

**FROM EARTHQUAKES TO TERRORIST ATTACKS:
IS THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION PREPARED
FOR THE NEXT DISASTER?**

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE AND
AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISASTER RECOVERY
AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

OF THE

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HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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**FROM EARTHQUAKES TO TERRORIST
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U.S. SENATE,
JOINT HEARING WITH THE OVERSIGHT OF
GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE,
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA SUBCOMMITTEE
AND THE AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISASTER
RECOVERY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2:32 p.m., in Room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Daniel K. Akaka, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, and Hon. Mark L. Pryor, Chairman of the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs, presiding.

Present: Senators Akaka and Pryor.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR AKAKA

Senator AKAKA. I call this joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia and the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs to order.

I want to welcome our witnesses today. I want to say aloha and thank you for being here. Today, we will examine the National Capital Region's (NCRs) preparedness and response to natural and manmade disasters.

The NCR is a region defined by statute including the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, 11 local jurisdictions, three branches of the Federal Government, and over 5 million residents. More than 20 million tourists visit the NCR every year, and 340,000 Federal employees work in the area. So this is the size of that area.

This is an appropriate time to explore the NCR's emergency preparedness and response capabilities as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor and we recently marked the tenth anniversary of September 11, 2001 attacks. Both

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tragic events tested our Nation's preparedness, and September 11, 2001, exposed shortfalls in this region's readiness.

The OGM Subcommittee's oversight of NCR's preparedness has spanned several Congresses. In partnership with my former colleague and dear friend Senator Voinovich, we held a series of hearings on this issue in 2005, 2006, and 2007, focusing largely on the region's poor strategic planning.

This hearing will help us evaluate the NCR's latest strategic planning activities. The responses to recent emergencies, including the January 26, 2011 snowstorm that led to many hours of gridlock, and the East Coast earthquake in August have renewed concerns that the NCR still faces serious challenges in disaster preparedness and response 10 years after September 11.

I was particularly troubled that the public, including Federal employees, received very little guidance in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. I look forward to discussing how we can improve regional situational awareness and information sharing.

NCR members must be able to communicate with each other, make informed decisions, and provide clear, consistent information to the public. Additionally, it is important for family members to be able to connect in the crucial hours after an unexpected event. Coordinating so many jurisdictions is challenging. However, it is essential that the region operates as a cohesive and unified body during emergencies.

A Washington Post editorial argued for creating a regional structure with authority to direct incident response. NCR officials have recommended improvements within the existing framework. Recently, Senator Pryor and I requested that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) review whether the NCR's current system for preparedness and response is effective and efficient. I look forward to discussing how the NCR can be best prepared to protect the millions of people who live and work in the NCR and to preserve the many national treasures located here.

I commend the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) for revising its dismissal and closure guidance in response to the January 2011 snowstorm and working with partner agencies and the Council of Governments (COGs) to get their input. These changes should help avoid future widespread gridlock, improve safety for Federal employees and others, and enhance continuity of Government operations. I also commend the Council of Governments for its review of the snowstorm and practical recommendations to improve coordination and information sharing.

While today's hearing focuses on the Washington, D.C. area, the issues of preparedness and response are important for regional coordination in cities and States across the country. I would like to thank the members of the NCR for all of their hard work to keep us safe from harm.

Let me now recognize Senator Pryor for his opening statement. Senator Pryor.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PRYOR

Senator PRYOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to start today by recognizing that today's hearing coincides with the 70th anniversary of the surprise attacks on Pearl Harbor and re-

flect on that fateful day about the heroism that still inspires us today. But, Mr. Chairman, if you could, I know that you were actually an eyewitness to that event.

Senator AKAKA. Yes.

Senator PRYOR. Would you mind telling the Subcommittee here in just a couple of minutes about your recollections about that?

Senator AKAKA. Yes. Well, thank you, Senator Pryor. It was on Sunday, December 7, 1941. In Hawaii at that time, there were scattered clouds. It was a pretty nice day and we were getting ready for church. I was in a boarding facility there in the hills above Pearl Harbor, and about, oh, I would say about 7:45, we detected some commotion down at Pearl Harbor and immediately heard some blasts. So we looked out of our windows and could see Pearl Harbor clearly.

I must tell you, I saw them torpedo the battleships that were moored there and watched them sink in place, some of them, and also a squadron of Japanese planes flew over us. And we looked up and I was so surprised. They were green in color and they had those rising suns on the wings, so we knew it was from Japan. By then, the radio was beginning to report what was happening there, that Pearl Harbor was being attacked and that people should stay home. So that squadron that flew over us bombed and strafed Kaneohe Marine Station over the mountains. That was the beginning of a new era for the world and our Nation.

The school that I was attending at that time was a military type of school. We were activated and sent up into the mountains for about a month, because we got information that there may be paratroopers landing in the hills and we had to protect the water systems. So, in a sense, immediately, we were engaged.

What I did not know until later, when I read it, is immediately, the military government took over, and so Hawaii went under martial law and General Walter Short was placed as military Governor. I remember his first announcement was, "All citizens in Hawaii will obey the commands of military officers," and that was the beginning.

It was quite a sight, and for days, Virginia just burned. Black smoke kept rising for days out of those battleships. But our country did respond, and it took us some time, but we fought and won the war. The war changed this country and ultimately made it better, as well as the rest of the world.

So thank you for giving me that opportunity. I do not usually talk about this, nor do I tell people about what I just told you, but that is what happened to me.

Senator PRYOR. Well, thank you for sharing that. The reason I wanted you to do that is because, obviously, that is an event that shaped the world and shaped United States history, but it also helped to shape you as a man and as a Senator—

Senator AKAKA. Yes.

Senator PRYOR [continuing]. So thank you for your service and thank you for sharing.

I have a longer opening statement that I will submit for the record, but Washington, D.C. has gone through some recent weather events and other things and we see continued gridlock in communications. We see gridlock in traffic. It just raises questions

about are there leadership gaps here? Is there bureaucratic fragmentation that needs to be addressed, without knowing who is responsible in an emergency? It is a good time for us to sit back and ask these sometimes hard questions about what is going on in the D.C. region.

Now, I will say that the emergency responders work tirelessly to keep the Capitol itself safe and keep the Capital Region safe from harm, and they deserve our recognition for their great service. The size of this metropolitan area and the multiple State and local governments that have to be coordinated is quite a challenge, and also the unique threats to this area present a challenge, and we understand that, but I think this is part of our oversight, to ask these questions.

But there is a huge risk in not being prepared. The Federal Government in Washington, D.C. obviously is the nerve center, command and control for all the Nation's military, all of our diplomatic missions, all of our government, all of our emergency response all over the country in the event that we have another September 11, 2001, or Pearl Harbor type of event, heaven forbid that we do. This area is absolutely critical to keeping things going around the country and around the world as we need them to.

So we also have to understand that in this very difficult budget cycle and this economy, with revenues being down and we are seeing layoffs, we are seeing tightening of belts in the various public entities, from the Federal Government on down to local government, we understand that it is a time to also look at efficiencies and try to make sure that we eliminate any inefficiencies, any wasted steps, and try to make sure that we squeeze every single dollar we can for preparedness and get us over the finish line like we want to.

So today, we are talking about improving coordination here in the National Capital Region for emergency preparedness, but we also need to keep our eye on the larger ball of preparedness around the Nation. One example in our region would be Memphis, Tennessee, which is a big metropolitan area. It has the heaviest population in that little region of the country. But Memphis and that area has a very large impact on Eastern Arkansas, Northern Mississippi, Western Tennessee, and even the southern parts of Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, down in there, because they all sort of touch down in that area. And so if something terrible were to happen in Memphis, because it is such a huge transportation and media and health services center, it would clearly have an impact on the rest of the region.

In October, our two Subcommittees collaborated on a Government Accountability Office request asking for further examination of the National Capital Region's current system of an all hazards preparation. Today's hearing will serve as a jumping off point for GAO. It will also help us determine what we can do and Congress to ensure that our Nation's cities are equipped to respond effectively to emergencies.

So, Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I look forward to hearing from the witnesses.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Senator Pryor. I look forward to hearing from our panel of witnesses, also, and I want to say mahalo, thank you, again, for your participation.

We have Steward Beckham, the Director of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Dean Hunter, Deputy Director of Facilities, Security, and Contracting at the Office of Personnel Management; Bill Jenkins, Director of the Homeland Security and Justice Team at the Government Accountability Office; Richard Muth, Executive Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency; Terrie Suit, Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security for the Commonwealth of Virginia; and Paul Quander, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice for the District of Columbia.

It is the custom of this Subcommittee to swear in all witnesses. I would ask that each of you stand and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give this Subcommittee is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Mr. BECKHAM. I do.

Mr. HUNTER. I do.

Mr. JENKINS. I do.

Mr. MUTH. I do.

Ms. SUIT. I do.

Mr. QUANDER. I do.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much. Let it be noted for the record that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Before we start, I want you to know that your full written statement will be part of the record, and I would also like to remind you to please limit your oral remarks to 5 minutes.

Mr. Beckham, will you please proceed with your statement.

TESTIMONY OF STEWARD D. BECKHAM,¹ DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION COORDINATION, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. BECKHAM. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, Chairman Pryor, and Ranking Member Paul, and other distinguished Members of the Subcommittees. I am Steward Beckham, Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before both Subcommittees today to discuss the way FEMA coordinates with our local, State, and Federal partners in the National Capital Region.

NCRC was established by Congress in the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Along with other preparedness offices, NCRC was transferred to FEMA after passage of the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA), in 2007. NCRC's mission is to oversee and coordinate Federal programs for and relationships with State, local, and Federal authorities. My office works closely with Federal, State, local, and private sector partners to enhance preparedness in the National Capital Region.

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Beckham appears in the appendix on page 35.

My participation with the NCR Senior Policy Group (SPG), is one example of NCRC's engagement with stakeholders. As the NCRC Director, I represent the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FEMA. As you will hear from my colleagues, Richard Muth and Terrie Suit, the SPG is comprised of the Homeland Security Advisors and Chief Emergency Managers for Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.

The SPG plays a key role in sustaining a coordinated regional approach to homeland security and strengthening integrated decisionmaking and planning. Other partners include the Joint Federal Committee, which is comprised of members from the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial Branches, the Emergency Preparedness Council, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and many other NCR officials. NCRC actively engages with chief administrative officers, public health officials, first responders, emergency managers, leaders from the private sector, and non-profit communities and other stakeholders in support of homeland security efforts.

With NCR partners, NCRC plans, leads, or participates in exercises, drills, and events that occur with frequency in this region. Consistent with our statute, NCRC provides the technical support to State and local partners. Interoperability, and regional risk are two examples.

Additionally, NCRC provides NCR-specific situational awareness to NCR partners through the FEMA-NCR Watch Desk. The NCR Watch Desk is the sole source of NCR-specific situational awareness at DHS. The Watch Desk links Federal, State, and local partners. This includes selected Federal agencies that are strategically located but that would otherwise not be a part of the homeland security or emergency management information system. The above efforts bolster information exchange and integrated planning.

In accordance with the National Response Framework, emergencies are managed locally. During a disaster, the States and the District maintain their sovereign authorities and work with FEMA Region III to obtain direct assistance for unmet needs or other aid approved by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. During an incident, FEMA's operational entities have lead for the agency. If needed, NCRC is able to augment FEMA Region III and support the Federal Coordinating Officer by providing enhanced situational awareness and consequence analysis capabilities, coordination with NCR partners and agency representatives through NCR Operation Centers.

Unfortunately, sometimes non-Stafford Act incidents take on a greater significance because of the sheer amount of commuter traffic within the National Capital Region. This occurred during the winter storms when Federal Government operations in the NCR were officially suspended. Federal agencies follow the guidelines set by the Office of Personnel Management to ensure the safety of their employees. NCRC and State and local partners worked with OPM and provided input as the agency developed its newly released guidelines. The decision to close Federal Government operations in the region rests with OPM.

The Subcommittee has asked me to say a few words about the NCR's Homeland Security Strategic Plan, which was created by the

NCR, the Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC). The EPC includes elected and appointed officials from Federal, State, and local government as well as private sector and nonprofit leaders. I participate along with these other leaders.

During 2010, NCR partners updated the Strategic Plan. The NCR Strategic Plan, along with other State, local, and national plans serves as a road map for strengthening capabilities to realize the NCR's vision for a safe and secure region. Major goals included in the NCR Strategic Plan are enhanced interoperable communications, enhanced information sharing and situational awareness, including the communication of accurate, timely information with the public, the enhancement of critical infrastructure protection and further development of core capabilities such as mass care and coordinated alert and warning systems.

In drafting the 2010 Strategic Plan, NCR partners built on the principles agreed to in developing the 2006 strategic plan. The four principles are inclusion of NCR partners, provision of a variety of forms for stakeholder involvement, respect for jurisdictional authority, and assuring the preparedness needs are reflected across all jurisdictional boundaries. There was a thorough process to provide extensive input and review by subject matter experts in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. NCR leaders on the Emergency Preparedness Council, which is responsible for the Strategic Plan, as well as the SPG and chief administrative officers provided input at all stages of the process.

In conclusion, FEMA will continue to support and collaborate with our regional partners to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. Building on decades of regional collaboration, Federal, State, local, and regional partners remain committed to a common vision of working together toward a safe and secure NCR.

Chairmen Akaka and Pryor, Ranking Members Johnson and Paul, and Members of the Subcommittee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have at the conclusion of these remarks.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Beckham.

Mr. BECKHAM. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Hunter, will you please proceed with your statement.

TESTIMONY OF DEAN S. HUNTER,¹ DEPUTY DIRECTOR, FACILITIES, SECURITY, AND CONTRACTING, U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Mr. HUNTER. Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka, Chairman Pryor, Ranking Member Johnson, Ranking Member Paul, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittees. My name is Dean Hunter and I am the Deputy Director for Facilities, Security, and Contracting at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. In this position, I have primary responsibility for security and emergency management at OPM.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss OPM's role in hazards affecting the operational

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Hunter appears in the appendix on page 40.

status of the National Capital Region as well as our partnerships with FEMA and other Federal, State, and local emergency management entities.

By law, individual Federal agencies possess the authority to manage their workforces and to determine the appropriate response during emergencies. Nonetheless, in order to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach on a region-wide basis, Federal, State, and local authorities have traditionally looked to OPM to determine the operating status of the Federal Government across the D.C. area. OPM maintains a 24-hour operations center to actively monitor unfolding events.

As emergencies arise, our standard protocols include participation in conference calls hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) in order to develop situational awareness, facilitate the exchange of information, and coordinate communications and response efforts among Federal, State, and local agencies and other stakeholders. Participants in these structured calls typically include over 100 Federal, State, and local partners in all applicable disciplines, including weather, transportation, emergency management, law enforcement, utility companies, and school districts.

The collaborative feedback of this network of stakeholders drives OPM decisions during emergencies. Ultimately, OPM's decision serves to carefully balance the safety and security of the Federal workforce and the public with the need to maintain the continuity of government operations.

Once made, a rapid dissemination of the OPM decision takes many forms, from direct notification to media outlets, to posting on the OPM webpage and call-in line, notification to COG, Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO), the White House and Congress, to e-mail alert notifications to subscribed employees, Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS) notification, and updating social media, including Twitter and Facebook.

We review and update our dismissal and closure policies on an annual basis in order to continue to ensure that we are able to make the most well informed and timely decisions. For example, Federal offices in the National Capital Region were closed for four consecutive days during the historic snowstorm of February 2010. Partly in response, last year, we updated our policies to add "Unscheduled Telework" as a new operating status option for agencies to provide their employees the ability to telework and maintain continuity of operations.

This year, we participated in an interagency review effort with our partners in COG to examine potential emergency management improvements in the National Capital Region. The resulting COG report, issued on November 9, details a number of recommendations to improve regional coordination and communication, including the establishment of a Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program as well as a Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC) to provide consistent messaging.

Our collaboration with COG and the Chief Human Capital Officers also led to the incorporation of additional options to our D.C. Dismissal Guide, including shelter in place, an early dismissal with a fixed final departure time, and an immediate departure option.

We do not contemplate issuing these announcements very often, but have added them to our tool kit to illustrate the full range of potential emergency situations that agencies might face, which will help agencies plan for emergency situations.

We are committed to making operating status decisions as far in advance as feasible in order to reduce uncertainty and minimize demands upon transportation infrastructure. It will always remain our goal to have employees home safely prior to the onset of a dangerous condition.

For anticipated late afternoon weather events, OPM will consider the most strategic options. For example, OPM could use unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework at the beginning of the day to reduce traffic into the city and, if necessary, followup with a staggered departure announcement with a final departure time after the workday has begun if conditions deteriorate sooner than originally forecast.

