



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
*Using Innovative Technology and Practices to Enhance the
Culture of Preparedness***

**Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications Subcommittee
July 25, 2018**

Throughout my 25 years in Congress, I have seen natural disasters devastate both my District and other communities across America. Unfortunately, the 2017 hurricane season was no exception. In fact, it was one of the most devastating hurricane seasons in history, with Harvey, Irma, and Maria striking our shores.

I am concerned about the Nation's preparedness for natural disasters. Clearly, nearly 13 years after Hurricane Katrina, we are still struggling with gaps in preparedness. The 2017 hurricane season, and Hurricane Maria in particular, exposed many of these gaps.

For example, FEMA's recently released 2017 Hurricane Season After-Action Report recognizes that one of the many errors in the Federal response to Maria was that FEMA did not have enough disaster supplies in Puerto Rico.

That is a basic element of disaster preparedness that FEMA has to get right.

I hope the Trump Administration will take seriously the after-action report, along with upcoming work from the DHS Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office, to improve their abysmal preparedness and response for Hurricane Maria.

While I look forward to a productive conversation on technology today, we must also continue to press FEMA on how it handles the fundamentals of disaster preparedness.

In its efforts to move forward in preparedness technology innovation, I hope FEMA, S&T, and NIST will prioritize technology that will aid first responder efforts to keep communities safe and provide for efficient asset management during natural disaster response.

Finally, I would note that preparedness has become even more important in the face of climate change, which is affecting weather across the globe and right here at home.

Unfortunately, the Trump Administration has failed to recognize climate change, even dropping the concept from FEMA's Strategic Plan. Given how destructive the 2017 hurricane season was, along with the wildfires that year, FEMA must get serious about the science behind these events.

How can we expect communities to prepare for extreme weather when the Federal government will not acknowledge that destructive weather patterns are occurring at a rate not seen before? I urge our witnesses from FEMA, NIST, and S&T to thread climate change into preparedness technologies and innovation.

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