

**Statement for the United States House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Homeland Security**  
**Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and**  
**Communications**

**November 29, 2011**

PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Richardson, Congressman Marino and Members of the Committee, I am Glenn Cannon, Director and Homeland Security Advisor for the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). I am pleased to have the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the response to the Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee and lessons learned from those storms.

I very much appreciate this Committee's concern that -- at the federal, state, and local level -- we continue to focus on ensuring effective preparedness and response to disasters. As some of you may know, after Hurricane Katrina, I was hired as an Assistant Administrator in the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). I was brought in to help fix the problems that happened during FEMA's response to that disaster. At FEMA, I was in charge of Disaster Operations for 56 states and territories and was responsible for, among other things, the development and execution of interagency plans and procedures in response to Presidential disaster and emergency declarations. I believe the lessons we learned from that disaster made us better prepared to respond to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee.

In late August, PEMA, other state agencies, county and local emergency management agencies, and FEMA began preparing for Hurricane Irene. Since that time, we responded to Irene, started the recovery process from Irene, prepared for Tropical Storm Lee, responded to Lee, started the recovery process from Lee, and

now are back in the recovery phase for both Irene and Lee. It has been a very hectic and stressful period of time -- with long hours -- for those at the federal, state, county and local level who have been involved with Irene and Lee. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was at elevated levels just about every day from August 25 until the last week of September. For several days, the SEOC was at Level 1 for the first time since September 11, 2001.

At the state level, Governor Corbett took a hands-on approach regarding the disasters and committed all necessary state resources. Governor Corbett, his Executive Staff, Lieutenant Governor Cawley, and Cabinet Secretaries were camped out at PEMA during these storms and actively involved in the operations. I think we may have set a record for Cabinet meetings held at an agency during a one week time period.

The magnitude of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee was immense. With regards to disaster destruction, Hurricane Agnes in 1972 has been the benchmark in Pennsylvania. With Tropical Storm Lee, there are areas with flood levels that exceeded Agnes, other areas that had record flood levels, and across the state the total amount of devastation was worse than any storm since Agnes. Here are many of the key statistics that show the magnitude of the storms:

- For Hurricane Irene, there were 11 counties declared for Individual Assistance, 14 counties declared for Public Assistance and 13 counties declared for Emergency Protective Measures.
- For Tropical Storm Lee, there were 28 counties declared for Individual Assistance, 30 counties declared for Public Assistance and 44 counties declared for Emergency Protective Measures.
- To date, there have been over 92,000 people register for Individual Assistance (IA) and over \$128 million in IA has been awarded.
- The Preliminary Damage Assessments for Public Assistance (PA) totaled over \$180 million and the actual PA damage number likely will be double or triple that amount. Currently, there are about 1,650 applicants for Public Assistance.
- There have been over 1,800 Small Business Administration (SBA) loans approved for a total of over \$68 million.
- We have had over 26,000 visits to our 23 Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs).
- Immediately after the storms hit, in coordination with FEMA, over 576,000 bottles of water and over 147,000 emergency meals were delivered to communities that needed these essential supplies.

With the widespread destructive force of these storms hitting not only Pennsylvania but the entire East Coast, it was a major challenge for all in the emergency management community. Now it's an even bigger challenge recovering from the

storms. Here are some of my thoughts on the lessons learned and some of the things upon which we should try to improve.

First and Foremost, we need to keep reminding our citizens about preparedness and our "ReadyPA" campaign. You probably have seen Governor Tom Corbett on television or heard him on the radio doing highly important Public Service Announcements about ReadyPA. The purpose of ReadyPA is to motivate Pennsylvanians to take action to prepare for a disaster. ReadyPA encourages all Pennsylvanians to: Be Informed, Be Prepared and Be Involved. Nationwide experience has shown that, in major emergencies or disasters, people need to be prepared to make it on their own for a period of time. Local officials and emergency relief workers will respond after a disaster, but they may not be able to reach everyone right away. As we saw with Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, it may take significant time after an emergency for things such as power or water to be fully restored. That is why it's critical for everyone to be prepared to survive on his or her own for at least 72 hours in the event of an emergency. The on-going purpose of ReadyPA is to make our citizens fully aware of this reality and have them fully prepared if such a situation occurs. The ReadyPA web site can be found at: [www.ReadyPA.org](http://www.ReadyPA.org).