OPM maintains a strong working relationship with FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. Working together, we have developed a strategic plan and concept of operations plan for catastrophic events as well as two tabletop emergency preparedness training exercises. We are expanding our efforts in the coming year to develop a Web-based preparedness course and an NCR Federal Workforce Preparedness brochure. We will continue to leverage those relationships and utilize the lessons learned from each of them to improve decisionmaking and communication in the interest of enhancing the safety of the Federal workforce and the public.

Thank you for this opportunity. I am happy to address any questions you might have.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Hunter.

Mr. Jenkins, will you please proceed with your statement.

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM O. JENKINS, JR., ¹ DIRECTOR, HOMELAND SECURITY AND JUSTICE TEAM, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Chairman Akaka and Chairman Pryor. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on the status of efforts to enhance disaster preparedness in the National Capital Region. My statement today focuses on the NCR's latest Strategic Plan, issued in 2010.

Basically, preparing for disasters requires identifying risk and potential consequences and identifying what needs to be done, by whom, and how well it should be done. For example, this includes identifying, first, the nature of the risk faced in specific geographic areas; second, the types and scale of the potential consequences arising from these risks; third, the desired outcomes in addressing those consequences; fourth, the capabilities needed to achieve those desired outcomes, including command and control; fifth, who should fund, develop, and maintain specific capabilities; and sixth, metrics for assessing whether needed capabilities are available for deployment.

¹The prepared statement of Mr. Jenkins appears in the appendix on page 46.

Well crafted and executed operational plans are critical to effective disaster preparedness and response, but sound strategic planning is also critical. A coordinated strategy to establish and monitor the achievement of regional goals and priorities is fundamental and can provide a guide and framework for operational planning.

We compared the NCR's 2010 Strategic Plan and its supporting documents with six desirable characteristics we have identified for strategic plans to support complex undertakings, such as NCR preparedness. We reviewed the content of the plan and its associated documents, such as investment plans, but we did not evaluate whether or how well NCR has fostered and implemented or coordinated its capability efforts. Work remains in completing the plans, tasks, milestones, and metrics for implementing the Strategic Plan and we are initiating work on the NCR's preparedness in response to a request from these two Subcommittees.

Overall, we found that the Strategic Plan generally addressed each of the six characteristics and is more comprehensive than its 2006 predecessor.

Briefly, with regard to each characteristic, we found, first, the purpose, scope, and methodology of the plan is reasonably clear. It focuses on investments in new and existing capabilities, primarily those funded by Urban Area Security Initiatives (UASI) grants, and the support of NCR jurisdictions' execution of their own operational plans.

Second, problem definition and risk assessment. The plan generally addresses the particular problems and threats identified for the region. It clearly updates and prioritizes goals from the previous version and the NCR says it will be making decisions soon about the timing and methodology of the next risk assessment.

Third, goals, subordinate objectives, and activities and performance measures. The strategy describes what it is intended to achieve and steps over the next 3 to 5 years to do that. However, the performance plan to monitor progress is not yet complete and NCR officials said that subject matter experts are currently completing progress reports on the metrics to be used for each of the strategy's initiatives.

Fourth, resources, investments, and risk management. The strategy includes information and processes designed to help address what it will cost to implement the strategy, including the investments needed and the sources and types of resources to support them. The strategy includes 16 investment plans that are currently out for NCR partner comment. We did not evaluate how well each investment plan's content is designed to achieve the objectives it is intended to support.

One concern we have is the Strategic Plan's principle focus on UASI grant resources. Beginning in our 2004 report on the NCR, we have expressed the need for the NCR to explicitly and fully consider the totality of resources available within the region to achieve preparedness objectives. Moreover, the plan does not identify or explicitly consider in-kind resources that may be available from the Department of Defense, the National Guard Bureau, or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Fifth, organizational roles, responsibilities and coordination. The Strategic Plan's Governance Appendix details the roles and respon-

sibilities of the various NCR organizations involved in all hazard preparedness. For example, the Emergency Preparedness Council is described as the body providing oversight of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and the Strategic Plan to identify and address readiness gaps.

Finally, sixth, integration and implementation. The strategy addresses how it is intended to integrate with the various NCR jurisdictions, strategies, goals, objectives, and activities and their plans to implement the strategy. An appendix describes how NCR's strategic plan aligns with national, State, and local strategies with the goal of identifying common goals, objectives, and initiatives to be implemented by the region.

In conclusion, a well defined, comprehensive Homeland Security Strategic Plan whose implementation is tracked and measured is an essential component of effective preparedness. The ultimate value of a Strategic Plan, no matter how well done, is its usefulness as a guide for policy and decisionmakers in setting priorities, allocating resources, and balancing risk and resource limitations. Having developed a generally good Strategic Plan, the NCR now faces the challenge of effectively implementing it and we will be following the NCR's efforts as it does so.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my remarks. I would be pleased to respond to any questions you or other Members of the Subcommittee may have.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. Muth, will you please proceed with your statement.

**TESTIMONY OF RICHARD MUTH,¹ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MARYLAND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, STATE
OF MARYLAND**

Mr. MUTH. Good afternoon Members of the Subcommittee. It is an honor to be invited here today to discuss our shared commitment to ensure the National Capital Region is prepared for emergencies. My name is Richard Muth and I am the Executive Director of Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

I bring nearly 40 years of experience at both the local and State level to bear on these issues. I have been the State Director for Emergency Management for about 4 years. Previous to that, I spent 33 years at the local level, first as a firefighter, emergency medical technician, and then retiring as the Baltimore County Emergency Manager to come to the State. The reason I state that is I am not your academic on this Subcommittee. I am kind of the rubber-hits-the-road type of guy here.

The Maryland Emergency Management Agency is the lead agency for coordinating emergency preparedness planning, response, and recovery during and after significant events, and that is for the entire State of Maryland. Local police, fire, and emergency medical personnel are almost always the first to respond to emergencies. When they exhaust their capabilities or need additional resources, they turn to the State. We coordinate the Maryland State and local agencies while also working with our regional partners in the District of Columbia and Virginia.

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Muth appears in the appendix on page 70.

We work not just during disasters, but every day with our local jurisdictions and our regional partners to improve the National Capital Region's response. We do this based on a strong regional strategic plan, through everyday interactions and exercises and standing regional work groups, as well as by supporting innovative communications and technology tools.

The first moments of any emergency event that occurs without warning are inherently chaotic and confusing. Initial confusion often leads to cascading effects as the individual decisions aggregate into a broad, far-reaching consequence. That is what happened during the earthquake. Initial confusion led to the public reaction and resulted in congested roads, slow transit, and tied-up networks, et cetera.

Public safety radio communications, however, were not impacted during either the January 26 storm or the earthquake. This is a result of significant effort in the region to ensure that our first responders have interoperable and redundant communications systems no matter the situation.

Our focus in Maryland is and will continue to be to build a resilient community. A resilient community has three primary elements: Resilient systems and utilities, resilient community planning, and a resilient citizenry. Resilient utilities quickly come back online after disruption because of redundancy. A resilient communications network is both redundant and robust for first responders. A resilient citizenry has been educated on what to do and can support emergency responders by keeping themselves safe and out of harm's way.

Since January of last year, we have made changes that we believe will continue to improve our capabilities. We have invested in the Virtual Joint Information Center that will improve our coordinated and public messaging, invested in regional situation awareness, including the new Regional Information Center, and we continue to invest significant time, effort, and funds to build resilient communications for our responders.

We have not stopped our efforts there. Other critical systems have been improved, as well. Maryland has expanded the availability of shared video cameras from 45 in 2009 to just under 600 today. In August, we launched a new Public Emergency Management Mapping System called OSPREY, to get needed information to the public during an emergency, and just in the past quarter, it has had over a quarter-of-a-million hits.

Everyone in the region also uses a single incident management software, WebEOC, that allows us to seamlessly share information, and that system is constantly being improved.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the evacuation comments that come up from time to time. For the first time in recent memory, Maryland had a mandatory evacuation of the barrier islands of Ocean City during Hurricane Irene, and we also had a hospital and two nursing homes evacuate. This successful, orderly, and proactive evacuation of approximately a quarter-of-a-million people took just under 24 hours to complete. An evacuation of the District or the NCR would be exponentially more complicated and a significantly more time consuming effort, even if prior notice is available. One

thing to keep in mind is evacuation is an option of the last resort, not an option of the first resort.

Maryland, together with regional partners, has developed an integrated model for evacuation plans that is being used not just throughout the National Capital Region, but also in other States to create fully coordinated plans. New state-of-the-art computer models are being used to validate, test, and improve these plans.

To conclude, I would like to urge a shared investment in the foundations of preparedness, building this resilient community I mentioned and its citizenry. The region, the State of Maryland, and the Nation should look for ways to educate young people in how to be ready for an emergency. We should work to engage private businesses in preparedness and for their support during a response. Maryland is already working toward those goals. My agency on January 1 will be launching the Maryland Office of Resiliency. We must educate our citizens and engage them in their own preparedness. A prepared public will help to lift the heavy burden placed on emergency workers, whether during a snowstorm or a terror attack, by keeping themselves safe.

Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Muth.

Ms. Suit, please proceed with your statement.

TESTIMONY OF HON. TERRIE L. SUIT,¹ SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOMELAND SECURITY, COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Ms. SUIT. Chairman Akaka, Chairman Pryor, on behalf of Governor McDonnell and the Commonwealth of Virginia, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify here before you today.

Virginia shares an outstanding relationship with our partner jurisdictions and responders in the National Capital Region. I would like to recognize our outstanding public servants, the area's first responders, who are among the finest in the Nation. They responded in an exemplary manner on September 11, 2001 when Arlington, Virginia, was attacked at the Pentagon by terrorists, and they continue to respond every day to the emergencies in this region. We could not be prouder of them.

Virginia is home to nearly 48 percent of the NCR's citizens. Our local counties and cities have what is called a manager form of government as opposed to an elected executive or a strong mayoral chair. These managers are the appointed administrative officers and are vested with the authority necessary to manage the operations of their respective jurisdictions. Our emergency professionals follow the National Incident Management System (NIMS) during emergency events. With the exception of Arlington, highways as well as secondary roads in Virginia are managed by the State through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Virginia works with our NCR partners to accomplish strategic planning and training through multiple organizations, such as the NCR Senior Policy Group, the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) Homeland Security Executive Committee, the NCR Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC), the Regional Emergency Sup-

¹The prepared statement of Ms. Suit appears in the appendix on page 85.

port Function (RESF) Committees—there are 16 of those—and the Regional Programmatic Working Groups, five, all of which collaborate to assist the SPG and the CAOs with the evaluation and the updating of the NCR Strategic Plan. We spend a lot of time together here in the capital.

NCR preparedness is ongoing. Virginia has recently completed our updated evacuation plan for Northern Virginia, and participants in this planning included both local, Federal, and District partners. Considerable planning has been done to prepare for both subsequent attacks on the Pentagon, to include annual exercises with participants from across the region, and other potential emergencies. NCR health partners have collaborated on response plans for biological, radiologic, and chemical events.

NCR decisionmakers coordinate in advance of and during emergencies through numerous information sharing platforms. These include e-mail, text alert, conference calls facilitated via RICCS as well as information sharing tools such as WebEOC, the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC), which is transportation related, and common operating pictures through VIPER and RITIS. These are geospatial pictures. The Washington Area Warning and Alert System provides a “when all else fails” means for communications to over 200 facilities.

To facilitate face-to-face decisionmaking, Virginia has colocated our regional decisionmakers for the Virginia Department of Transportation, Emergency Management, and State Police in a 24/7 operations center at the Fairfax, Virginia Public Safety Tactical Operations Center (PSTOC).

In addition to daily use radios, we have two strategic radio caches in the NCR. Each cache contains over 500 portable radios, satellite communications capabilities, and interoperability devices that can connect NCR jurisdictions as well as Federal entities.

General preparedness messaging is ongoing. Virginia is currently engaged in our Winter Preparedness Campaign and citizens can learn how to prepare for the season by accessing www.readyvirginia.gov, and this information is available to all of the NCR residents. For commuters, this is the time to prepare vehicles and acquire appropriate winter wear. Most importantly, commuters need to be prepared to stay in place when travel conditions are projected to be unsafe.

Transportation capacity is always an issue in the NCR. On a normal workday, the workforce has a staggered commute. In an emergency, the workforce tends to leave all at once, which creates gridlock. Staying in place is critical for managing through current and preventing subsequent emergencies, and staying in place means that citizens need to plan in advance for the care of loved ones, know the emergency plans for their children’s schools and care centers, and share their own plans with care providers and loved ones in advance in case the phone and cell service in the region is interrupted. These are all the messages that we are constantly putting out and aggressively putting out today. Citizens need to monitor weather and commuting conditions.

The NCR Public Information Officer (PIO) Committee has established the NCR Virtual Joint Information Center, which just went live 2 days ago. This is at www.capitalregionupdates.gov, and this

is a single web stop for the public to access all current NCR event information and to sign up for text and e-mail alerts.

Emergencies are localized events. The vast geography of the NCR means it may be sunny in one part of the area but snowing in another, and that is why bottom-up incident management is the national standard. Responders and emergency officials on the ground are empowered with delegated authorities from their principals to make the public safety decisions necessary to protect our citizens. This is NIMS. This is the National Response Framework. All of our responders are Incident Command System (ICS) trained and that is how we manage incidents, from the bottom up.

Every incident provides the opportunity for lessons learned. The events of January and the earthquake have helped to change policy, and we embrace the new policies that OPM has committed to enact going forward.

By abiding by the National Response Framework and employing the National Incident Management System, we are able to successfully manage our events, and understanding these systems, avoiding policy decisions that will confuse or conflict with this doctrine is critical to our ability to continue to effectively respond to emergencies.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Ms. Suit.

Mr. Quander, will you please proceed with your statement.

**TESTIMONY OF PAUL A. QUANDER, JR.,¹ DEPUTY MAYOR FOR
PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Mr. QUANDER. Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka and Chairman Pryor. My name is Paul Quander. I serve the District of Columbia as the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. In that role, it is my responsibility to provide direction, guidance, support, and coordination to the District's public safety agencies to develop and lead interagency public safety initiatives that improve the quality of life in the District of Columbia.

As the Nation's Capital, we share our borders with the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Maryland. In the 68.3 square miles that we call home, there are 40 bridges and numerous tunnels and overpasses. There are 1,500 miles of public roads in the city. All three branches of our Federal Government are located within the boundaries of the city. Additionally, the District hosts 45,300 businesses, 17 colleges and universities, and four military installations. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the District of Columbia has over 601,000 residents and our population increases every day. New construction projects continue and signs of growth and vitality show themselves every day.

Each day, we welcome between 600,000 and 1,000,000 people—commuters, visitors, and students—into the District on our roads and our rails. These commuters come into the city from Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Delaware every day. Further, the city hosts more than 15 million visitors annually, according to information gathered from Destination D.C. and the National Park Service (NPS).

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Quander appears in the appendix on page 91.

One of the many agencies that I provide oversight to is the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), whose mission is to support and coordinate homeland security and emergency management efforts, ensuring that the District of Columbia's all hazards emergency operations are prepared to protect against, plan for, respond to, and recover from natural and man-made hazards. This is accomplished by developing plans and procedures to ensure emergency response and recovery capabilities for all emergencies, coordinating emergency response allocation for emergencies in disaster incidents, providing training for all emergency responders, and coordinating all major special events and street closings.

In addition and in furtherance of this mission, HSEMA also provides public awareness and outreach programs as well as a 24-hour emergency operations center which has special capabilities and serves as one of the region's central points of communication during regional emergencies.

One of the agency's unique capabilities is that it serves as the Regional State Administrative Agency (SAA), for the Homeland Security Grant Program for the National Capital Region. HSEMA has served in this role since 2007. From 2007 through 2011, HSEMA has been responsible for administering more than \$471 million to jurisdictions within the NCR. Historically, most of the funding has been in UASI which, as you know, provides funding to address the unique planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas. This funding has provided the NCR with the opportunity to provide meaningful support to jurisdictions, allowing us to ensure that as a region we are addressing our challenges and preparing and equipping the boots on the ground, our first responders.

As we transition to discuss regional issues, we are not able to do so without speaking of the collaboration that the National Capital Region enjoys because of the work of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The MWCOG provides an opportunity for partners from across the region to discuss and strategize around regional issues. These issues, from City Council Administrative Homeland Security, Emergency Preparedness Council, the National Capital Regional Senior Policy Group, and others.

As a practical matter, the District of Columbia could not do what it does each day in serving its constituents and stakeholders if it did not have a strong relationship with partners within our borders, to include our Federal partners. Each day, we work with any number of entities from the National Park Service and the Park Police to the FBI, and Secret Service, to the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the National Capital Region Coordination of FEMA and the Office of Personnel Management. Effective coordination and relationship building cannot wait for a crisis. It must be developed and nurtured on an ongoing basis.

