

**FEMA National Advisory Council Meeting**  
December 14, 2009  
Public Teleconference

This Executive Summary, submitted pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), contains a summary of the activities that took place during the National Advisory Council (NAC) teleconference on December 14, 2009. The complete transcript may be requested at FEMA-NAC@dhs.gov.

**DRAFT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**NAC Members Present:**

Dr. Kem Bennett, Chair  
Dr. Robert Gougelet, Vice Chair  
David Barron  
Ann Beauchesne  
Joseph Becker  
Joseph Bruno  
Stephen Cassidy  
Irene Collins  
Robert Connors  
Russell Decker  
Nancy J. Dragani  
Cathey Eide  
Angela Mary Elgin  
Lee Feldman  
Joanne Hayes-White  
Charles Kmet  
Kurt Krumperman  
Suzanne Mencer  
Dr. Kenneth Miller  
James Paturas  
Peter Verga

**FEMA Staff Present:**

Alyson Price, Designated Federal Officer (DFO)  
Breese Eddy, Alternate DFO  
Beth Zimmerman, Deputy Associate Administrator, Operations

**Meeting:**

The teleconference was called to order at 10:45 a.m. by Alyson Price, NAC Designated Federal Officer. The meeting was opened and presided over by Dr. Kem Bennett, NAC Chair.

**Call to Order and Roll Call – Alyson Price, NAC DFO**

- As stated in the Federal Register Notice for this meeting, members of the public wishing to offer comment were asked to do so in writing by December 4<sup>th</sup>. The FEMA NAC office received no comments.

### **Opening Remarks, Dr. Kem Bennett, NAC Chair**

- This teleconference is open to the public and meeting notes will be posted on the FEMA NAC website.
- The agenda for the February 10-11, 2010 NAC meeting in Washington will include briefings on a number of topics including the FEMA reorganization and the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review. Please email any additional topic suggestions to Alyson Price by December 28, 2009.

### **Overview and Status of Recovery Framework – Beth Zimmerman, Deputy Associate Administrator, Operations**

- Strengthening the disaster recovery initiative has been a recent focus in addition to planning, preparedness, and the National Response Framework. Moving forward, we will be looking at new solutions that address long-term complex challenges communities face in the aftermath of the disaster. At the end of August, Administrator Fugate charged us with putting together the National Disaster Recovery Framework.
- On September 29, 2009, the President signed an initiative that charged the Secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to co-chair the long-term disaster recovery working group of representatives from over 20 Agencies and Departments. This group has been working at a fast pace. The goal is to ensure a more resilient nation moving forward, one where individuals, communities and our economy can adapt to changing conditions and ultimately withstand and rapidly recover from disaster.
- The working group is using multiple channels to facilitate and engage participation from all levels of government: urban and rural communities, non-profit sectors, private industry, faith-based communities, and advocacy groups. To receive input on the 16 questions related to recovery we have convened ten meetings in conjunction with the HUD and FEMA regions and five stakeholder forums in 5 cities across the US.
- These talks aided in the creation of the [Disaster Recovery Working Group website](#), a place for participation and collaboration. This has been a great outreach effort with over 6,300 responses.
- Emerging themes from the website and discussion include the need for goal setting, a broadly applicable definition of recovery, a common operating picture, leadership, ways to improve disaster recovery programs and funding issues, mitigation pre-disaster, resiliency in the recovery process, a systematic approach for ensuring accountability, flexibility, transparency, and effective disaster assistance programs and policies.
- The President wants a high-level review of the authorities, programs and policies for disaster recovery from a current and future state perspective. The National Disaster Recovery Framework will provide operational guidance related to roles and responsibilities for all levels of government, voluntary agencies and the private sector. Both items are due to the President on April 1, 2010.
- While FEMA is a leader in this process, this is not a FEMA document; it is a national document, based on the national input of stakeholders relevant to disaster recovery.

