U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20472

FEMA

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TO: All FEMA Personnel

FROM: Cameron Hamilton
Administrator

SUBJECT: **FEMA Strategic Direction and Agency Priorities**

FEMA's mission is to help the American people before, during, and after disasters. Fulfilling that mission requires an agency that is operationally ready, nationally focused, field-oriented, and accountable for results. This is accomplished through the strategic coordination of emergency services to protect life, property and continuity of operations. As the risk environment evolves, FEMA must ensure its programs, policies, and investments meet the Nation's needs.

This memorandum establishes FEMA's strategic direction and four priority objectives to guide decision-making, resource alignment, operational planning, workforce efforts, intergovernmental coordination, and program execution:

1. **Reduce Federal Government Dependency**
2. **Deliver America First Resilience**
3. **Return Power to the American People**
4. **Strengthen National Security**

These objectives will strengthen FEMA's ability to support disaster survivors and communities, reinforce national resilience, and ensure responsible stewardship of federal resources. FEMA must be prepared to operate amid complex disasters, emerging threats, aging infrastructure, resource constraints, and increasingly distributed responsibilities. We must reduce unnecessary complexity, strengthen nationwide capabilities, and position the emergency management enterprise to meet routine and catastrophic demands.

The following objectives will guide FEMA's work across headquarters, regions, field operations, mission support functions, and program offices.

Strategic Objective 1: Reduce Federal Government Dependency

FEMA will promote good governance, responsible investment, and stronger emergency management capabilities at every level of government. A resilient Nation requires state, local, tribal, and territorial partners that can prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate disasters using capabilities established before incidents occur. Federal assistance remains an important backstop for catastrophic and extraordinary events, but it cannot replace sustained

readiness and preparedness, mitigation, planning, staffing, and response capabilities at the state and local levels.

Reducing federal dependency requires partners to build, maintain, and exercise the capabilities needed to manage incidents effectively. States and communities are often the first to respond and the last to recover, and their ability to act directly affects disaster survivors, communities, and the national interest.

FEMA's role is to support, coordinate, and supplement these efforts, not replace state and local responsibilities.

FEMA will advance this objective by setting clear expectations, aligning incentives, providing technical assistance, and prioritizing investments that strengthen long-term capabilities. Federal funding should address demonstrated needs, produce measurable outcomes, reduce risk, and reflect sustained partner commitment. FEMA will reinforce that resilience begins before disaster strikes and that readiness is a shared responsibility across all levels of government.

FEMA will promote efficiency and accountability

FEMA will promote efficiency, accountability, and simplification to ensure federal resources are used responsibly, and mission objectives are achieved. The American people expect their government to deliver results, reduce complexity and duplication, and manage taxpayer resources with discipline. FEMA's programs, policies, and internal operations must be clear, effective, and aligned with measurable outcomes.

Efficiency requires eliminating unnecessary steps, reducing administrative burdens, improving coordination, and directing resources toward activities that deliver the greatest value.

Accountability requires transparent decisions, performance tracking, responsible financial management, and programs that achieve their intended results. FEMA will examine its programs, policies, administrative processes, internal controls, and support functions to identify areas of improvement. Program offices will streamline processes, clarify guidance, reduce duplication, and responsibly use technology to improve service delivery, oversight, and decision-making. These efforts will preserve appropriate controls while making FEMA easier to work with for applicants, recipients, partners, and employees.

FEMA will:

- Strengthen state and local emergency management capacity through responsible investment, sustainable staffing, operational capabilities, and ownership of disaster risk reduction.
- Build preparedness and resilience through planning, training, exercises, technical assistance, mitigation, and shared responsibility across all levels of government.
- Align federal funding with risk, need, and measurable outcomes to address capability gaps, strengthen long-term resilience, and protect taxpayer resources.
- Simplify programs and reduce administrative burdens while maintaining appropriate oversight.

- Improve performance, financial stewardship, and grants management through stronger outcome tracking and disciplined management.
- Reduce duplication and improve coordination across FEMA programs and offices.
- Modernize systems and processes to improve service delivery, oversight, data quality, and operational efficiency.

These actions will strengthen national resilience, improve federal stewardship, and maintain public trust.

Strategic Objective 2: Deliver America First Resilience

FEMA will advance national resilience by protecting the American people, reducing risks to life and property, and strengthening the systems on which the United States relies before, during, and after disasters. This objective will be guided by balanced federalism, clear accountability, measurable outcomes, and investments that provide practical value to the homeland.

America First Resilience requires that the federal government as well as state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, fulfill their responsibilities while targeting federal resources toward the highest-value national priorities. FEMA should strengthen partner capabilities without creating dependency or unnecessarily centralized structures.