Likewise, we work on a daily basis with our colleagues from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland, and cities and counties from each jurisdiction that make up the National Capital Region. Aside from the regularly scheduled calls that the Senior Policy Group has to discuss regional issues, the District's rep-

representatives and the Director and Deputy Director of HSEMA attend monthly meetings.

One of the issues and one of the goals that we have reached has been mentioned earlier, and that is the MATOC program and strengthening our multi-agency coordination among transportation agencies. The District, in our 24-hour, 365-day Joint All Hazards Center, we have combined our Traffic Management Center function as an improvement so that we can coordinate services.

The District and its partners are involved in training and exercise activities from planning through execution. We have several members who have a seat on the Regional Exercise and Training Oversight Panel.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my remarks and I look forward to responding to any questions that you may have. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Quander, for your statement, and to all of you, thank you very much for your statements.

Mr. Hunter, you testified before a House Subcommittee in October that OPM had communication challenges in coordinating with NCR partners after the August 23 earthquake which resulted in the delayed announcement on the operating status of the Federal Government. My question to you is, would you please further explain these problems and whether they have been resolved.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We initially had difficulties in our communications capabilities from both our Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) cards, to operate on traditional landline phones, as well as our wireless priority for cell service. Those difficulties were fairly short lived. As my colleague, Ms. Suit, mentioned, we were able to obtain some situational awareness through the Washington Area Warning Alert System during that point in time. We were able to also make contact with D.C. HSEMA as well as FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. So while we did have some initial difficulties in communication and we are working in an after-action capacity with FEMA and other agencies to look at how to strengthen those capabilities, we did have success through the Washington Area Warning Alert System.

But if I could add, one of the things that we noted in dealing with the earthquake, as also my colleague, Mr. Muth, testified, is that in the initial response to any no-notice event, it is very chaotic. And through the fog, you will need to take some time to develop some level of situational awareness. That hampered our capabilities from the standpoint that we did not have immediate damage assessments, nor were we fairly certain at the initial onset exactly what had happened. So it takes time to gather that information and to make that decision.

One of the things that we noted and we have strengthened in our D.C. Dismissal Guide Policy is that need for individual agencies to be able to act when there is an immediate need for the safety and security of their employees. They have that authority, and to not wait for OPM's decision when they need to proceed immediately.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much.

This next question is for the five other witnesses as a followup question. It took nearly an hour and a half after the earthquake for NCR decisionmakers to participate in a regional conference call. The question is, were other NCR decisionmakers having trouble communicating, and what lessons were learned about NCR communication and coordination after the earthquake? Mr. Beckham.

Mr. BECKHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Because the August 23 event not only occurred or affected the National Capital Region, it also impacted other parts of Virginia and Maryland, as well, and I will leave it to my colleagues to restate this, but they had responsibilities that were statewide and were probably or most likely engaged in dealing with their particular leadership at the State level as well as their personnel to do the assessments not only in the National Capital Region, but the other parts of Maryland and Virginia.

As Mr. Hunter did state, there was communication. He mentioned WAWAS. We also had our WebEOC operational as well as the fact that all Emergency Operations Centers were able to talk to each other at that time. The Regional Information and Coordination Communication System (RICCS), was also operational and was transmitting messages back and forth to all of the distribution on that system, including all of us here at the table, so that we did have our situational awareness and we were sharing information through that type of media.

The conference call that you mentioned, I believe a page went out to the COG, which is the manager of the conference call, and they designated the time when everybody would be available, and as you mentioned, an hour and a half after the incident is the time when everybody could get together and answer any questions or resolve any issues that were occurring.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. We have not looked at that issue. We are going to look at this issue and a number of others in response to the Committee's request, including the after action reports and lessons learned. But we have not looked at that issue at this point.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Muth.

Mr. MUTH. It is interesting. As we are going back through this, in my mind, I was reminded that it took me a while to even figure out myself what was going on, as never experiencing that before. And our initial reaction at the State was to make sure all those nuclear power plants and other critical infrastructures were safe and up and running. So that took our initial attempt probably an hour or longer to even start.

And being that—we have the responsibility for the whole State, so at no time did we say, OK, let us see what is going on in the NCR. We were monitoring traffic and everything else from Maryland's side, as I am sure Virginia was doing, as D.C. was. But from my office, speaking on my office alone, Emergency Management, we were not concentrating on the NCR at that point when that earthquake hit. So it may be that we need to work on identifying somebody that immediately concentrates on that piece.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Ms. Suit.

Ms. SUIT. When you say the decisionmakers, we abide by NIMS, by ICS. The decisionmakers are the boots on the ground during an

emergency. We do not micro-manage the emergency response from the top down. The decisionmakers had the authorities necessary, already vested with them, to do what they needed to do during the initial response. They receive those authorities through code, through an Executive Order, and through both our State Virginia Emergency Response Plan, our Operations Plan—we call it the COVEOP—as well as the Local Emergency Operations Plan. So the people responding are not waiting for a decisionmaker on high to say it is OK to do this or to do that. They are acting. They are doing what they need to do.

From a managerial level, we have colocated our decisionmakers for transportation, emergency management, and safety, public safety, with the State Police at the PSTOC in Fairfax. That is where I was also located. And so we were talking face-to-face. And I was also immediately communicating with the Governor. As you are aware, the earthquake was centered in Mineral, Virginia, and so we had a lot going on.

I did know it was an earthquake. I went to high school in San Diego and immediately dove under my desk when an earthquake started.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Mr. Quander.

Mr. QUANDER. When an event takes place like the earthquake, the event is first local, that local response where we have to assess the damage and respond immediately to the pressing issues. Once that is done, then we can inform our regional partners what issues we face and then we can take a look at the region, what is happening.

But as Ms. Suit indicated, it is from the bottom up. We have to respond to the emergency. We have to address that emergency. Then we take a look at where we are in our respective jurisdictions and then where are we regionally. How are we responding. But we first have to put out the fire and then we deal with the other issues.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Senator Pryor.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to start down on this end of the table with the State and the District people, if I could, Mr. Chairman, and that is last January we had a snowstorm, and I am curious from all of your perspectives if that is a fair comparison to our preparedness in a terrorist event or if that is an apples and oranges comparison. Mr. Muth.

Mr. MUTH. Certainly. I do not think it is a comparison. First of all, what we experienced, what you experienced, was up and down the whole East Coast. So it was not the NCR that was gridlocked. It was the whole East Coast that was gridlocked.

The reason for that was the storm in the morning was ice. They salted the roads. There was an increase in the temperatures. We had storms come through in the afternoon that were not of a frozen type that washed all the salt off. Before everything had a chance to be reapplied, it refroze again. It just happened to freeze again right at rush hour. So you had this perfect storm, no pun intended, that was all coming together at the same time.

So I do not think a snowstorm and all its inherent problems that come along with that really can be a comparison to evacuations in

any other term. I think each one is its own and has to be assessed on its own. That would be my thoughts.

Senator PRYOR. Yes, that is why I said it. Ms. Suit.

Ms. SUI. I would absolutely agree. I was on 395 and had the misfortune of watching the plane go into the Pentagon and then was in the traffic for about 4 hours making my way out of the NCR that day.

In the snowstorm, you had the added situation of the weather. We had people abandoning their vehicles, which is extremely problematic for our highway personnel, to get up there, get tow trucks and move those vehicles. I would not compare the two at all.

What I would say is that we have had an opportunity to review what took place and to establish new policies, and I applaud OPM for embracing two things, an earlier decision and not bringing the workforce in when we have bad weather projected, but also embracing a strategy of staying in place. In any event it is safer for the public, for our citizens to stay in place. If we have a terrorist attack, if we have any kind of contamination, leaving the building exposes them to much higher levels of contamination and of unsafe situations than staying in place, and that is the biggest message that we need to really get out there with our citizens. Stay. Wait. Wait for more information. Do no harm. Stay where you are until we get you more additional information.

Senator PRYOR. Mr. Quander.

Mr. QUANDER. I concur, but I also realize, as we all do, that disasters are rarely announced, and because of the events in January, because of the circumstances almost being a perfect storm, it caused severe problems for us. But we, I believe, have learned from that. When traffic does not move, citizens cannot get to where they need to be. They cannot get home. They cannot take care of their children. They cannot take care of their other responsibilities. So it has an impact.

Although there may be different reasons, different scenarios, the result is the same, and we need to learn, and I think we have learned. We have made changes and improvements. And I think we have to look at the take-aways from January. What are we doing differently now? What are the changes? And that is the significance, I believe.

Senator PRYOR. Ms. Suit, let me followup on one thing you said about stay in place, and Mr. Quander alluded to it there, and that is the issue—one of the issues would be your children being in school. I know that what you are saying is staying in place is rational, it is the right policy and all those things, but when it is a parent and their child or children, they are going to try to get to those children, and that is just human nature and we understand that.

So how should we handle that? Would you recommend, or have you all considered trying to work with the schools to sort of have safe places in school, communicate that to the parents, that if there is some event, they are going to be safe at school? I mean, what do you do? How does that piece of the puzzle fit in?

Ms. SUI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are several things we are doing. One, we utilized the Catastrophic Planning Grant Funds to do a very, very comprehensive study through the University of

Virginia of citizens in the NCR. It was about, 2,500 or 2,600 citizens who were surveyed for 30 minutes on their behavior, their projected behavior during an incident, and the incident was a dirty bomb incident. What we found was that they will stay in place if they have confidence that their children are safe.

So through those catastrophic grants, we are now doing a follow-on phase two pilot program of working with select businesses in the District and working with them on having a program in place for their employees to be prepared and understand things like what is their school preparedness plan? What is going on with their children? After the earthquake, when those businesses were surveyed, we found that because of that pilot program and the ongoing training, their response was they waited until after 5 o'clock and had the best commute of their lives.

And so it does work. It takes extra effort. It takes more intense training. We are already putting out just in our broad general preparedness messaging, know your children's school plans. Communicate your plan to family members in advance so that if phone service is out, they know you are safe and you are not rushing to get together. But that is huge cultural, behavioral changes and it will take time.

Senator PRYOR. I am going to ask the panel a good question, but it is kind of unfair how I am going to ask it because I am going to ask the five of you a question about Mr. Beckham's shop, and that is basically the question will be is how—ONCRC's placement in FEMA is designed to help create efficiency and better communication, more streamlined, et cetera, and I do not want to ask Mr. Beckham this because I want to hear from you guys, how is that working? Is it beneficial to you all to have his office in FEMA where it is and doing the various functions it does? Go ahead.

Mr. MUTH. From my perspective, they were already in place when I came aboard at the State level, so I have no knowledge of how it was before that. But my interaction since I have been there in the just about 4 years has been very positive in that it provides an immediate conduit, if you will, to other information that we might need from FEMA within that NCR region.

So I think they are now where they belong in life, it really does not matter to me. I think it kind of makes sense that they are in FEMA and they are dealing directly with us. We certainly get a lot of information pushed from that office almost daily on things that are happening and occurring. So I would have to say, from Maryland's perspective, anyway, it has been a positive interaction.

Senator PRYOR. Anybody else? Ms. Suit.

Ms. SUIT. I think we could utilize them more than we do, and that is probably more on my shoulders, reaching out to them, having them help us with introductions and coordination with Federal agencies that we do not have relationships with already, and we need to push that more within our Virginia decisionmaking area.

As far as where they are located, the only way I can answer that is just from my own experience as being a member of a bureaucracy. Bureaucracies are very chain of command oriented. They are very rank oriented. And when you are at a certain level, then your peers work with you based on you being at that level. I think that if ONCRC was reporting directly to the Secretary, they would have

probably more gravidas with the other Federal agencies. But I think because of the people at ONCRC, because of the relationships they have and the reputation they have, that they have that gravidas personally while they may not have the optimal amount positionally.

Senator PRYOR. OK.

Mr. QUANDER. I agree with that assessment, but I will go further. We have had great access and great benefit as a result. Where the group sits, I am not sure as to the optimum position. But it has been effective.

As an example, last week, we conducted a tabletop exercise and Mr. Beckham and his team participated and assisted in making sure that other Federal agencies, we had business groups there and it was an exercise that was a severe weather event. And so we had more than 200 individuals that participated. So when you have that type of partnership and you actually can make things happen, it is a benefit.

Senator PRYOR. Mr. Beckham, are you satisfied with all those answers? [Laughter.]

Mr. BECKHAM. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would mention, as I said in my opening statement, yes, we did start with the Office of Homeland Security when Governor Ridge stood it up right after September 11. We continue to have access to the DHS Office of the Secretary through the Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Relations Office, also the Under Secretary of Management's Office. We report through the Protection and National Preparedness Directorate, which is run by Deputy Administrator Manning. However, I must point out, while he has the administrator function for our office, we also report to Craig Fugate, the FEMA Administrator, Deputy Administrator Serino, as well as the Chief of Staff on a regular basis on a variety of issues, depending on what the issues are.

I am fortunate that—I have been there 2 years—I inherited a staff that has the legacy and the institutional history of working in this program and have been able to leverage their relationships and been able to reach out to the various partners throughout the National Capital Region, both on the Federal and on the State level. Players do change with election cycles and what have you, but they are all committed to the mission. They have all been experts in—if they did not have particular expertise, they were not afraid to reach out and get it, and I think it has made it a beneficial experience.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Jenkins, GAO was instrumental in helping my Subcommittee to examine the NCR's strategic planning efforts by providing recommendations to the region during the Subcommittee's 2005 and 2006 hearings on this topic. Would you comment on what improvements have been made between the NCR's 2006 Homeland Security Strategic Plan and its current plan.

Mr. JENKINS. There were two 2006 plans. The first one was, in a word, terrible, and then the second one really tried to address these six characteristics that I talked about and we did sort of outline, in broad fashion, roles and responsibilities. The big difference, I think, in the 2010 plan is they have taken that foundation and

gotten much more specific in the various areas in terms of trying to identify the goals, have subordinated objectives that match those goals, as well as initiatives that would help them achieve the objectives.

So it is much more structured. It is much more systematic than it was before. It is much more specific, as well, and they are, in terms of the initiatives they are taking, they are on the right track in terms of trying to develop, give responsibility to somebody and some group for achieving different objectives and setting measures for how they are going to achieve those. So I think they have made considerable progress since 2010.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Mr. JENKINS. Since 2006.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Mr. Hunter and Mr. Beckham, I am concerned about protecting Federal employees during emergencies. As we saw with the earthquake, we must be prepared for unexpected events. In this area, acts of terrorism are a constant threat, as well. So I am asking you to please discuss what efforts your offices have made to prepare Federal employees in the D.C. area for unexpected emergencies, such as a tornado or radiological dirty bomb. Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you. First, we at OPM conducted a press conference just last week to roll out our new procedures, our new D.C. Dismissal Guide, and, in fact, FEMA was a partner with us at that press conference as well as the District of Columbia. So we provided information through the press conference itself, but we also did a webcast for Federal employees, as well, and the focus of the webcast is just not to lay out the new policies associated with our new D.C. Dismissal Guide but also to reiterate to our Federal employees that this really is a partnership, that we need their assistance to make this work, from developing a family plan to making sure that they have telework agreements in place and that they have found alternative ways to come and go into the city.

So in addition to the press conference itself and the webcast, together with Steward's group and the Office of National Capital Region Coordination, we have worked through the Joint Federal Committee during the course of the last year to do some training exercises for emergency managers and to, again, to have them take that information back to Federal employees.

We are participating with FEMA on NCRC in developing a web-based training program, as well as a Federal preparedness brochure in the coming year.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Mr. Beckham.

Mr. BECKHAM. Just to elaborate on what Dean just said, in the Federal Preparedness Program, it is an initiative in partnership with him, that OPM has started in our office, and the main focus of that initiative is to get DHS employees to have individual and family preparedness efforts underway and maintained and exercised so that if they have responsibilities in their employment, in their Federal employment, they do not have to worry about their family members, their children or adult day care or adult care issues that they may have.

The hope is that once we get the program up and running and we reach out to DHS, we would envision having it extended to the

entire Federal family so that they can go through this web-based training and be able to identify those types of issues that they need to shore up in their own personal lives so that they cannot only take care of themselves, but make sure that their families are safe, as well.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hunter, as has been discussed, OPM recently announced sheltering in place as an operating status option to protect the Federal workforce during severe weather events or emergencies. The term "shelter in place" may suggest that employees would need to stay in their offices for a prolonged period of time. Would you please discuss how OPM intends the sheltering in place to be used.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We implemented the shelter in place option to our D.C. Dismissal Guide to add an additional option to our tool kit. There has been much play about how we would invoke that during a snow emergency, but I would like to emphasize that it really has a broader role, and we have talked about terrorism capabilities here, but particularly for chemical, biological, nuclear, radiological types of threats, this could be an option that we would put in for a longer-based capacity.

