoration of damaged public infrastructure.

The Bureau coordinates with local, state and federal agencies to inform residents and businesses of disaster-recovery programs that are available for assistance to recover after a disaster.

The Individual Assistance Section is Florida's first line of recovery assistance to affected individuals and families after a disaster. After performing preliminary damage assessments, the Section assists Florida's residents to understand and apply for state and federal disaster-related assistance through the activation of Essential Service Centers, Disaster Recovery Centers and the Community Response Program. During a catastrophic event, the Section coordinates and supports direct housing missions through the Disaster Housing Program, which provides travel trailers or mobile homes to survivors when other housing sources are unavailable. The Individual Assistance Section assists survivors with unmet needs in the disaster assistance process by providing information and referrals to the appropriate disaster assistance resources and following through with cases to ensure critical needs are met.

The Florida Recovery Office is a long-term recovery office in Lake Mary, Florida that is jointly administered by the Division and the FEMA, which created the facility after eight named storms made landfall in Florida during the 2004 and 2005 hurricane season. These events caused billions of dollars in damage throughout the state and required extensive federal and state recovery assistance. As a result of the unprecedented impacts, federal and state emergency management officials established a separate office located in Central Florida to coordinate Damage Assessment Teams on-site and to disburse federal assistance grants, and conduct project closeouts for affected residents, county and municipal governments.

Bureau of Mitigation

The Bureau of Mitigation strives to fortify Florida's infrastructure against the effects of future disaster through proactive structural-enhancement and policy initiatives. The Bureau works with county and municipal governments, non-profit organizations, other state agencies, and individuals throughout the state to enhance Florida's resistance to disasters. As a result of such proactive efforts, the Division is compliant with all federal regulations regarding mitigation planning and procedures and has even received the federal government's

highest mitigation designation for planning. This “Enhanced” recognition permits the state to receive additional post-disaster funds (20% rather than 15%) for mitigation activities. All of Florida’s sixty-seven counties have state and FEMA-approved Local Mitigation Strategies, a necessary requirement to receive federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program funding.

The federal Hazard Mitigation Grant Program provides funding for the efforts of state, local, and tribal governments, and non-profit organizations to implement long-term hazard mitigation measures following presidentially-declared disasters. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program can fund measures that protect public and private property by breaking the cycle of damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage caused by repairing and reconstructing property to pre-disaster conditions.

The state implements the National Flood Insurance Program. The Program is a voluntary federal program that pools the country’s flooding risk to provide Americans with comprehensive flood insurance. In Florida, there are approximately 2.1 million National Flood Insurance Program policyholders, a figure representing 38% of all policies nationwide. So many homes and businesses are National Flood Insurance Program-insured in Florida because of the state’s unique geographic and demographic circumstances, as over eighty percent of the state’s 18 million residents live or conduct business near the coastline. Moreover, the state’s flat agricultural lands and inland populations are primarily located near rivers and floodplains that have historically flooded after moderate to severe rainfall. To qualify for the National Flood Insurance Program, communities must adopt, implement, and enforce FEMA-approved regulations for floodplain construction and development.

Recent Innovative Practices

Adoption of Social Media Accounts

To help keep Florida’s residents and visitors up-to-date on disaster-related operations, DEM provides a variety of information through several social media accounts, including three Twitter accounts and a Facebook page. The Division’s three twitter accounts offer users different perspectives on important emergency management-related topics. DEM’s main account, @FLSERT, gives general program and emergency information, news releases, interesting facts, videos and photos of current events; @FLSERTWeather retransmits significant severe weather alerts and statements issued by the National Weather Service and the National Hurricane Center that are specific to Florida, as well as links to weather-related press releases and Florida hazardous weather awareness information; @FLStateWatch provides a daily feed of breaking news and alerts from the Florida State Watch Office Operations Team for all 67 Florida counties. Facebook, another popular social media forum, provides users with another option to readily access disaster information in a manner that suits them.

