



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY) Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee

*“The Future of FEMA: Stakeholder Recommendations for the Next Administrator”
February 14, 2017*

Remarks as Prepared

This hearing is the first in a series the Subcommittee will hold to consider the future of FEMA. We will use what we learn at these hearings, along with the findings from past Subcommittee work, to make recommendations for the next FEMA Administrator – a roadmap for success of sorts.

I think Captain Kelenske may have said it best when he stated in his written testimony that we must “recognize past progress [at FEMA], but embrace innovative approaches for future policy development.”

And that’s why we’re here today. We want to hear from you, the practitioners, about what we need to do to stay on the path of a strong FEMA. What are those innovative approaches? What is going well at FEMA and should be continued? What can be improved?

At the heart of the issue is leadership. As I discussed with Secretary Kelly last week, it is vital that the Administration move quickly to appoint a qualified FEMA Administrator.

We have already had seven major disaster declarations this year. There is no doubt that FEMA has disaster-tested officials in place to get the job done, but it is important to install permanent leadership as soon as possible. The job requires an experienced emergency manager capable of navigating the National Preparedness System.

For more than a decade, billions have been invested across the United States to enhance capabilities and achieve the National Preparedness Goal. It is to FEMA’s credit that such investments are making the United States stronger and safer in the face of emergencies. We have an obligation to keep this momentum going.

Hurricane Katrina’s devastation in 2005 demonstrated the significance of FEMA’s mission and the failures that can occur when FEMA is unable to execute it. The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, coupled with effective leadership at FEMA, strengthened FEMA’s capability to lead national emergency management efforts. These capabilities are tested each time the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA headquarters is activated.

My district in New York City saw firsthand in 2012 the need for strong federal, state, and local coordination when Superstorm Sandy caused widespread destruction. It should be noted that FEMA did make stark improvements from 2005 to 2012, but challenges still remain. This Subcommittee looks forward to continuing its engagement with FEMA to support continued progress.

According to the Homeland Security Committee's *Terror Threat Snapshot*, the terrorist threat environment worsened in 2016. The number of homegrown jihadist cases and lone wolf attacks continues to surge with attacks ranging from Ohio State University to Orlando and San Bernardino.

FEMA has awarded over \$40 billion in preparedness grants to states and localities since 2001 to build, sustain, and enhance their capabilities to protect the public from acts of terrorism and other hazards. It is important that we ensure resources and training remain accessible to communities across the country. The critical importance of these programs and how to continue to improve them is not lost on this Subcommittee.

We truly are a resilient nation. This is a testament to our first responders, emergency managers, and community partners at every level of government and their ability to continually adapt to ever-changing threats and vulnerabilities. Together, we can ensure our nation's continued ability to prevent, prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards we face.

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