It is also important to note that individual agencies typically have their own building based shelter in place plans as a result of, or incorporated into their Occupant Emergency Plans.

So, again, the intent is for this to be used really in extreme circumstances along the lines of chemical or biological threats. But we do see that there could be a very short-term utility for a snow event. But I would also want to caveat that with, again, it would be our intent to have people home before we got to those extreme circumstances.

We would lean forward very proactively the day before a storm, perhaps, to announce an unscheduled leave, unscheduled telework policy whereby we bring less people into the city in the first place. We would perhaps follow that up if a storm occurred during the day with a staggered departure with a final departure time, for instance, having people leave no later than 3 p.m. And after that point in time, if in consultation with our colleagues in the emergency management capacity and law enforcement, if there was a need for us to request people to be off of the roads so that the transportation entities could keep the roads clear in a snowstorm, we would do that, but again, it would be on a very temporary, short-term basis.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much.

As a followup question to Ms. Suit, you use the phrase "staying in place" rather than sheltering in place. Is there a difference between Virginia's policy and OPM's revised policy?

Ms. SUIT. No, and actually, OPM at the recent Emergency Preparedness Council meeting also was more apt to use the phrase "stay in place." I think the media has co-opted that a bit into the sheltering in place. Sheltering in place is not as well received with the public and we find from a standpoint of a public message and crafting public messaging, sheltering in place does not have the same comfort level with the public as staying in place. Staying in place has more of a temporary connotation, an hour, 2 hours, 6

hours, long enough for the emergency to pass. Sheltering in place does insinuate in the mind of the public longer times.

Now, I will say this. In the event of a radiological event, and we just had a report released on Monday from our working group here in the NCR on radiological and nuclear detection issues, we had a huge study that was done and this is brand new information, and that study does go into great depth as far as the number of hours and possibly days to stay in place, or shelter in the event of going beyond 6 hours, in place and how much more lives that will save by staying where they are as opposed to getting out and becoming exposed.

And so this is all information that we are obtaining and acquiring, greatly in part because of the grants that you all have given us. They are working. They are informing our policies going forward and now we will take this information and incorporate that in the future into our strategic plan and additional things and investments that we make in the NCR and messaging going forward.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you. Senator Pryor.

Senator PRYOR. Thank you.

Let me start with Mr. Beckham. I know it is hard enough to try to coordinate with all the various governmental entities that you have to deal with, and I know you have a myriad of them in this region that all need to interface and interconnect somehow, and it sounds like you are doing a great job there. But my question is, are you also trying to coordinate with the business community?

Mr. BECKHAM. Yes, sir, and as was pointed out again in some of the testimony, first of all, talking about the Emergency Preparedness Council, the Director of the Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade sits on that council and represents the business community and their interests and their points of view. I cannot speak to how he disseminates the information from the Preparedness Council, but I do know that they have monthly meetings and I actually attended one when I first got here and they bring that information out to their membership.

Another group we meet with, while not necessarily business, is the Consortium of Universities. We meet with the emergency managers and the preparedness officials with that organization and attend some of their training and exercises, and they are very engaged in those efforts that we have going here in the National Capital Region.

We also worked with the Golden Triangle Business Improvement District (BID), which is in the center of the District, and used the work that we are doing with them as a model to hopefully reach out to the other BIDs around the District and use that to have them do some of the Occupant Emergency Planning and make sure that they have their workforces coordinated if there had to be a release for whatever reason and that they do not put additional stress on the transportation assets of the National Capital Region.

Senator PRYOR. Great. That is great.

Mr. Hunter, let me ask you a similar question. When OPM does the various things that you do, when you set your policies and all that, do you consult with the business community to try to coordinate with them in any way?

Mr. HUNTER. As Mr. Beckham mentioned, during our policy revision this year, we coordinated our policy with the Washington Board of Trade and members associated with the Emergency Planning Committee. We recognize that the private sector often follows our lead from how they develop their own policies, so we did coordinate that policy in conjunction with the EPC and COG.

Senator PRYOR. OK. And do you do just the policy coordination, or do you also, when you have to make a decision that day on whether something closes or whatever and you actually make the call, do you try to coordinate with them at that point, or do they just key off of the decisions that you are making?

Mr. HUNTER. They key off the decisions. They are typically not involved in the COG calls.

Senator PRYOR. Yes. The reason I was asking is we talked a minute ago, one of the witnesses talked about sort of a phased leaving of the city or coming into the city or whatever effort during or after an event, probably, and I just did not know if you try to coordinate with the business community, because if you look at their numbers, Even though government is a huge industry here in this area, the private sector is quite a bit larger with a lot more people in this area.

Let me ask about the ready.gov program. On the ready.gov Web site, it talks about make a plan and try to have a plan for yourself. What is the experience with that? Are people making plans? And if there is something going on, whether it is an earthquake or a snowstorm or whatever it happens to be and maybe the communication is not real clear in the beginning and everybody is unsure about really what is happening, are they sticking with their plan? Do we know? Mr. Beckham, maybe you might be best for this.

Mr. BECKHAM. Obviously, ready.gov is a program that was rolled out nationally as well as in the NCR, but to the statistical request that you have, we would have to get back to you with the effectiveness of that program at this point.

Senator PRYOR. All right. Let me ask you about this, as well, then. The August earthquake, like September 11, 2001, and other types of incidents like that, not just in this area but elsewhere, in those type of events, often the region's telecommunication system is just very quickly congested. It is not inoperable, but it is just so jammed that it is not—not very many people are able to get on it, or, I should say, a lot of people are not able to get on it. Do you feel like the D.C. area has sufficient capacity in an emergency to keep all the lines of communication open or are we going to continue to see sort of a clogged telecom capacity here?

Mr. BECKHAM. I understand that there was some overloading of the cell phone system here in the National Capital Region, but one of the messages that we are going to push out, and we are pushing out, is many folks use text messaging and Twitter, which require less bandwidth. I am not an expert on this—

Senator PRYOR. Right.

Mr. BECKHAM [continuing]. But we are going to push out that if you want to get in communication with folks, using Twitter or text messaging capacity, you will have a better success rate of pushing your message forward.

There was some congestion, as I mentioned, in the cell phone towers, but I think about an hour to an hour and a half or so after that, it began to reduce and it was back to a near-normal state.

Senator PRYOR. Yes. One of the things we did on our Subcommittee—Mr. Chairman, that would be on this half of the table over here—but one of the things we did on our Subcommittee is that we had a hearing on social media and the impact that social media has in these events now. I thought it was very interesting. When you look around the country at some things that have happened recently, whether it is ice storms or tornadoes or whatever it may be, floods, people are wanting to communicate and really have that two-way communication all instantaneously which can be an amazing asset in a situation like that. So the people, if they have access to the bandwidth they need, et cetera, they are going to respond and they are going to participate and they are going to communicate and that is a very good thing.

Did you have something you wanted to add?

Ms. SUIT. Just two things. Going back to your original answer about the plans, there was a survey that was done of the New York area after Katrina and we found that they went from 17 percent to 19 percent, only a 2-percent rise in the number of families that had an emergency plan. We expected that it would have gone up higher because of Katrina. So that is a little bit of information. I mean, it is the New York area, not the whole Nation, but it gives you a little information.

What we have also found is that by doing the more intense work directly with the business community like we are doing through the Catastrophic Planning Grant, we raise that to 80 to 90 percent of the participants of that training. So the more we can use those Catastrophic Grant funds and other grant funds as well as our own investments to go into those kinds of more intensive, direct training programs, the more we see success in that area.

And as far as bandwidth, bandwidth is finite. I mean, right now, we have the big issue taking place right here that I am sure you all are weighing in on with the D Block. Our public safety responders desperately need that extra bandwidth for public safety, and then the ability also to allow the private sector to lease back some of that space for use. But it is finite. The more you have smart phones and people downloading videos and doing games, that all uses up that same space and it cuts us off. And people have a natural tendency to go straight to the mobile phone when they want to communicate as opposed to defaulting to text messaging, which uses up much less space.

And finally, it used to be we all had landlines at home. Now, even at home, you are going over the Internet for the most part with your communications. So the culture has changed and we have to change with it in how we respond from a policy standpoint.

Senator PRYOR. I do not know the difference in the numbers in New York versus New Orleans, but one of the things I learned in Katrina, again, as part of the Committee's work after Katrina, was that a lot of folks, a very high percentage of people down there, do have a plan because this is kind of ingrained in them from the beginning that you live in this certain area and it is prone to X, Y,

and Z happening. It is going to vary region to region, and just given the experience and the expectations in that area.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. That is all I have.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Mr. Hunter, I have been a strong supporter of increasing the use of telework in the Federal Government and I applaud OPM's efforts to implement my Telework Enhancement Act. As you stated, building a strong telework culture is important to making sure that government operations continue during emergencies. Will you please elaborate on how OPM is working to make sure agencies have integrated telework in their continuity of operations plans.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In updating our policy, our D.C. Dismissal Guide Policy, we provided additional information on incorporating telework. But I also want to point out that we have been working with the interagency community, both FEMA, GSA, the National Archives and Record Administration, to work toward an update of Federal Continuity Directive 1, to provide additional guidance on not only the training of employees for telework but also testing those capabilities and exercising them on a frequent basis.

And we also have some encouraging news from the Employee Viewpoint Survey that we recently have received the results from that has showed us that in the National Capital Region, we have about 18 percent of people, Federal respondents, that indicated that they are teleworking at least once a week, and 47 percent have indicated that they have the capability to telework at least some of the time. So we see that this has very positive implications for us on the emergency planning side.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much for that response.

My last question is for the panel. A recent *Washington Post* editorial argued that the reluctance of area jurisdictions to cede power in decisionmaking to a central authority has hampered the NCR during a crisis and could exact a terrible price in the future. There is no one entity or person with the ability to make regional decisions when an emergency involves multiple NCR jurisdictions, and the multiple authorities have complicated communication among decisionmakers and the public. So what I would like to ask you is how do you respond to these concerns and how will you make sure that there is a seamless response to the next regional emergency? Mr. Muth.

Mr. MUTH. Thank you. First of all, we have—I am not sure I agree with that editorial. We have very robust mutual aid plans that are used every day, in and out of the Capital and Maryland to Virginia and vice-versa, that are very well versed and very robust.

The resources that we are, I assume, we are talking about are resources that belong to local governments or State Governments, and to say that somebody would have overall authority to strip those from a State or a county and reassign those would be an interesting concept, to say the least. I think you might be infringing on the States' rights there.

I think we have a very refined Incident Command System, as Terrie and others have mentioned today, and that allows for that expansion of the Incident Management System, if necessary. So

where if we have something on the border, we do not necessarily worry about whose it is. We just go and do it and then we work on that Incident Command System as it grows.

So is there one regional person in charge? No, there is not, and that is because you have independent governments that are involved in this whole thing. That does not mean that the governments cannot all work together in an emergency, and I think they absolutely would. I think there is still a long way to go to refine that and to make that operational and just not from the planning stage, because that is where it is right now.

But I think it is there, and I still have to reiterate, going back, that Montgomery and Prince George's County are responding into D.C. every day and vice-versa and it works seamlessly. Nobody knows about it because it works seamlessly and it is there. It does not change just because there is an emergency. It is still the same system, the same process, et cetera.

I think the only area where it may be worth looking at a little bit more is the non-traditional first responder equipment and getting more into public works, snowplows and those types of things, which generally are not thought of as a mutual aid response, in and out continuously.

But the last thing I will add to that is that we all at State and local governments have very finite resources. Those are already taxed and engaged in whatever we are dealing with statewide, NCR being one of our parts of the State. And so there is no cache of equipment sitting somewhere like there is with radios to say that in a regional emergency, we will bring this cache of snowplows together and operators. It is all equipment that is used every day and it is already being used during an event.

So I think the process needs to be working down the line, but if Washington calls for assistance from us, we are going to jump in and help Washington if at all possible. That is the way we do it every day and we will continue to do that. Thank you.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you.

Ms. SUI. Mr. Chairman, I would answer that by saying that there is not one central decisionmaker in any disaster, any emergency situation. We use NIMS. We use ICS. The writer of that article needs to go online to FEMA's Web site and take ICS-100, and then they need to follow that on and take NIMS-700. They need to learn ICS and incident management and how the National Response Framework is designed. It works.

It worked at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. When that plane hit the Pentagon, I was able to get a cell phone call out, one call out to the Governor. At that time, it was Governor Gilmore. I got the call out to his office. I said, I am on the highway. I have just watched a plane go into the Pentagon. By the time we hung up, Arlington County fire trucks were already at the Pentagon. Jim Schwartz, the Assistant Fire Chief, took incident command of that situation at the Pentagon. That is how ICS worked.

It was not mandated then. It was not required for grant usage then. Now, it is required. Now, we make sure everyone is NIMS compliant or they cannot receive a dime of Federal Homeland Security money. That doctrine works, and folks that criticize that bottom-up response do not understand it. They need to go in. They

need to learn how we do emergency management. The Governor's office becomes involved with messaging, with guidance, with issuing emergency declarations, but we never manage the emergency on the ground from a central decisionmaker's office from on high. That is not how emergencies work.

And I would further say that the District is not unique. NCR is not unique. When we are dealing with a hurricane in Hampton Roads, we are dealing with the evacuation of the North Carolina Outer Banks up through the Virginia highway system. We are dealing with the largest Naval base in the world. We are dealing with one of the largest ports in this country and working with the Coast Guard on whether or not to shut down that port and when to move bridges and when to allow people to evacuate. It is always unified, working together in these decisionmaking cross-cutting manners with our Federal partners, our local partners, and our intrastate and interstate partners.

So NCR is not unique in that. But if we all work through the National Response Framework and we understand it, and we do not make policy changes to confuse it, we will be OK.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Quander.

Mr. QUANDER. From the District's perspective, a centralized decisionmaker is not the point. It is an operational issue. It is from the bottom up. It is using the system, the NIMS system that we have, and we operationalize it. That is how you address the issues.

One of the things that—the Mayor announced today that the District has undertaken and has completed a system of cabling, fiber optics, that will increase the capability within the District of 100 gigabytes bandwidth. It will be the largest usage or availability of bandwidth anywhere in the world, more so than Silicon Valley, more so than in New York, anyplace in the country, anyplace in the world. So agencies will be able to tie into a greater resource that will be available—that is available now. We did not have that in the past. We have that now. So we will be able to communicate more by using some of the electronic means and less on cell phones when we are able to communicate and get our messaging out.

One of the other things that we are doing, again, not from who makes the decision but what we are doing, we spoke about developing family plans. We spoke about teleworking. We spoke about public awareness. We spoke about involving the business community. These are the things that we need to do to make sure that when we know that we have to act, we will know how to act, and that is where our focus really needs to be, not on who makes the call. That is really not the focus. It is following the plan, bottom up, using NIMS, and that is where we are going to see our greatest success. Thank you, sir.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much, Mr. Quander.

Any other comments? Mr. Beckham.

Mr. BECKHAM. Yes, sir. I concur with my colleagues and just want to mention that Secretary Suit mentioned that under the ICS system, it is designed for the smallest incident all the way up to the very large incident. ICS is designed not only for cross-functional purposes, but for cross-jurisdictional purposes and it can always expand into a unified command, which would bring in all of

those decisionmakers, again, as I mentioned, whether it is function related or jurisdictionally related.

Senator AKAKA. Any other further comments? Mr. Jenkins.

Mr. JENKINS. Mr. Chairman, I would just make one sort of fundamental point when I read the Post editorial, is that if you look at the NCR itself, the NCR is not an operational entity. It is a coordination entity, and there could be issues in how they coordinate and how they make decisions, but as the other witnesses point out, part of the problem with having a single person in control is that it assumes that the NCR is an operational entity in and of itself, which it is not.

Senator AKAKA. Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Just to add to what my colleagues said, I think what is equally important rather than having a single decision-maker is to make sure that we are all operating with the same set of facts or from a common operating perspective. I think that is really key and I applaud the District of Columbia for some of their efforts with COG to look at how we are going to implement the concept of Regional Information Center and how we might share that type of information.

Senator AKAKA. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank all of our witnesses for being here today and for your excellent responses. It is clear that the NCR has improved its emergency coordination considerably since September 11, 2001. However, serious challenges still remain. I look forward to working closely with my colleagues in the Senate and with the NCR stakeholders to improve regional coordination and make sure that the millions of residents and visitors to the NCR are safe. This has been, I feel, a good hearing and thank you again so much for your contributions.