Development of State Logistics Response Center

In 2007, the Division established the State Logistics Response Center in Orlando, Florida. The facility is home to the State/Federal Unified Logistics Section, which represents the union of state, federal, voluntary agencies, and contract vendors that mobilize during

declared emergencies to facilitate the acquisition, management, and distribution of Florida's disaster logistics resources. The 200,000 square foot warehouse, complete with the latest tracking software and communications technology, is among the largest state disaster resource facilities in the nation. The facility maintains sufficient resources to support over 500,000 disaster-affected people for the first three days after a catastrophic incident and is capable of distributing these items quickly and efficiently. Most supplies stored at the State Logistics Response Center cost nothing to taxpayers until they are deployed by the SERT, since commodities are maintained under vendor managed inventory contracts with private entities.

The State Logistics Response Center is strategically located in Central Florida to minimize the average response time throughout the state. The State Logistics Response Center is adjacent to major interstates and highways, reducing the possibility that debris or other obstacles might inhibit semi-trucks from arriving at the supply depot. The cache is also highly storm-resistant and located outside of all documented flood zones and storm surge areas.

State Disability Coordinator

The State Disability Coordinator works with Florida's county-level emergency management offices, the American Red Cross and other shelter management groups to ensure that each county has accessible special-needs and general population shelters. The Disability Coordinator also helps persons with disabilities develop evacuation plans prior to a declared emergency. The Disability Coordinator maintains a constant dialogue with Division policy makers, which ensures that any new directive or program suitably takes into account the unique position of members of the disabled community during emergencies. The Full Time Equivalent position is provided by the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, funded through a federal grant allocated by the Florida Department of Health, and housed in the Division. The Disability Coordinator also works with the FEMA's Disability Coordinator and the FEMA Administrator's Senior Advisor on Disabilities to harmonize federal and state information and resources regarding persons with special needs and persons with disabilities during emergencies.

Private Sector Coordination

After the 2004-2005 hurricane seasons, the Division recognized that Florida needed to further incorporate the private sector into the state's strategic disaster response planning. To accomplish this goal, the Division created Emergency Support Function 18: Business, Industry and Economic Stabilization (ESF 18). ESF 18 has the lead responsibility to coordinate local, state, and federal agency actions that provide immediate and short-term assistance to businesses and industries affected by a disaster. Such assistance may include providing access to the financial, workforce, technical, and community resources that may affect a community's ability to restore business operations and resume focus on long-term business strategies. The Division also hired a private sector coordinator to assist Florida's business community ensure that they are prepared for a disaster response. This work is critical, since 40% off all small businesses that close during a disaster never resume business operations.

Conclusion

Natural disasters are certain and often anticipated. Every state must be able to plan for disasters as well as build and sustain the capability to respond. EMPG is the backbone of the nation's all-hazards emergency management system and the only source of direct federal funding to state and local governments for emergency management capacity building. EMPG is used for personnel, planning, training, and exercises at both the state and local levels. EMPG is primarily used to support state and local emergency management personnel who are responsible for writing plans; conducting training, exercises and corrective action; educating the public on disaster readiness; and maintaining the nation's emergency response system. EMPG is being used to help states create and update plans for receiving and distribution plans for emergency supplies such as water, ice, and food after a disaster; debris removal plans; and plans for receiving or evacuating people – all of these critical issues identified in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and in the recent outbreak of tornados and flooding across the south and Midwest.

EMPG is the only all-hazards preparedness program within the Department of Homeland Security that requires a match at the state and local level. The match is evidence of the commitment by state and local governments to address the urgent need for all-hazards emergency planning. Because of this commitment at the state and local level it is vital to the mission of DEM and our local partners that this funding remain intact and funding levels be maintained or increased.

The Division is prepared to respond to any disaster that affects Florida. As the hurricane capital of the United States and being susceptible to several types of other disasters, the importance of strong state and local emergency management systems is critical. The Division will continue to work with federal, state, local, and private-sector partners to ensure that Florida's emergency management systems remain among the best in the nation.