With regards to power outages, in the aftermath of the storms we had citizens who were without power for a week to 10 days. We also had people who experienced power outages for over a week from an early season snow storm that hit the eastern part of the state several weeks ago. PEMA's role is very limited regarding power outage matters and I appreciate the challenges the utilities face in restoring power in these situations. However, long power outage issues need to be reviewed. It is my understanding that the Public Utility Commission is considering doing a tabletop exercise with the utilities to try and assess what can be done to better prepare for and respond to these situations. I think such a tabletop exercise would be very beneficial to see how things can be improved.

We also learned a lesson about the huge benefits -- on the human safety side and the property damage side -- of flood mitigation projects. Since 1996, PEMA has used federal mitigation funds to acquire about 1,400 homes which removed an estimated 3,500 people from dangerous flood areas. Acquisition is considered the "best" mitigation practice because it eliminates the hazard of flooding in a risk area: no homes = no losses. Based on the amount of homes damaged in Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, we anticipate that PEMA will receive requests for 400-500 home buyouts from the storms. In addition, the flood levee system in Luzerne County -- that wasn't there during Hurricane Agnes -- probably saved lives and over a billion dollars in property damage. Nationwide, FEMA estimates that for every \$1 spent on mitigation, \$4 are saved. I highly encourage this Committee to make funding of federal mitigation projects a priority.

On the recovery front, there are several important matters to note. At the beginning of the recovery, FEMA did not think it could support the large number of DRCs that we needed opened in the state and get them up and running as quickly as we needed. We worked jointly with FEMA and moved aggressively on the matter. The result – we had DRCs opened in record time and in record numbers. For future disasters, it should be a reminder that -- when it comes to helping our citizens -- where there's a will, there's a way to get things done. On the housing front, getting citizens into Temporary Housing Units (THUs) has been the biggest challenge during the recovery. I know that it is a very complex matter at the federal and local level and I hope that progress will continue to be made to get all people in THUs as soon as possible. On the business front, SBA's 4% interest rate continues to be a concern for many small businesses. I would encourage this Committee to see whether SBA will lower the interest rate in light of the devastation from these storms. The viability of the affected businesses is crucial to the future recovery of our flood ravaged communities.

I thank everyone involved -- in the preparation for, the response to, and the recovery from these storms -- for the tremendous effort and work that has been done to protect and help the citizens and communities that have been so adversely affected. Our first responders and rescue teams were heroes who went beyond the call of duty to save lives. There were neighbors helping neighbors and strangers helping strangers. The cooperation and coordination among state, county, local, and federal entities truly has been remarkable. On the political front, the assistance given on these disasters has been so terrific and so nonpartisan. When I was in Duryea, Luzerne County, FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate was there to see the devastation first hand. He told me "Glenn, whatever you need, call me and you'll have it." When I was in Noxen and Forkston, Wyoming County, Congressman Marino told me he would call the Chairman of this Committee, Peter King, to absolutely make certain we had everything we needed to help our citizens and communities. Simply put – the worst of Mother Nature was met with the best of human nature.

The success we had in the response to Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee was, in large part, due to the prior work done in enhancing our emergency response capabilities. The events related to Hurricane Katrina and Rita highlighted the critical importance of comprehensive all-hazard planning and training. In particular, the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) have played key roles in providing the resources needed to strengthen our state response capabilities. In light of the current budget crisis, I fully appreciate the difficult situation faced by Members of Congress in making budget cuts. As you know, over the past year cuts have been made to EMGP and HSGP. I am very concerned that further cuts will be made to these and other programs which will jeopardize our ability to respond effectively to future disasters. Therefore, I strongly urge you to fight for the resources our emergency management community, including our first responders, need to sustain our response capabilities and protect our citizens.

On behalf of Governor Corbett and the twelve million Pennsylvanians we serve, I again want to thank you the Members of this Committee and the entire United States Congress for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.