## **NAC Member Discussion on the National Disaster Recovery Framework: Initial Input**

### *1. How would you define successful disaster recovery?*

- Do you base recovery on what it might look like from the citizen's perspective? Would this be too difficult or subjective to measure? What can actually be measured?
- Base success on the return of commerce and population to a city/area.
- Base it on the critical elements or functions required in a community to keep it functioning on a daily basis. Determine levels of recovery (such as):
  - Short term – restoration of electricity, cleanup and critical infrastructure
  - Mid term – repairing and opening structures such as businesses, schools, government facilities; provision of same level of service prior to event
  - Long term – tax base restored, population returns home in event of an evacuation.
- Recovery will be measured differently at each level of government.
- What would a city council look at to define a viable community? Tax base?
- It is possible that a community may never be the same post-disaster. A definition should include this potentiality. Consider using “New Normal” versus “Returning to Normal.”
- Sharing information is essential to disaster recovery and federal, state, tribal and local governments must work together to collect and share the information needed to drive the recovery operation. This data should be collected and shared across all agencies to track needs and monitor progress. This includes data by:
  - Jurisdiction: neighborhood, village, town and community district including the area of impact;
  - Status of impact: physical damage, critical infrastructure/key assets, essential services, security, community health, occupational safety and psychological impacts.
- Case management is a major part of successful disaster recovery.

### *2. What are the appropriate State, local and Tribal roles in leading disaster recovery efforts?*

- Each level of government needs their own role and responsibility defined so that they all appropriately own the problem.
- The FEMA Regions must have a key coordination role to foster local and State collaboration on a regional basis.
- Local government needs to understand their roles. The Federal government must give greater recognition of the leadership value of local government. Focus must be less Beltway-centric for what is a local decision. The Federal government should consider investing extra funding in post-disaster public assistance efforts; there has been tension between Federal agencies with funding and the local government employees who implement projects.
- There is a disconnect between local emergency management and FEMA. During an emergency, locals deal directly with the State and the State deals directly with FEMA. When the recovery process sets in, the State bows out. The local officials need to feel they are also a partner with FEMA.
- There is a lack of information that describes FEMA's current leadership role.
- The Federal government's responsibility is to bring Federal resources to the table and find a way to streamline the various Federal agencies rules and regulations.
- The private sector must have a role.

- The Federal role should also be one of fostering relationships between State and local governments with NGO's and the private sector; serve as an honest broker to bring all parties to the table and provide opportunity to build relationships, particularly during planning stages.
3. *How can Federal, State, and local disaster planning and recovery processes and programs be best coordinated?*
- When applying for public assistance, local jurisdictions find they must deal with several Federal agencies as a part of their process – they see a need for a one-stop shop or a more coordinated process (this issue was also raised during in the council's August 24, 2009 recommendations regarding multi-agency coordination issues in recovery).
  - Federal, State and local disaster planning must focus on the National Disaster Recovery Framework itself. Some members agree with the purpose statement [Source: Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation, accessed at <http://disasterrecoveryworkinggroup.gov/purpose-statement.cfm>] of the Long-Term Disaster Recovery Working Group that the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) must "...provide operational guidance...[that] includes defining roles and responsibilities, detailing recovery management and operational coordination, articulating communications strategies and establishing measurements for success."
    - Preparedness for us means operational planning that includes all players - the Federal, State, Tribal and local authorities - along with their tasks, responsibilities, milestones and metrics. Operational planning for us means development and implementation of detailed plan documents.
4. *What else would you like FEMA to know?*
- The council would like to know the Agency's thoughts and answers to these questions as well, and feels that understanding the Agency's viewpoint will better inform their input.
    - The council wants FEMA to provide the operational guidance to recovery and to know how FEMA sees this part.
    - Additionally, it was asked whether the reorganization would affect the recovery framework. The council felt it may also inform their input and eventual recommendations as well.
  - Some council members want to see one plan, one framework, one operations guide, one logistics guide, etc., while other members feel that one system does not work well with multiple jurisdictions and would propose an umbrella unified command with multiple systems. There was some discomfort with adhering to a process that defined success; while process is important, one may still fail while adhering to process.
  - All the key players need to be in the same room to achieve consensus on recovery. This may mean different things across the country.
  - Recovery must be an open system with many partners (NGO's, the private sector), it is not just a government response.
  - Recovery cadre personnel are often not knowledgeable about tribal culture and relationships, causing greater harm than good.
  - FEMA needs to update the antiquated application process and insufficient inspection process.

**Recommendation Language and Final Remarks**

- NAC members requested that Alyson Price, DFO capture spirit of call, key areas of agreement as well as those with varying opinions.
- Dr. Bennett requested that the summary be sent to members with a timeline for editing.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:18 pm by Alyson Price, DFO.