



**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Scott Perry (R-PA)
Oversight and Management Efficiency Subcommittee**

*“Oversight of Federal Efforts to Address Electromagnetic Risks”
May 17, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

America’s energy infrastructure is the heart that pumps the American economy. Long term power outages resulting from an attack on our critical infrastructure could cripple our nation’s economy and put Americans’ health and safety in jeopardy. Because the nation’s critical infrastructure is so vital to Americans’ way of life, the Federal government has recognized the necessity of securing our infrastructure from an array of risks, including the threat of an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack. The most serious EMP risk would come in the form of an EMP resulting from a nuclear detonation at high altitude. Such an attack could cause long-term damage to the power grid. While many believe the likelihood of such an attack is low, the damage and economic aftershocks that would follow demand that we address these risks. We cannot discount that other nation-states, such as North Korea, or sophisticated terror groups might want to utilize an EMP to wreak havoc on our economy.

The Departments of Homeland Security and Energy, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have an active role in protecting our critical infrastructure. According to a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report released last month, Federal agencies have taken action to prepare and mitigate EMP risks, but there’s still room for improvement. According to GAO, DHS and the Department of Energy have addressed some but not all of the recommendations in a 2008 report from the congressionally authorized EMP Commission.

Unfortunately, DHS has yet to clearly identify a lead office or official within the Department to coordinate efforts internally and with other Federal and industry stakeholders. How can DHS protect us against EMP risks if they don’t know who is in charge? I expect to hear from DHS’s witness today on how the Department has corrected this failure. GAO also found that Federal partners must do a better job of collaborating their planning activities. Additionally, GAO made recommendations to improve how DHS analyzes EMP risks and how DHS and DOE identify and implement key research and development priorities.

Overall, GAO found that the Federal government’s efforts to prepare for and mitigate EMP risks are at best, a mixed bag. The progress made to date is certainly due, in part, to Congress’s oversight efforts and the recommendations made in 2008 by the EMP Commission. DHS and DOE must make more headway in their efforts to address EMP. Effectively engaging the private sector to assist with planning and building system resiliency will be an essential component of these efforts.

Congress must also do its part. In November 2015, the House passed H.R. 1073, the Critical Infrastructure Protection Act, authored by Congressman Trent Franks of Arizona, which would require better planning, research, and development for EMP risks. Unfortunately like many other bills passed by this Committee, it remains stuck in the Senate.

I appreciate the hard work of our watchdogs at GAO for their report and the witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee today. I look forward to hearing how federal agencies will work to improve themselves, in light of GAO's findings, to better protect the American people from EMP risks.

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