The hearing record will be open for 2 weeks for additional statements or questions other members may have.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:14 p.m., the Subcommittees were adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia and the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and
Intergovernmental Affairs joint hearing:

December 7, 2011

*"From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared
for the Next Disaster?"*

Opening Statement

Senator Mark L. Pryor

I would like to start today by recognizing that today's hearing coincides with the 70th anniversary of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, and reflect on that fateful day and the heroism that still inspires us today. Pearl Harbor was a no-notice event that shocked us and altered the course of this Nation — like 9/11 just over ten years ago.

Recent events like August's earthquake and the January 2011 snowstorm reminded us once again that the security of the Washington D.C. region is a test case for the entire Nation. Unfortunately, the hours of traffic gridlock and communications failures in the aftermath of these events exposed leadership gaps and bureaucratic fragmentation in the region's response efforts.

Without knowing who is responsible in an emergency, we are forced to question whether we are truly prepared to maintain continuity of government. We also wonder whether we can protect our critical infrastructure and ensure the safety of the five million people who live in the region.

The emergency responders who work tirelessly to keep the Capitol safe from harm deserve our recognition for their service. The size of the metropolitan area, the multiple State and local governments, and broad scope of threats, make for a unique and complex coordination challenge.

But the risk of not being prepared is too great—as the seat of the Federal government and the center of command-and-control for our Nation's military and diplomatic missions, we need to be especially ready to respond to any threats that come our way.

At the same time and in light of current economic realities, we must be vigilant about streamlining operations. We need to strengthen efficiencies in the region's partnerships and response entities. We need to assess the roles of the region's responders, identify critical gaps. And we need to ensure that there are no costly redundancies or inefficiencies in the current preparedness system. These steps are necessary if we are truly committed to improving the effectiveness of the region's first responders and ensuring we are spending taxpayer dollars responsibly.

Today we will be talking about improving coordination in the National Capital Region's emergency preparedness. Although the National Capital Region is unique in many ways, improving coordination and effectiveness in emergency operations is a challenge that exists in major metropolitan areas across the country.

For example, the city of Memphis is crucial to eastern Arkansas and northwest Mississippi as a regional center for transportation, media and health care services. A major event in Memphis would have a far-reaching impact on the area and its preparedness depends on collaboration between the numerous State and local governments and first responder agencies. I hope that today's assessment of preparedness and protection capabilities in the National Capital Region will yield efficiencies that can be applied in other multi-jurisdictional metropolitan areas.

In October our two subcommittees collaborated on a Government Accountability Office (GAO) request asking for further examination of the National Capital Region's current system of all-hazards preparation. Today's hearing will serve as a jumping-off point for GAO. It will also help us determine what we can do in Congress to ensure that our nation's cities are equipped to respond effectively to emergencies.

Written Statement of
Steward D. Beckham
Director, Office of National Capital Region Coordination
Federal Emergency Management Agency

“National Capital Region Coordination”



Before the

**U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government
Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of
Columbia and**
**The U.S. Senate Homeland Security Ad Hoc
Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and
Intergovernmental Affairs**

Washington, D.C.
December 7, 2011

I. Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka and Ranking Member Johnson, Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Paul. My name is Steward Beckham, and I am the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before both subcommittees today to discuss the way FEMA coordinates with our local, state, and federal partners in the National Capital Region (NCR).

II. The Role of the NCRC

The NCRC Office was created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with local, state, and federal partners in the National Capital Region to enhance domestic preparedness.

NCRC was transferred to FEMA along with other preparedness elements under the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act (PKEMRA) in 2007. This shift recognized FEMA's strong partnerships with state, local, and federal authorities, and was designed to promote the seamless coordination of all-hazards preparedness and response efforts between and across all National Capital Region jurisdictions.

As Director of the NCRC, I represent DHS and FEMA on the National Capital Region's Senior Policy Group (SPG), a body of homeland security advisors and chief emergency managers from Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia. The SPG plays a key role in sustaining a coordinated regional approach to homeland security and in strengthening integrated decision making and planning in the National Capital Region.

To proactively maintain this coordination role across the region, the NCRC interacts daily with public, private and non-profit homeland security officials, including chief administrative officers (e.g. city and county managers), public health officials, first responders, emergency managers, leaders from the private sector and non-profit communities, and many other local, state, and federal partners in support of all hazards preparedness.

Preparedness is the best way to ensure a consistently effective, integrated, coordinated, government-wide response to emergencies. FEMA regularly participates in and hosts exercises in the NCR with our local, state, and federal partners to test and ensure the preparedness of individual jurisdictions and agencies as well as to identify practices to improve planning and coordination. Additionally, to bolster information sharing and integrated planning, NCRC develops and participates in exercises, drills and events (e.g., presidential inaugurations, national security special events, state funerals, and large demonstrations) that occur with regularity across the region.

The region's training and exercise programs are administered and coordinated by the NCR Exercise and Training Operations Panel (ETOP). The ETOP is comprised of representatives from local, state, and federal NCR entities. The cooperative efforts of this group are critical to

integrating and strengthening all-hazards preparedness across the NCR, whether for natural disasters or other terrorist threats.

III. Incident Management

The National Capital Region is the fourth largest metropolitan region in the United States and comprised of twelve local jurisdictions encompassing the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland and Virginia. It is home to the three branches of the federal government, one of the largest metropolitan public transportation systems in the country, thousands of non-profit, private sector, and federal offices, and a complex and diverse populace.

In accordance with the National Response Framework, emergencies are managed locally. During disasters, Maryland, Virginia, and the District maintain their sovereign authorities and work with FEMA Region III, located in Philadelphia, to receive any direct assistance for unmet needs or other aid approved by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

During incidents in any National Capital Region state, or within the District of Columbia, the local jurisdiction maintains lead authority and addresses emergencies as they arise. If a jurisdiction is overwhelmed by the incident, the District and nearby states may, through their participation in both the National Capital Region Mutual Aid Agreement and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), request and receive assistance from neighboring states.

When emergencies occur in the U.S. Capitol, the Capitol Police respond first and assume incident command. Per the National Incident Management System and as required under the National Response Framework, the incident commander maintains responsibility for coordinating the engagement of any additional responding authorities or resources. In a larger, multijurisdictional event with a federal Stafford Act declaration, the jurisdictional coordination will be managed by a Unified Command Group within a Joint Field Office.

Local jurisdictions lead incident response, and FEMA facilitates local coordination with federal partners through the National Watch Center (NWC) at FEMA Headquarters and the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) Watch in Region III. When an incident is underway inside the NCR, the NCR Watch Desk, which is funded and staffed by the NCRC, will support watch operations and facilitate information exchange with our NCR partners. For example, during weather events, conference calls are conducted between the National Weather Service, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), transportation agencies (e.g., WMATA, DDOT, MDOT, VDOT), state and local law enforcement and others. These calls are hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.

Certain types of incidents that might otherwise be relatively minor events take on a greater significance because of the high volume of commuter traffic within the National Capital Region. This has occurred during winter storms, when federal government operations in the NCR were officially suspended. Federal agencies follow the guidelines set by OPM to ensure the safety of

their employees. A decision to change the operating status of the federal government in the immediate Washington, DC, area, including closing federal offices to the public, rests with OPM.

Like many federal agencies, FEMA has increased the use of telework for business continuity purposes. When weather or other events force FEMA staff to work from alternate locations, non-emergency employees are prepared to work from home and continue normal operations. FEMA staff exercise this process at least annually, and most recently during the Determined Sentry 2011 exercise, a one-day, 'No Fault' exercise for FEMA personnel to telework from their designated Continuity of Operations (COOP) alternate facility or telework sites, which was held in November. FEMA staff across the country logged on to the network and performed specific tasks to try to stress the system with emails, conference calls, and document retrievals from centralized systems. This exercise again demonstrated that FEMA is ready and able to effectively perform from alternate locations, including from employee's homes, during emergencies.

IV. The National Capital Region Strategic Plan

The most effective means of providing help to those affected by an emergency within the National Capital Region is through the progressive involvement of local, state, and federal assistance. If more than local assistance is necessary, a cooperative and unified local, state and federal partnership is the best approach.

To strengthen this process, a broad cross-section of local, state and federal government officials, along with many non-profit and for-profit organizations, made significant contributions to develop the most recent NCR Strategic Plan. NCR stakeholders engaged in a transparent, inclusive, and collaborative process to reach consensus on the key components of the plan which is in force through 2015.

This Strategic Plan identifies a series of goals, objectives, and initiatives to further its mission; but it is not an operational emergency plan. Because emergency response is a local and state responsibility, each local and state jurisdiction in the NCR has developed its own set of emergency operation plans. This Strategic Plan does not replace those emergency operation plans, but instead guides investments in improving the capabilities needed to execute emergency plans to respond and recover from all-hazards incidents.

The NCR Strategic Plan-along with other local, state, and federal plans-serves as a roadmap for strengthening capabilities and enhancing capacity to realize the NCR partners' vision for a safe and secure NCR.

The plan's goals include: enhancing interoperable communications capabilities; improving information sharing and situational awareness, including the communication of accurate, timely information with the public; critical infrastructure protection; development of core capabilities such as mass care; and coordinating alert and warning systems. Initiatives to implement these goals include: developing and maintaining secure data communications governed by common standards and operating procedures; ensuring NCR partners have the systems, processes, security

clearances, tools, and procedures to access, gather, and share appropriate intelligence, law enforcement, and classified data; and conducting a comprehensive risk analysis of the NCR critical infrastructure and key resources, including a review of the critical systems upon which they depend and the interdependencies of those systems.

Funding for the activities that build the capabilities identified in the plan and other NCR implementation documents is derived from a variety of sources, to include, federal grant programs from DHS, such as the Urban Area Security Initiative, the State Homeland Security Grant Program, and the Transit Security Grant.

IV. Conclusion

Effective collaboration remains the key to the success of FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination. The strong working relationships forged between local, state, federal, private, and non-profit partners within the NCR will serve as our most beneficial asset during a disaster response. FEMA will continue to support common regional goals through exercises, collaboration, and coordination efforts, and along with our NCR partners, we will continue to build and sustain an integrated effort to prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards. In the event of an incident in the NCR, the NCRC stands ready to support FEMA's core mission and our local, state, and federal NCR partners. Building on decades of regional collaboration, local, state, and federal partners remain committed to a common vision of working together toward a safe and secure National Capital Region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

STATEMENT OF

DEAN HUNTER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FACILITIES, SECURITY & CONTRACTING
U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

before the

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL
WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
AND THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON DISASTER RECOVERY AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE

on

FROM EARTHQUAKES TO TERRORIST ATTACKS: IS THE NATIONAL CAPITAL
REGION PREPARED FOR THE NEXT DISASTER?

December 7, 2011

Good afternoon, Chairman Akaka, Chairman Pryor, Ranking Member Johnson, Ranking Member Paul, and distinguished members of the subcommittees. My name is Dean Hunter, and I am the Deputy Director for Facilities, Security and Contracting at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In this position, I have primary responsibility for security and emergency management at OPM. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss OPM's role in hazards affecting the operational status of the National Capital Region (NCR), as well as our partnerships with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other Federal, State, and local emergency management entities.

By law, individual Federal agencies possess the authority to manage their workforces and to determine the appropriate response during emergencies, including natural disasters. Nonetheless, in order to facilitate a consistent and coordinated approach on a region-wide basis, Federal, State, and local authorities have traditionally looked to OPM to determine the operating status of the Federal Government across the DC area. OPM maintains a 24-hour operations center to actively monitor unfolding events. As emergencies arise, our standard protocols include participation in conference calls hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) in order to develop situational awareness, facilitate the exchange of information, and coordinate communications and response efforts among Federal, State, and local agencies and other stakeholders. Participants in these structured calls typically include over 100 Federal, State, and local partners in all applicable disciplines, including weather (e.g., National Weather Service), emergency planning (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency, emergency management agencies of DC, MD and VA, as well as County representatives from local jurisdictions), transportation (e.g., Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority/Metro/Metrobus, Virginia Railway Express, Maryland Area Rail Commuter, Amtrak, commuter bus lines, Departments of Transportation for DC, MD, and VA), law enforcement (e.g., Metropolitan Police Department, U.S. Park Police), utility companies (e.g., PEPCO), and school districts.

The collaborative feedback of this network of stakeholders drives OPM decisions during emergencies. Ultimately, OPM's decision serves to carefully balance the safety and security of the Federal workforce and the public, with the need to maintain continuity of government operations. Once made, a rapid dissemination of the OPM decision takes many forms - - from direct notification to media outlets, to posting on the OPM webpage and call-in line, notification

to MWCOG, the Chief Human Capital Officers, the White House, and Congress, to e-mail alert notifications to subscribed employees, Washington Area Warning Alert System notification, and updating social media including, Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, OPM is aware that some private-sector employers in the DC area follow OPM's dismissal and closure decisions, thereby magnifying the impact of these decisions on the region's transit authorities.

We review and update our dismissal and closure policies on an annual basis in order to continue to ensure that we are able to make the most well-informed and timely decisions in the face of both expected events such as snowstorms or unprecedented, spontaneous events such as earthquakes. For example, Federal offices in the National Capital Region were closed for four consecutive days during the historic snowstorm of February, 2010. Partly in response, last year we updated our policies to add "Unscheduled Telework" as a new operating status option for agencies to provide their employees the ability to telework and maintain continuity of operations, to the greatest extent possible, when severe weather conditions or other circumstances disrupt commuting.

As we reviewed our dismissal and closure policies this year, we wanted to keep the momentum going on telework to support continuity of operations. The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010, which the President signed into law almost a year ago, requires agencies to keep up efforts to implement telework not only to reduce costs and improve employee work/life balance, but also to help ensure continuity of operations during both short- and long-term disruptions due to emergency situations. To that end, we are committed to continuing collaboration with all agencies to build a strong, results-based telework culture in the Federal Government.

Another issue we wanted to focus on during our annual review was on improving communication and coordination with our Federal, State, and local partners and dissemination of information to agencies and employees. Even before the earthquake, we were engaged with our partners on MWCOG to improve the region's preparedness and response to emergency events through enhanced communication and coordination. On November 9th, the MWCOG Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response presented a report making recommendations to enhance incident management and response in the National Capital Region. Among other improvements, the Steering Committee recommended the establishment of a Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program focused on ensuring regional coordination and communication among the region's decision-makers and providing better information for making operational decisions.

The COG Steering Committee after action review with our interagency partners in emergency management and transportation, as well as collaboration with the Chief Human Capital Officers, also led to the incorporation of additional options to our DC Dismissal Guide, including shelter-in-place, an early dismissal with a fixed final departure time, and an immediate departure option. It is important to note that although OPM has added new announcements for "shelter-in-place" and "immediate departure" to its procedures, this has been done to complete our emergency preparedness tool kit. We do not contemplate issuing these new announcements very often, if at all, but instead we provide them as constructs to illustrate the full range of potential emergency situations that agencies might face, which will help agencies plan for emergency situations.

We are committed to making operating status decisions as far in advance as feasible in order to reduce uncertainty and minimize demands on transportation infrastructure. It will always remain our goal to have employees home safely prior to the onset of dangerous conditions. For those times when events happen during the workday and decisions on early dismissal must be made, we strive to make these decisions as early as possible, emphasizing staggered releases so as not to overwhelm the transportation systems. For anticipated late afternoon weather events, OPM will consider the most strategic options. For example, OPM could use “unscheduled leave/unscheduled telework” at the beginning of the day to reduce traffic into the city and, if necessary, follow-up with a staggered departure announcement after the work day has begun if conditions deteriorate sooner than originally forecasted.

We recognize that the quality of our decisions depends not only on being well-informed, but also on being made in a timely fashion. There is obviously a tension between having the most accurate information and making a timely decision, with safety being the foremost consideration. We learned over the past year that some decisions are best made on a building-by-building basis, rather than through a broad, region-wide announcement. For example, immediately following the earthquake, individual agencies were better positioned to make decisions on a building-by-building basis concerning shelter-in-place or evacuation, given the potential for varied levels of damage across the building inventory, ongoing structural assessments, and the potential for aftershocks.

OPM appreciates and is proud to be a part of a strong, collaborative partnership with other Federal, State, and local entities in the National Capital Region (NCR) working on emergency

preparedness and response. In 2009, OPM and FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination (ONCRC) jointly formed the National Capital Region Federal Workforce Preparedness Subcommittee (NFWPSC) of the Joint Federal Committee (JFC), created to improve regional coordination and emergency management. Working with the interagency community, these efforts have yielded the development of a Strategic Plan and a Concept of Operations Plan for Catastrophic Events, as well as two tabletop training exercises. We are expanding our efforts in the coming year to develop web-based preparedness courses and an NCR Federal Worker Preparedness Brochure. We will continue to leverage those relationships and utilize lessons learned from each event to improve decision-making and communication in the interest of enhancing the safety of the Federal workforce and the public.

Thank you for this opportunity, I am happy to address any questions that you may have.