Resilience must be built through capable jurisdictions, distributed operations, hardened infrastructure, effective mutual aid, and investments that reduce future disaster costs and consequences.

FEMA will prioritize hardening national infrastructure where federal investment provides clear national value. Damage to critical systems can cause cascading consequences. Strengthening infrastructure resilience helps sustain essential services, reduce future losses, support economic stability, and protect national security. FEMA investments will prioritize mitigation and resilience projects that protect community lifelines with an emphasis on power, communications, water and other capabilities as critical systems.

FEMA will prioritize projects and programs based on risk reduction, consequence reduction, cost-effectiveness, and strategic importance. Investments should produce tangible benefits, particularly where infrastructure failure would have consequences beyond one locality. FEMA should emphasize projects that reduce future disaster costs and demonstrate strong benefits, including a benefit to cost ratios where appropriate and consistent with program requirements.

Key priorities include:

- Strengthen operational coordination across FEMA regions, field offices, logistics nodes, operations centers, and partner networks.
- Reduce single points of failure in command, control, communications, logistics, and operational decision-making.
- Improve continuity of operations during disruptions to communications, transportation, supply chains, power, and other essential services.
- Reinforce state, local, tribal, and territorial responsibility for preparedness, resilience, and operational success.

- Align resilience investments with national priorities and demonstratable outcomes, including protection of community lifelines.
- Harden national infrastructure where federal investment protects essential services and reduces cascading consequences.
- Support cost-effective projects that reduce future disaster costs, protect life and property, and provide long-term benefits.
- Coordinate with infrastructure owners, operators, and government partners to make investments practical, targeted, and executable.
- Improve benefit measurement and long-term performance tracking.
- Focus FEMA programs on domestic needs, practical risk reduction, preparedness, and continuity of essential services.

America First Resilience requires a FEMA that is nationally capable, operationally distributed, and focused on results. Hardening infrastructure and strengthening distributed resilience are strategic imperatives for national readiness, security, and economic stability.

Strategic Objective 3: Return Power to the American People

FEMA will move appropriate authority, decision-making, and execution closer to the American people by empowering state, local, tribal, and territorial partners; strengthening regional and field leadership; and supporting practical, risk-informed readiness nationwide.

FEMA must reduce unnecessary centralization in Washington, D.C., and strengthen the roles of states, regional offices, field leaders, and front-line personnel.

Regional and field teams are often closest to disaster survivors, state and local officials, emergency managers, and community partners. They are well positioned to understand operational conditions, identify barriers, and make timely decisions within established authorities.

FEMA will maintain a survivor-centered approach. The agency's work should be judged by whether its programs help individuals, families, communities, and governments recover effectively and prepare responsibly.

Assistance should be timely, understandable, accessible, and aligned with mission needs as directed by the President.

Policies and procedures should be executable and focused on outcomes rather than unnecessary process. Returning power to the American people also means revitalizing civil defense as a shared national responsibility. National readiness requires informed citizens, prepared households, capable communities, responsible state and local governments, reliable infrastructure, trained responders, effective mutual aid, and sustained coordination. FEMA will set expectations, support capability development, and help partners build practical readiness before disasters occur.

Civil defense must reflect today's threat environment, including severe weather, wildfires, floods, earthquakes, infrastructure disruptions, cyber incidents, terrorism, hazardous materials incidents, and other emergencies. Readiness efforts must be realistic, scalable, and

focused on protecting lives, sustaining essential functions, and managing prolonged disruptions.

FEMA will:

- Empower state, local, tribal, and territorial partners by encouraging responsible investment in public safety and reducing overreliance on federal assistance.
- Enable regional and field leaders to make timely decisions within established authorities and operational parameters.
- Eliminate policies and processes that unnecessarily delay assistance, complicate operations, or create avoidable administrative burdens while maintaining accountability.
- Make assistance easier for survivors and applicants to understand, access, and use.
- Promote practical civil defense readiness at the individual, household, community, institutional, and governmental levels.
- Build state and local capabilities through planning, training, exercises, technical assistance, professionalization, and capability standards.
- Strengthen alert, warning, continuity, and essential-services planning.
- Enhance mutual aid through national agreements and frameworks that allow states to assist one another during high-consequence events.
- Focus program delivery on timely, practical outcomes that improve readiness, response, and recovery.

FEMA will provide federal support that is clear, efficient, responsive, and accountable while affirming the primary responsibilities of individuals, communities, and state and local governments in building national resilience.

Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen National Security

FEMA strengthens national security by preparing the United States for catastrophic risks that could disrupt critical services, weaken communities, strain government capacity, and affect national stability. FEMA's planning, investments, and operations must be risk-informed, operationally sound, and aligned with the Nation's most consequential threats and hazards.

FEMA will prioritize efforts based on likelihood, consequence, and national value. Because risks and potential returns vary, FEMA must apply sound judgment, fiscal responsibility, and accountability when directing readiness resources. Government entities and other partners must also understand their roles in building and sustaining preparedness.

This objective reinforces FEMA's role in national readiness, continuity, consequence management, emergency communications, logistics, and interagency coordination. FEMA must be able to support incidents that cascade across sectors, jurisdictions, and regions, particularly when state and local capabilities are overwhelmed.

FEMA will enhance operational readiness

FEMA must be prepared for nationally catastrophic events and complex incidents requiring sustained federal coordination. The agency must be able to deploy, coordinate, communicate, and sustain operations under degraded, uncertain, and rapidly changing conditions.

Catastrophic events may cause mass casualties, widespread displacement, infrastructure damage, supply-chain disruption, degraded communications, extended power outages, and significant effects on government operations. They may occur with little warning, affect several regions simultaneously, or require prolonged response and recovery support.

Operational readiness requires disciplined planning, trained personnel, reliable systems, clear authorities, effective logistics, and strong partnerships.

FEMA must maintain a workforce that can transition quickly from steady state to disaster operations. Doctrine, plans, procedures, and systems must be modernized, simplified, tested, and understood by those responsible for execution.

Key priorities include:

- Focus FEMA planning, programs, and investments on threats and hazards with the greatest consequences for national security and disaster readiness.
- Improve planning and consequence management for large-scale, simultaneous, cascading, and nation-state threat scenarios.
- Strengthen incident management, field operations, logistics, supply-chain coordination, resource movement, surge capacity, and communications in degraded environments.
- Improve coordination and information sharing among federal agencies, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, and emergency management stakeholders.
- Support continuity of government and continuity of operations so essential functions continue during major disruptions.
- Use defensible risk analysis to guide grants, planning, exercises, and investments toward the highest-priority threats, vulnerabilities, and capability gaps.
- Conduct realistic exercises and strengthen corrective-action processes so findings produce measurable readiness improvements.

FEMA's readiness must be measured not only by its plans, but also by its ability to execute effectively under difficult, uncertain, and rapidly changing conditions.

Implementation Expectations

These four objectives will guide FEMA's planning, budgeting, program management, operations, and partner engagement. Each office, region, and program must assess whether its current activities align with these priorities and identify opportunities to improve execution.

All FEMA personnel will:

1. Review current programs and activities for alignment with the four objectives.
2. Identify near-term actions to improve readiness, efficiency, resilience, and accountability.
3. Assess authorities and decision-making structures to identify opportunities to delegate appropriate authority to regional and field offices and reduce unnecessary headquarters involvement.

4. Evaluate resource allocation to ensure investments reflect risk, readiness, and national value.
5. Strengthen performance measures to track strategic outcomes.
6. Improve coordination among headquarters, regions, field offices, and external partners.
7. Report barriers to efficient execution or mission delivery.
8. Institutionalize lessons from exercises, operations, audits, and after-action reviews.

FEMA leadership will use these objectives to inform agency priorities, internal reviews, policy development, and resource decisions. Program and regional leaders will ensure employees understand how their work supports the objectives.

Measures of Progress

FEMA will assess progress through practical outcomes. Specific performance measures will be developed through agency planning and implementation processes, with the following categories guiding evaluation:

- Improved readiness for catastrophic events.
- Increased state and local emergency management capabilities.
- Improved infrastructure resilience and mitigation outcomes.
- Stronger accountability and resource stewardship.
- Faster, more effective support for disaster survivors and communities.
- Stronger regional and field execution.
- Reduced administrative burdens and clearer processes.
- Better alignment of investments with national risk and value.

Success must be measurable, transparent, and tied to mission outcomes. FEMA must demonstrate how its actions improve preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, and resilience for the American people.

Conclusion

FEMA's mission is vital to the Nation's safety, security, and resilience. The American people depend on FEMA to be ready before disasters, effective during response, and accountable throughout recovery and mitigation. These objectives establish how FEMA will meet that responsibility.

Every employee has a role in advancing this direction.

Whether serving at headquarters, in a regional office, on a field assignment, at a call center, in a warehouse or operations center, or within a mission support function, each FEMA employee contributes to the agency's ability to serve the American people.

Thank you for your continued service, professionalism, and commitment to our mission. Together, we will build a FEMA that is more ready, resilient, accountable, and prepared to serve the Nation.