United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony

Before the Subcommittees on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs and Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia; Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Oversight Committee

For Release on Delivery
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**NATIONAL CAPITAL
REGION**

**2010 Strategic Plan is
Generally Consistent with
Characteristics of Effective
Strategies**

Statement of William O. Jenkins, Jr., Director
Homeland Security and Justice



GAO-12-276T

Chairmen Akaka and Pryor, Ranking Members Johnson and Paul, and Members of the Committees:

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on the status of efforts to enhance emergency preparedness in the National Capital Region (NCR). The NCR is a partnership among the District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, area local governments, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Office for National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC) within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and nonprofit organizations and private sector interests.¹ The partnership aims to help the region prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from "all-hazards" threats or events. Gridlock and hazardous conditions during recent events like the January 26, 2011, snow and ice storm and the August 23, 2011, earthquake demonstrate the importance of regional communication and coordination in the NCR and that challenges remain. Well-crafted and executed operational plans are critical for effective response to emergencies, but sound strategic planning is also important.² As I have previously testified, a coordinated strategy to establish and monitor the achievement of regional goals and priorities is fundamental to enhancing emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the NCR.

We reported on this issue repeatedly from 2004 through 2006, and I testified most recently on the NCR's preparedness before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, in September 2006. My remarks today focus on the extent to which strategic planning for NCR preparedness is consistent with characteristics we have previously identified as desirable for strategies for complex undertakings, such as NCR preparedness. This statement is based on work we recently completed for you. To conduct this work, we compared the 2010 strategic-plan update with six characteristics of an effective homeland-

¹ The Office for National Capital Region Coordination was established in the Homeland Security Act. Pub. L. No. 107-296, § 882, 116 Stat. 2135, 2246-47 (2002).

² According to the 2010 NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan, operational plans are the responsibility of state and local emergency management agencies and they are to describe how each jurisdiction will coordinate its response to an event regionally.

security strategy we previously identified.³ We reviewed the content of the strategic plan and associated documents—such as investment plans—but we did not evaluate whether and how well NCR has fostered, implemented, and executed coordinated capability efforts. We have recently initiated a review of NCR preparedness efforts for these subcommittees and expect to issue a report late next year.

We conducted this work from November 2011 through December 2011 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

In summary, the 2010 NCR strategic plan, when accompanied by its supporting documents—investment plans, work plans, and a Performance Management Plan—collectively referred to in this statement as the NCR strategy, is largely consistent with the six characteristics of a strategy that we advocated for complex homeland-security undertakings where multiple organizations must act together to achieve goals and objectives.⁴ However, neither the Performance Management Plan nor the investment plans have yet been finalized; decisions remain regarding how the NCR will conduct future regional risk assessments; and it is not clear that NCR has systematic processes in place to identify the full range of

³See GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, GAO-04-408T (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004) and *Homeland Security: The Status of Strategic Planning in the National Capital Region*, GAO-06-559T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2006).

⁴GAO-04-408T and GAO-06-559T. In February 2004, we identified six characteristics of effective strategies that could be applied to the NCR. We noted that these six characteristics would help to enable its implementers to effectively shape policies, programs, priorities, resource allocations, and standards and enable relevant stakeholders to achieve intended results. In our testimony on the 2006 NCR Strategic Plan, we elaborated on the desirable characteristics of a strategic plan at the regional level based on our six characteristics. The six characteristics are: (1) purpose, scope, and methodology; (2) problem definition and risk assessment; (3) goals, subordinate objectives, activities, and performance measures; (4) resources, investments, and risk management; (5) organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination; and (6) integration and implementation. For more details, see appendix III.

resources available to support its goals.⁵ Finally, it is important to keep in mind that strategies themselves are not endpoints, but rather, starting points. As with any strategic planning effort, implementation is the key. The ultimate measure of the 2010 NCR strategy's value is how useful it is as guidance for policymakers and decisionmakers in allocating resources and balancing priorities.

Background

The NCR is a unique regional partnership, in that it is the only region that has a statutorily created and federally funded office devoted solely to supporting coordination and cooperation within the region. Appendix I provides more information about the region and the organizations responsible for supporting preparedness coordination.

We have reported in the past on preparedness efforts for the NCR. Our past work for Congress has tracked the evolution and development of increasingly effective efforts to develop a coordinated NCR preparedness strategy, along with some opportunities for continuing improvement in strategy-related efforts. See appendix II for more information about our past NCR work.

The 2010 NCR Strategy Is Largely Consistent with Desirable Characteristics for Effective Strategies

We have previously identified six characteristics of effective strategies that could be applied to the NCR.⁶ We noted that these six characteristics would help to enable its implementers to effectively shape policies, programs, priorities, resource allocations, and standards and enable relevant stakeholders to achieve intended results. These characteristics call for strategies to include (1) purpose, scope, and methodology; (2) problem definition and risk assessment; (3) goals, subordinate objectives, activities, and performance measures; (4) resources, investments, and risk management; (5) organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination; and (6) integration and implementation.⁷ More information

⁵The UASI Program provides funding to address the unique planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and assists them in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.

⁶GAO-04-408T.

⁷GAO-04-408T.

about the six desirable strategy characteristics and their application to a regional preparedness strategy appears in appendix III.

Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

The 2010 NCR strategy addresses why the strategy was produced, the scope of its coverage, and the process by which it was developed. The introduction to the plan specifies that it was produced to help identify the capabilities needed to strengthen the region's homeland security efforts and to define the framework for achieving those capabilities. The scope of the plan, as outlined in the introduction, is strategic investment in new and existing capabilities to help all localities in the NCR prepare for, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from all-hazards threats and events. Specifically, the plan's goals and objectives are designed to build new and expanded capabilities and to ensure maintenance of previous investments. Additionally, the aim of these capabilities, according to the plan, is to help support the localities in the NCR as they execute their operational plans in all phases of homeland security. The plan's methodology appendix specifies that the effort to produce the 2010 plan started with an NCR partner-led assessment of progress under the 2006 NCR Strategic Plan and stakeholder recommendations on how best to update the goals to reflect current priorities of the NCR.⁸ As part of this effort, subject-matter experts identified priority capabilities from the 2010 UASI Investment Justifications that serve as the foundation for the plan's goals and objectives.⁹ Additionally, the appendix outlines how the NCR partners (1) accounted for legislative, policy, and economic factors; (2) facilitated stakeholder engagement; (3) drew on capabilities-based analysis to identify priorities; and (4) designed capability initiatives to be specific and measurable.

Problem Definition and Risk Assessment

The 2010 NCR strategy generally addresses the particular problems and threats the strategy is directed towards, and the NCR has undertaken efforts to assess threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences. In our September 2006 statement on NCR strategic planning, we noted that an

⁸NCR partners refers to the region's local, state, regional, and federal entities, citizen community groups, private-sector organizations, nonprofit organizations, and nongovernmental organizations.

⁹UASI applicants must develop investment justifications that demonstrate how proposed projects address gaps and deficiencies in current capabilities.

ongoing risk-assessment methodology is important to help ensure identification of emerging risks. It is not clear from the strategy how the NCR plans to update risk information, but according to responsible NCR officials, a regional risk assessment will be conducted every 2-4 years, and during this fiscal year the NCR will be making decisions about the timing and methodology for the next regional risk assessment. In addition, the officials said risk information can enter prioritization decisions as subject matter experts bring to bear their knowledge of critical-infrastructure sector-specific risk assessments and lessons learned from regional and worldwide incidents.

The 2010 NCR Strategic Plan includes a profile of the region that details how particular social, economic, and critical-infrastructure factors in the region serve to increase both the threat and consequence components of its profile. For example, the plan's profile explains that the NCR has more than 340,000 federal workers; 2,000 political, social, and humanitarian nonprofit organizations; more than 20 million tourists per year; 4,000 diplomats at more than 170 embassies; and some of the most important symbols of national sovereignty and democratic heritage. The plan notes that the region needs to be prepared for a variety of threats and challenges. The region has historically experienced, and in some cases routinely experiences, natural events such as ice, snowstorms, and flooding; special events such as international summits, inaugurations, and parades; and human-caused threats such as terrorist attacks.

The plan identifies previously conducted risk-assessment efforts that, along with other information, helped inform the identification of priority goals, objectives, and activities. First, the NCR's Hazard Information and Risk Assessment, conducted in 2006, was used to identify threats and vulnerabilities and then to consider consequences of various incidents. Second, NCRC conducted another assessment—the NCR Strategic Hazards Identification Evaluation for Leadership Decisions (SHIELD)—in 2008. NCRC developed SHIELD with input from federal, state, local, and private-sector partners and in collaboration with DHS's Office of Risk Management and Analysis. SHIELD's analysis ranks potential critical-infrastructure hazards and provides options for risk reduction, with a focus on probable scenarios for the region.

**Goals, Subordinate
Objectives, Activities, and
Performance Measures**

The 2010 NCR strategy addresses what the strategy is trying to achieve, and steps to achieve those results in the next 3 to 5 years; however, the Performance Management Plan to help monitor progress toward those results is not expected to be finalized until December 31, 2011. The

strategy clearly identifies updated and prioritized goals from the previous version of the strategy. Each of these four goals is accompanied by supporting objectives, which in turn, are supported by more targeted initiatives. According to the strategy, the goals, objectives, and initiatives were developed by multiple stakeholders, including emergency managers, first responders, health-care officials, and information-technology specialists, among others, and focus on developing and sustaining key capabilities in the region. (A full description of the goals, objectives, and initiatives identified in the 2010 NCR strategy appears in appendix IV.)

In our work on desirable strategy characteristics, we reported that identification of priorities, milestones, and performance measures can aid implementing parties in achieving results in specific timeframes—and could enable more effective oversight and accountability.¹⁰ The strategy states that a Performance Measurement Plan will guide monitoring of the strategy's implementation to evaluate progress in achieving its goals and objectives. NCR provided us with a draft copy of the Performance Measurement Plan, which is currently under development. Our review of this draft showed that the NCR has begun efforts to develop measures. While the 2010 plan states that the initiatives it defines are intended to be attained during the next 3 to 5 years, the strategy does not currently communicate specific milestones for achieving the plan's objectives and initiatives. However, according to NCR officials, with the annual planning and implementation cycle beginning in January 2012, they plan to enter into a new phase of their strategy efforts, designed to make the strategy process more data-driven and project-management focused. According to the officials, this phase entails each objective being assigned a designated leader, who will be responsible for setting milestones and monitoring project plans for achieving his or her objective across the region.

The Performance Measurement Plan template information for each initiative includes (1) the strategic goal and objective the initiative

¹⁰GAO-04-408T.

supports; (2) a scale to track progress toward achieving the initiative;¹¹ (3) the initiative's relationship to DHS's Target Capabilities List;¹² (4) applicable national standards; and (5) multiple metrics for each initiative to be tracked separately for Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. For example, in the draft plan, the NCR initiative to "catalog all critical infrastructure and key resources in the NCR and conduct consequence-of-loss analysis" ties in with three separate DHS Target Capabilities and is based on the DHS National Infrastructure Protection Plan's definition of Tier-2 Critical Assets.¹³ It then provides five separate metrics to monitor the identification and documentation of assets, as well as the completion of consequence and loss analyses. A senior official in the NCR said that subject-matter experts are currently completing progress reports on the metrics for each of the initiatives in the strategy.

Resources, Investments, and Risk Management

The 2010 NCR strategy contains information and processes designed to help address what the strategy will cost, the sources and types of resources and investments needed, and where resources and investments should be targeted based on balancing risk reductions with costs. According to the strategic plan, its implementation will be guided by investment plans that define the activities required to achieve the goals and objectives, and an annual work plan will lay out grant-funded projects needed to complete the investment plans. We have reviewed draft copies of 16 investment plans, which are out for NCR partner comment until December 22, 2011. Our review of the draft investment plans show that

¹¹The status scale for the draft Performance Measurement Plan is as follows: 0 = No effort underway or recognition of the need; 1 = Recognition of the need but no effort or resources to accomplish the output; 2 = Initial efforts and resources underway to achieve the output; 3 = Moderate progress towards accomplishing the output; 4 = Sustained efforts underway and outputs nearly fulfilled; 5 = Output achieved and resources devoted to sustain the effort.

¹²The Target Capabilities List is a national-level, generic model of operationally ready capabilities defining all-hazards preparedness. It is intended to help jurisdictions assess capabilities, identify needs, and inform plans and strategies, taking into account their risk.

¹³Tier 1 or Tier 2 assets are those that if destroyed or disrupted could cause significant casualties, major economic losses, or widespread and long-term disruptions to national well-being and governance capacity. According to DHS, the overwhelming majority of the assets and systems identified through this effort are classified as Tier 2. Only a small subset of assets meet the Tier 1 consequence threshold—those whose loss or damage could result in major national or regional effects similar to the effects of Hurricane Katrina or the September 11, 2001, attacks.

they specify their relationship to the strategic objective they are designed to support, but we did not evaluate how well the specific content of each investment plan is designed to achieve those objectives.

In our work on desirable strategy characteristics, we reported that, ideally, a strategy would identify appropriate mechanisms to allocate resources, such as grants, in-kind services, loans, and user fees, based on identified needs.¹⁴ The strategic plan notes that the UASI grant program provides a key source of funding for achieving the priority capabilities in the NCR's Strategic Plan. The strategic plan's methodology appendix states that the 2010 UASI Investment Justifications serve as the foundation for the strategic plan's goals and objectives. In previous NCR work, we raised concerns about NCR's singular focus on UASI resources.¹⁵ The strategic plan states that the NCR draws upon federal grant programs outside of those provided by DHS, such as public health-related grants from the Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Justice. However, it is not clear that NCR has a systematic process for identifying and allocating funding other than UASI to help achieve priority objectives. According to responsible officials, NCR officials coordinate with local, state, and federal jurisdictions to help ensure UASI investments do not duplicate existing federal, state, and local assets. These officials also said the new Management Review Process, set to begin in January 2012, is to help with the identification and documentation of available resources.

Similarly, the plan does not identify nonfinancial resources—such as Department of Defense (DOD) NORTHCOM or National Guard Bureau resources—that potentially could support priority objectives.¹⁶ The federal government has an array of resources that can be made available, at request, to assist state and local response. For example, DOD has significant capabilities to augment a federal chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive (CBRNE) response, like

¹⁴GAO-04-408T.

¹⁵GAO, *Homeland Security: Effective Regional Coordination Can Enhance Emergency Preparedness*, GAO-04-1009 (Washington, D.C. Sept. 15, 2004).

¹⁶NORTHCOM is the unified military command responsible for planning, organizing, and executing DOD's homeland defense and federal military support to civil authorities' missions within the continental United States, Alaska, and U.S. territorial waters. DOD's civil-support missions include providing support during disasters and declared emergencies (both natural and man-made); providing support for restoring public health and services and civil order; and providing support for national special security events.

those identified in the strategic plan, and also contributes to the organization, training, and equipping of state-controlled military units focused on consequence management.

According to the 2010 strategic plan's methodology appendix, the region's priorities are informed by risk assessments—specifically SHIELD—gap analyses, after-action reports, and other studies. According to NCR officials, NCR and its jurisdictions coordinate with various DOD organizations to ensure the availability of CBRNE assets. Moreover, they said that subject-matter experts also bring their knowledge of other resources and capabilities to bear during efforts to identify gaps and prioritize resources. However, they acknowledged they have not systematically considered how existing federal capabilities—like DOD resources—relate to efforts to build the capabilities within their priority objectives, but are considering how they might further enhance coordination in the future. We will continue to monitor this issue as we conduct future work on NCR preparedness.

Organizational Roles, Responsibilities, and Coordination

The 2010 NCR strategy addresses the roles and responsibilities of the various NCR organizations. We previously reported that identifying which organizations will implement the strategy, their roles and responsibilities, and mechanisms for coordinating their efforts helps answer the fundamental question about who is in charge, not only during times of crisis, but also during all phases of preparedness efforts: prevention, vulnerability reduction, and response and recovery. The NCR has responsibility for coordinating information and resources from multiple jurisdictions at the federal, state, and local levels to ensure that strategic goals are met.

According to the 2010 NCR strategy, NCR stakeholders have constructed the strategy to complement state and local operational plans. Operational plans remain the responsibility of state and local emergency-management agencies, and state and local emergency-operations plans describe how each jurisdiction will coordinate its response to an event regionally.

The Governance appendix to the NCR strategic plan details the various organizations involved in preparedness for all-hazards disasters in the region and their roles and responsibilities. For example, the Emergency Preparedness Council is described as the body that provides oversight of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and the NCR Strategic Plan to identify and address gaps in readiness in the NCR, among other responsibilities. Additionally, the appendix lays out the Regional

Emergency Support Function committees for functions most frequently used to provide support for disasters and emergencies in the region.

According to the plan, representatives from various sectors work together toward building capabilities within each support function and the chairs of the committees provide leadership in identifying gaps in regional capabilities in the committee's areas of responsibility and identify the need for UASI funds or other resources to address those gaps. An example of a Regional Emergency Support Function committee is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee which focuses on nutrition assistance, animal and plant disease and pest response, food safety and security, as well as the safety and well-being of household pets.

Finally, the appendix highlights the Regional Programmatic Working Groups which consist of practitioners, policymakers, and representatives from the government, civic, and private sectors. The groups serve to fill gaps, coordinate across the Regional Emergency Support Function, and provide more focused attention on high-priority areas. For example, the Exercise and Training Operations Panel Working Group supports training and exercises for all Regional Emergency Support Functions.

Integration and Implementation

The 2010 NCR strategy addresses how the plan is intended to integrate with the NCR jurisdictions' strategies' goals, objectives, and activities and their plans to implement the strategy. An appendix dedicated to the plan's alignment with national and state strategic plans lays out how the NCR's strategic plan aligns with related federal, state, and local strategies, programs and budgets, and emergency plans. The appendix states that the aim of the NCR strategic plan is to align regional strategic planning efforts with federal, state, and local planning efforts by identifying common goals, objectives, and initiatives to be implemented by the region. In addition, it says the strategic plan provides a framework by which state and local entities can plan, resource, and track priority homeland security-related programs and budgets.

Concluding Observations

The NCR faces a significant challenge coordinating federal, state, local, and regional authorities for domestic preparedness activities. Due to the size and complexity of the NCR, coordination with relevant jurisdictions may confront challenges related to, among other things, different organizational cultures, varying procedures and work patterns among organizations, and a lack of communication between departments and agencies. A well-defined, comprehensive homeland security strategic

plan for the NCR is essential for effectively coordinating investments in capabilities to address the risks that the region faces, and our preliminary observations are that the 2010 Strategic Plan was comprehensively developed. However, we have previously noted that strategies themselves are not endpoints, but rather, starting points. As with any strategic planning effort, implementation is the key. The ultimate measure of value for a strategy is how useful it is as guidance for policymakers and decisionmakers in allocating resources and balancing priorities. It remains to be seen the extent to which the plan is implemented effectively. We will continue to monitor this as part of our ongoing work.

Chairmen Akaka and Pryor, Ranking Members Johnson and Paul, and Members of the Subcommittee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you or other Members of the Committee may have at this time.

Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

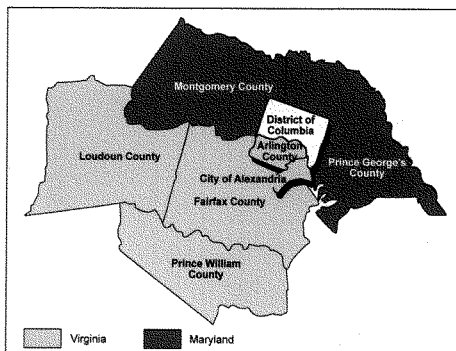
For further information about this statement, please contact William O. Jenkins, Jr., Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues, at (202) 512-8777 or jenkinswo@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement. In addition to the contact named above, the following individuals from GAO's Homeland Security and Justice Team also made key contributions to this testimony: Chris Keisling, Assistant Director; Kathryn Godfrey, Susana Kuebler, David Lysy, Linda Miller, and Tracey King.

Appendix I: The NCR Region and Organizations

National Capital Region

The National Capital Region (NCR) is a complex multijurisdictional area comprising the District of Columbia and surrounding counties and cities in the states of Maryland and Virginia (as shown in figure 1) and is home to the federal government, many national landmarks, and military installations. In addition to being the headquarters to all three branches of the federal government, the NCR receives more than 20 million tourists each year. The NCR is the fourth-largest U.S. metropolitan area in the country and is also close to other densely populated areas, including Baltimore and Philadelphia. Those living and working in the NCR rely on a variety of critical infrastructure and key resources including transportation, energy, and water. The transportation system contains the nation's second-largest rail transit and fifth-largest bus systems. The intricate network of major highways and bridges serve the region's commuters and businesses, and the NCR also has two major airports within its borders. These attributes both heighten the threat and raise the consequences to the region in the instance of human-caused incidents. An incident caused by any hazard could result in catastrophic human, political, and economic harm to the region, as well as the entire nation.

Figure 1: National Capital Region Jurisdictions



Source: National Capital Planning Commission.

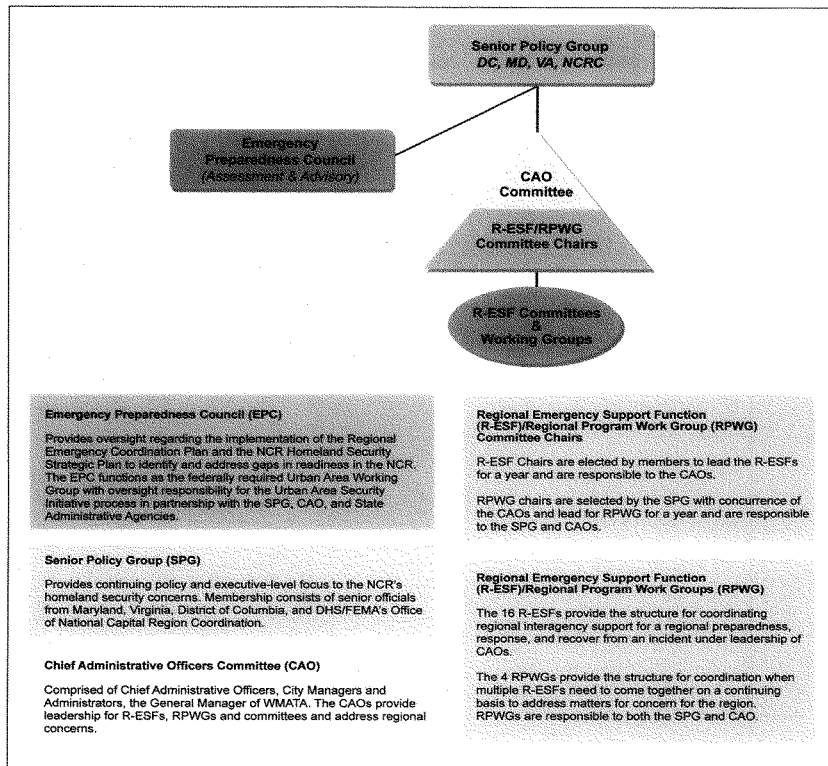
Roles and Responsibilities of the NCRC

The Homeland Security Act established the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC) within the Department of Homeland Security. The NCRC is responsible for overseeing and coordinating federal programs for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR and for assessing and advocating for the resources needed by state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR to implement efforts to secure the homeland, among other things. One of the NCRC mandates is to coordinate with federal, state, local, and regional agencies and the private sector in the NCR to ensure adequate planning, information sharing, training, and execution of domestic preparedness activities among these agencies and entities.

NCR Governance Structure and Organizations that Support Preparedness

Figure 2, below, depicts the NCR organizational structure.

Figure 2: NCR Organizational Structure



Source: National Capital Region Homeland Security Program.

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Appendix II: Our Past Work on NCR and Related Emergency Preparedness Efforts

GAO product	Findings and recommendations
Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals, GAO-04-433 (Washington, D.C.: May 28, 2004)	NCR faced several challenges organizing and implementing efficient and effective regional preparedness programs. Among these challenges included the lack of a coordinated strategic plan, performance standards, and reliable, centrally sourced data on funds available and the purposes for which they were spent. We concluded that, without these basic elements, it would be difficult to assess first-responder capacities, identify first-responder funding priorities, and evaluate the effective use of federal funds to enhance first-responder capacities and preparedness. We recommended, for example, that the Secretary of Homeland Security (1) work with local National Capital Region (NCR) jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan to establish goals and priorities. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) generally agreed with our recommendations and NCR finalized its first strategic plan in 2006.
Homeland Security: Effective Regional Coordination Can Enhance Emergency Preparedness, GAO-04-1009 (Washington, D.C. Sept. 15, 2004)	The characteristics of effective regional coordination we previously identified were applicable to the NCR's efforts to coordinate emergency preparedness. We noted that, if implemented as planned and as observed in its early stage, the NCR's Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) program would include a collaborative regional organization. While we remained concerned that the NCR did not include a full array of homeland-security grants in its planning, we reported that the NCR's UASI program planned to address those issues by identifying non-UASI funding sources and collecting information about the funding allocations, expenditures, and purposes, as well as data on spending by NCR jurisdiction. NCR is currently planning to implement a process to help ensure identification of other funding resources.
Homeland Security: Managing First Responder Grants to Enhance Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region, GAO-05-889T (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2005)	In this statement, we reported on the implementation of the recommendations from our May 2004 report. DHS was working with the NCR jurisdictions to develop a coordinated strategic plan. At that time, we identified the need for NCR to gather data regarding the funding available and used for implementing the plan and enhancing first-responder capabilities in the NCR—data that were not routinely available. We reported that such data would allow DHS to implement and monitor the future plan, identify and address preparedness gaps, and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures by conducting assessments based on established guidelines and standards. We remained concerned that no systematic gap analysis had been completed for the region. We noted that the NCR planned to complete an effort to use the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) as a means of conducting a gap analysis and assess NCR jurisdictions against EMAP's national preparedness standards. Since we last reported, the District of Columbia has received its EMAP accreditation.
Homeland Security: The Status of Strategic Planning in the National Capital Region, GAO-06-559T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2006)	At the time of this report, a completed NCR strategic plan was not yet available. We identified five areas that would be important for the NCR as it completed a strategic plan. Specifically, we reported that a well-defined, comprehensive strategic plan for the NCR was essential for assuring that the region is prepared for the risks it faces and that the NCR could focus on strengthening (1) initiatives that will accomplish objectives under the NCR strategic goals, (2) performance measures and targets that indicate how the initiatives will accomplish identified strategic goals, (3) milestones or time frames for initiative accomplishment, (4) information on resources and investments for each initiative, and (5) organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination and integration and implementation plans.

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Appendix II: Our Past Work on NCR and
Related Emergency Preparedness Efforts

GAO product	Findings and recommendations
Homeland Security: Assessment of the National Capital Region Strategic Plan, GAO-06-1096T (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 28, 2006)	We concluded that the 2006 NCR strategic plan included all six characteristics we consider desirable for a regional homeland-security strategy. To illustrate, the plan includes regional priorities and presents the rationale for the goals and related objectives and initiatives. However, we noted that the substance of the information within these six characteristics could be improved to guide decision makers.

Source: GAO.

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Appendix III: Six Desirable Strategy Characteristics

We previously outlined a set of desirable characteristics for strategies involving complex endeavors that require coordination and collaboration among multiple entities.¹ The desirable characteristics are presented in table 1, along with a brief description and the benefit of each characteristic.

Table 1: Desirable Characteristics for a Strategic Plan, Their Description, and Benefit

Characteristic	Description	Benefit
Purpose, scope, and methodology	Addresses why the strategy was produced, the scope of its coverage, and the process by which it was developed.	A complete description of the purpose, scope, and methodology in a strategy could make the document more useful to the entities it is intended to guide, as well as to oversight organizations, such as Congress.
Problem definition and risk assessment	Addresses the particular problems and threats the strategy is directed towards.	Use of common definitions promotes more effective intergovernmental operations and more accurate monitoring of expenditures, thereby eliminating problematic concerns. Comprehensive assessments of vulnerabilities, including risk assessments, can help identify key factors external to an organization that can significantly affect that organization's attainment of its goals and objectives and can help identify risk potential if such problem areas are not effectively addressed.
Goals, subordinate objectives, activities, and performance measures	Addresses what the strategy is trying to achieve, steps to achieve those results, as well as the priorities, milestones, and performance measures to gauge results.	Better identification of priorities, milestones, and performance measures can aid implementing entities in achieving results in specific time frames—and could enable more effective oversight and accountability.
Resources, investments, and risk management	Addresses what the strategy will cost, the sources and types of resources and investments needed, and where resources and investments should be targeted based on balancing risk reductions with costs.	Guidance on resource, investment, and risk management could help implementing entities allocate resources and investments according to priorities and constraints, track costs and performance, and shift such investments and resources as appropriate. Such guidance could also assist organizations in developing more effective programs to stimulate desired investments, enhance preparedness, and leverage finite resources.
Organizational roles, responsibilities, and coordination	Addresses who will be implementing the strategy, what their roles will be compared to others, and mechanisms for them to coordinate their efforts.	Inclusion of this characteristic in a strategy could be useful to organizations and other stakeholders in fostering coordination and clarifying specific roles, particularly where there is overlap, and thus enhancing both implementation and accountability.

¹GAO-04-408T.

Appendix III: Six Desirable Strategy Characteristics

Characteristic	Description	Benefit
Integration and Implementation	Addresses how a strategy relates to other strategies' goals, objectives, and activities (horizontal integration), and to subordinate levels of government and their plans to implement the strategy (vertical integration).	Information on this characteristic in a strategy could build on the aforementioned organizational roles and responsibilities—and thus further clarify the relationships between various implementing entities, both vertically and horizontally. This, in turn, could foster effective implementation and accountability.

Source: GAO.

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Appendix IV: NCR 2010 Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
Ensure Interoperable Communications Capabilities Ensure response partners have the ability to transmit and receive voice, data, and video communications.	Ensure response partners can communicate by voice in all environments on a day-to-day basis	Increase access to voice systems capable of transmitting and receiving voice information to and from National Capital Region (NCR) response partners.
	Ensure response partners can communicate and share necessary, appropriate data in all environments and on a day-to-day basis.	Develop and maintain secure data communications governed by common standards and operating procedures.
		Share Computer Aided Dispatch data between jurisdictions and other related data systems to streamline the process of capturing 911 information and responding to incidents.
		Share Geographic Information System data between jurisdictions and other related data systems.
Enhance Information Sharing and Situational Awareness Ensure NCR partners share the information needed to make informed and timely decisions; take appropriate actions; and communicate accurate, timely information with the public.	Ensure response partners can communicate and share necessary, appropriate video information in all environments on a day-to-day basis.	Increase access to video systems capable of transmitting and receiving video information to and from NCR response partners.
	Ensure the public has all information necessary to make appropriate decisions and take protective actions.	Improve the dissemination of accurate, timely information to the public using multiple venues, including social media outlets, to ensure that the content of emergency messages and alerts is easily accessible and available to the public.
	Define, obtain, and share appropriate situational information with NCR partners so that they have the necessary information to make informed decisions.	Define essential elements of data and information for situational awareness for each discipline and all partners in the NCR. Then develop, maintain, and utilize business practices and common technical standards for situational awareness in order to make informed decisions. ^a
	Improve the NCR's ability to collect, analyze, share, and integrate intelligence and law enforcement information so that NCR partners receive appropriate information.	Ensure all NCR fusion centers share information through secure and open systems, produce relevant and standardized analytical products, and share information in a timely manner with appropriate NCR partners. ^b
		Ensure NCR partners have the systems, processes, security clearances, tools, and procedures to access, gather, and share appropriate intelligence, law enforcement, and classified data.

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Appendix IV: NCR 2010 Strategic Plan Goals,
Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
Enhance Critical Infrastructure Protection Enhance the protection and resilience of critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR) in the NCR to reduce their vulnerability to disruption from all-hazards events.	Understand and prioritize risks to CI/KR.	Catalog all CI/KR in the NCR and conduct consequence-of-loss analysis.
		Conduct a comprehensive risk analysis of the NCR CI/KR, including a review of the critical systems upon which they depend and the interdependencies of those systems.
		Develop and implement a plan for sharing CI/KR information among public and private entities throughout the NCR.
	Reduce vulnerabilities and enhance resiliency of CI/KR.	Develop and implement sector vulnerability-reduction plans.
		Conduct a technology-feasibility assessment and develop a plan for technology investments for CI/KR.
		Develop and implement a cybersecurity plan for NCR critical systems.
	Ensure continuity of critical services required during emergencies and disaster recovery. ^c	Identify key facilities throughout the NCR that require backup critical services.
		Assess facilities' plans for loss of critical services.
	Promote broad participation in CI/KR community outreach and protection programs.	Develop a community-awareness training and education program.
		Develop a strategy for using CI/KR data to inform law enforcement.
		Establish a regional business information-sharing committee.
	Monitor Critical Infrastructure to provide situational awareness and to promote rapid response.	Develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive CI/KR monitoring program.
		Develop and implement a plan that integrates CI/KR monitoring information into response operations.

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Appendix IV: NCR 2010 Strategic Plan Goals,
Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
Ensure Development and Maintenance of Regional Core Capabilities Develop and maintain the basic building blocks of preparedness and response by ensuring the NCR develops a baseline of capabilities including: Mass Casualty, Health Care System Surge, and Mass Prophylaxis; Mass Care and Evacuation; Citizen Participation, Alert, and Public Information; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive Detection and Response; and Planning, Training, and Exercises.	Increase the Region's capacity for medical surge preparedness and response to an all-hazards event to reduce deaths and injuries	Ensure that private health care, federal, state, and local public health, and EMS programs and providers in the NCR can increase surge capacity to respond to mass-casualty incidents and events requiring mass prophylaxis. Establish a regional monitoring and response system that allows for health and medical-response partners to track patients, hospital bed availability, alerts, and EMS/hospital activity in a shared, secure environment.
	Improve the region's capacity to evacuate and provide mass care for the public, including special needs individuals, when impacted by an all-hazards event.	Ensure the ability to track patients from the start of pre-hospital care to discharge from the health-care system during both daily operations and mass-casualty incidents. Develop, coordinate, and integrate local and state evacuation plans so that evacuation policies and routes complement each other to ensure the NCR's ability to coordinate evacuation across the region.
	Strengthen individual, community, and workplace preparedness for emergency events through public engagement and citizen participation designed to reach the general population and special needs citizens in response to and recovery from all-hazards events.	Ensure the NCR's ability to provide sheltering and feeding for the first 72 hours following an incident for individuals in the general population, persons with special needs, persons with special medical needs, and pets. Sustain the NCR's ability to alert and warn residents, businesses, and visitors using multiple methods including social media.
		Bolster recruitment, management, and retention of volunteers through Community Emergency Response Team, other citizen corps programs, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster member agencies, the Medical Reserve Corps, and registration in Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals programs.

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Appendix IV: NCR 2010 Strategic Plan Goals,
Objectives, and Initiatives

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
		Ensure post-incident human services and recovery assistance throughout the NCR including case management, emergency housing, behavioral health, spiritual care, and family reunification.
	Ensure the NCR has region-wide capacity to detect, respond, and recover in a timely manner from CBRNE events and other attacks requiring tactical response and technical rescue.	Enhance the NCR's ability to detect chemical, biological, radiological, and other types of contamination.
		Ensure region-wide access to Type 1 hazardous material (HazMat), bomb response/Explosive Ordnance Device units, and tactical teams and ensure each unit/team is able to respond in a reasonable amount of time.
		Ensure all responders in the NCR have access to Personal Protective Equipment, equipment, and apparatus that match the identified capability needs.
		Establish a regional monitoring and response system that provides health and medical-response partners with central access to biosurveillance.
	Improve capacity to develop and coordinate plans among all NCR partners and ensure the availability of region-wide training and exercise programs to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery efforts from all-hazards events.	Develop and exercise key regional emergency response and recovery plans.
		Ensure regional procedures, memoranda of understanding, and mutual-aid agreements are in place to allow for rapid coordination of resources including health assets across jurisdictional boundaries.
		Develop and update a matrix of training and exercises that meet Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program standards needed to maintain core regional capabilities. This matrix should address new and emerging threats and concerns raised in gap analyses and after-action reports from events and exercises.

Source: 2010 National Capital Region Homeland Security Plan.

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Appendix IV: NCR 2010 Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

^aAlthough the specific elements needed for situational awareness vary according to the field and area of expertise, the term "situational awareness" in the 2010 strategic plan refers to the ability to identify, monitor, and process important information, understand the interrelatedness of that information and its implications, and apply that understanding to make critical decisions in the present and near future. For example, if the region is threatened by a hurricane, awareness of the status of roads, shelters, traffic, available medical resources, power outages, and the like is important in making decisions about what type of assistance is needed and where it is needed. To coordinate an effective response, NCR partners need to share their information and have access to the information of others.

^bThe NCR fusion centers include the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center, the NCR Intelligence Center, and the Virginia Fusion Center. A fusion center is a physical location where data can be collected from a variety of sources, including but not limited to police departments, fire departments, health departments, and the private sector. Experts analyze the incoming information and create intelligence products, which can be used to maximize resources, streamline operations, and improve the ability to address all-hazards incidents and threats. Fusion centers help to prevent terrorism and criminal activities as well as support preparedness for man-made and natural hazards to trigger quick and effective response to all-hazards events.

^cCritical services are defined as life-sustainment services during an emergency and include energy (electric power and gas), water supply, transportation, food, and communications. These are all supplied routinely by the C/IKR sectors. During a disaster, providing critical life-sustaining services ensures that government and private health, safety, and emergency services continue, and that plans are in place to compensate for losses among interdependent systems.

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GAO-12-276T

Statement of
Richard Muth
Executive Director
Maryland Emergency Management Agency
Maryland Department of the Military

Before the
United States Senate
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia

And the
Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs

Hearing On:
"From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the
Next Disaster?"

December 7, 2011

1. Introduction

Chairman Akaka, Chairman Pryor and Members of the Sub-Committees on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia and the Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs, my name is Richard Muth and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency. It is an honor to be invited here today to discuss our shared commitment to ensure the National Capital Region responds effectively to no-notice emergencies whether they arise from a natural event or from terrorism. I bring nearly 40 years of experience to bear on these issues. After spending 33 years at the local level first as a firefighter and then as the Baltimore County emergency manager; I have now spent almost 4 years as the State Director of Emergency Management.

We have only one National Capital – that makes this area different from any other region in the United States. The extensive federal presence in the National Capital Region – not just in the District of Columbia but also Maryland and Virginia and the various state and local government agencies responsible for public safety and security in the region are a unique challenge.

To ensure we are continuously improving the readiness of the National Capitol Region, Maryland:

- Participates in NCR strategic planning, training, and exercises; and
- Coordinates and communicates with NCR stakeholders relating to emergency preparedness and response for the NCR through MEMA and local and regional groups; and
- Identifies and addresses on an ongoing basis the challenges the State faces in preparing for and responding to no-notice emergencies and how it has or plans to address those challenges.

Maryland is working every day with our local jurisdictions and our regional partners to improve the National Capital Region's response during a disaster. We do this both through various coordinating bodies as well as by supporting innovative communication and technology tools. We learn from risk assessments, threat information, and from after-action reviews. We adjust our strategies and tactics and learn both from what has worked and where things need to be improved.

2. The NCR Strategic plan anchors our regional preparedness efforts.

a. Maryland Role in NCR Strategic Planning

Maryland, The District of Columbia, and Virginia coordinate and work together every day whether during rush hour, mutual aid support, or simply to monitor conditions on the ground. Through our watch centers, fusion centers, emergency operations centers, and traffic management facilities, the region is constantly engaged in a dialog about how we can improve on past performance, work together during incidents today, and plan for an even more efficient and effective future.

The Senior Policy Group (SPG), a group that includes the Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia Homeland Security Advisors and Emergency Managers and of which I am a member worked closely with the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) from the local jurisdictions in the region to build a strong strategic vision for the region. Supported by many work groups made up of first responder subject matter experts and organized around the different response disciplines the region has developed a strategic plan which prioritizes core capabilities.

The SPG and CAOs are implementing a sustainable process that builds the region's capabilities in alignment with the strategic priorities identified in the Strategic plan.

The Strategic Plan was built on a strong foundation of regional collaboration and stakeholder participation including extensive participation by the State of Maryland. This Plan outlines priority capabilities, those key capabilities needed by the region for response during natural disaster or terrorist attack. The region is developing and strengthening these capabilities with all of its partners in a coordinated, efficient, and effective manner. As stewards of the public trust and its resources, we are committed to exercising rigorous oversight to implement this Strategic Plan through a comprehensive process of regional planning and performance measurement. The SPG and local CAOs are all committed to anchoring regional investment on the strategic plan.

In the past year, we have updated information on our spending history, expanded our identification of alternate funding sources, and put in place metrics to measure progress in achieving capabilities. We have also put into place milestones and indicators to help us chart our progress in implementing the Plan. As we begin a new planning cycle we are doubling down on our efforts to use all our data streams on risk, on project management, on better approaches to anchor our oversight and management in the strategic plan. This process builds on past experiences and should yield a more transparent and consistent way to bring state and local leadership together with the responders at the local level to ensure accountability and the best use of our resources

The Plan provides a strategy and vision for the future. We are committed to make sure everyone knows what our goals are, where we are in reaching our goals, and that we invest according to the strategy to reduce or eliminate risk.

We continue to improve.

3. The Role of Emergency management and State and Local Government in Preparing for, Responding to, and Recovering from Disasters is built on coordination.

a. The Role of MEMA in the Emergency Management

Local police, fire, and emergency medical personnel are almost always the first to respond to emergencies. When they exhaust their capabilities or need additional resources they turn to the state. The Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the lead agency for coordinating emergency preparedness, planning, and response during significant events. MEMA is the lynchpin for coordinating preparedness, planning, response, and recovery. When the

Governor declares a State of Emergency MEMA, by law, becomes the responsible agency for managing the emergency at the State level.

We coordinate Maryland state agencies and local Maryland agencies while also working with our sister agencies in the District of Columbia and Virginia. Through various regional entities and the state structure we not only coordinate operations during a response but we provide communications and innovative technological tools to connect decision makers and the public with key information needed to prevent, detect, respond, and mitigate crises.

When the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is fully activated, it is staffed by MEMA employees, a representative from each state agency, as well as representatives from FEMA Region III, the private sector, and volunteer organizations. These people coordinate the state response and work with locals to fill gaps and support the front line first responders in all disciplines.

MEMA also operates the Maryland Joint Operations Center (MJOC). The Maryland Joint Operations Center, a joint civilian and National Guard watch center, functions 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. The MJOC is the State Warning Point for public notification (i.e. Amber alerts, weather warnings, etc.). The staff helps to coordinate conference calls with state, local and federal partners; maintains detailed call-down lists for SEOC providing regular updates on incidents throughout the state to executive leadership, regional emergency managers in all three state, the Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration and their D.C. and Virginia counterparts.

Many of the events that have had a significant regional impact over the past year have been transportation related. While emergency management becomes involved during an escalation of circumstances the Departments of Transportation, the highway agencies, and the transit agencies are all working together every day. Maryland has the State Highways State Operations Center which coordinates statewide traffic in conjunction with the Maryland NCR Regional Traffic Management Center. All of these agencies are connected through RITIS (described below) and WebEOC and enhancements to those systems are underway.

We continue to improve.

a. Responding to No-Notice Events

No-notice events are particularly challenging for emergency managers and first responders. We cannot plan for every contingency and every possibility. Instead, Maryland and the region focuses on building the capabilities that allow us to respond in all hazards. In an emergency response, the tools required to respond to a fire caused by an explosive device or a lightning strike do not change. We build core capabilities so that we are better at response, more effective and more efficient.

We continue to improve.

b. Building a Resilient National Capital Region

The snowstorm and the earthquake, two examples of incidents that occurred without notice, highlight the importance of building a resilient community: resilient utilities, resilient communications, and a resilient public. Resilient utilities quickly come back on line after disruption because of redundancy and an active effort to mitigate disruptions. A resilient communications network is both redundant and robust for first responders and public. A resilient citizenry has been educated on what to do and can support emergency management by keeping themselves safe.

In California, citizens react the right way during an earthquake because they have been taught what they need to do. In our region, where earthquakes are very rare, public education efforts have focused on another risk – terrorism. The region has adopted the “See Something, Say Something” campaign and regularly provides individual disaster preparedness education, training, and materials.

The earthquake highlighted that during events of significance (including every New Year’s Eve at 12:01) cell phone systems become overloaded and calls from mobile phones will not go through. This is a feature of modern life. Public safety radio communications were not impacted at all. Land lines were open, 911 centers were not impacted. This is a result of a significant effort in the region to ensure that our first responders have interoperable and redundant communications no matter the situation.

Localities are currently providing the public information via email, text messages, Twitter, Facebook and on government agency websites. These methods of communication (in addition to radio and TV) functioned well during the earthquake. We need to invest in broadband for public safety to ensure that data communications are available to first responders. We should also educate the public that, while a phone call may not go through, text messages are a much lower bandwidth solution to communicating to friends and family.

We continue to improve.

c. No-Notice Response and Maryland’s Checklists

The challenge to response during a no-notice event is three-fold. First, you must quickly identify the event, and then assess the extent and work to anticipate secondary events or affects, and finally quickly disseminate information to the public. The first moments of any emergency event that occurs without warning are inherently chaotic and confusing. Responder’s first effort is to determine the situation on the ground and then begin to plan to move forward. That initial confusion often leads to cascading effects as the individual decisions of the public aggregate into broad far-reaching consequences. That is what happened during the earthquake – initial confusion led to a reaction from a cross-section of the public who flooded roads and transit and tied up commercial communications networks.

All emergencies are local. They begin with a 911 call to a local dispatch center and local police and firefighters are usually the first on the scene. Any event from a house fire to the Virginia Tech shootings to an attack on the Capitol building will first have a local response and then

emergency managers and other first responders will be called in to support those first on the scene. The region uses the Incident Command System (ICS) as the basis for response to any incident but particularly to no-notice events. ICS was developed as a command scheme for handling forest fires in California. It is a modular, ground up approach to incident management and has been proven, time and again, to be an effective management structure for emergencies. Every first responder in the region is trained in ICS and this forms the backbone of our overall response.

Our strategic plan focuses on building core capabilities – building blocks of response. This approach helps to ensure that we are ready for any and all events of any hazard type. No matter the incident, by building capabilities necessary for all response we build capabilities that are adaptable to any situation.

In Maryland we've focused on providing guidance to our watch centers and our responders on how to react in an unexpected and evolving event. Maryland has developed a series of Emergency Checklists used to systematically identify the correct course of action. Our no-notice checklist leads personnel in our watch center through a series of assessments meant to identify the problem, analyze the risk, and provide for the next steps including notifications to leadership and the public.

We now have hazard specific checklists for hurricanes, winter weather, and terrorism ready to be implemented the moment an event occurs.

We continue to improve.

d. Public Outreach

In some cases, either because of the travel distance of partner agencies and/or road conditions, it is impractical to set up a physical Joint Information Center (JIC). In those instances, Maryland will activate a virtual JIC, allowing public information offices from other agencies to help monitor the media, write and edit press releases, send out social media messages and make phone calls from their local office – providing them with direct access to information that can then be shared with regional partners. During the three blizzards of the winter of 2009-2010, a number of state agency PIOs assisted the MEMA public information office in this way.

In the months ahead, the NCR PIO group will be rolling out a Virtual JIC website developed by Fairfax County. This will allow all of the local, state, federal and District of Columbia PIOs to coordinate on public messages and to help ensure a consistent and effective message to the public. We have worked hard to facilitate better communications between the PIO professionals in the region and with the public. The public side of the site will allow the public to access the various websites and pages with safety information.

In addition, the public information offices of the National Capital Region have developed a public awareness and education campaign. The final messaging is still being developed, but the tentative theme for the campaign is "Get Where You Need to be Before the Weather Gets Bad."

The purpose of the campaign is to encourage people to be vigilant about the weather forecast and make plans to arrive at your ultimate destination before the roads become dangerous. The campaign will also encourage employees to release employees early enough to get home before the roads become dangerous or encourage workers to stay at work until after the roads have been cleared – very similar to the new Office of Personnel Management policy for federal employees. Many of the transportation issues on Jan. 26 were caused by large volumes of employees headed out just as the snow began to fall, and this program is designed to help avoid a similar situation in the future.

Maryland is also expanding the use of social media for keeping the public informed. MEMA has significantly enhanced our web presence and we now have over 2.2 million fans on Facebook and, after only three months of publicizing our Twitter feed we have 4,000 followers. This is all part of a coordinated State of Maryland effort to expand our reach in social media and partner with other State agencies partner to get a single unified message out to the public.

As our citizens change the way they communicate we have adapted and evolved to communicate in the most effective way possible.

We continue to improve.

4. The State continues to make efforts to effectively coordinate and communicate with NCR stakeholders relating to emergency preparedness and response for the NCR

The past year, 2011, has been an eventful one for those of us in the emergency management and response community in the National Capital Region. Beginning with the January 26 Storm and continuing through the Louisa Earthquake, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Leo, Maryland and the National Capital Region have experienced an unprecedented number of significant natural events. From each of these events we continue to improve and advance – we get better and learn from every incident. .

The January 26 Storm was serendipitous in the worst possible way - early road treatments, a staple of winter preparedness, were washed away by mid-afternoon rains which were followed by a temperature drop and icing of roads. The now ice covered roads quickly filled with commuters on early release from regional employers and conditions worsened – buses were stuck on icy hills, tractor trailers were jackknifed – and the congestion familiar to many DC commuters on the best of days made a quick response to individual incidents difficult.

The January 26 Storm was not, in itself an emergency – the snowfall amounts were not exceptional and wind was not a significant factor. Instead, the storm resulted in a series of significant traffic incidents across the region – in Maryland there were up to ten significant traffic incidents statewide – each requiring individualized attention and management. Emergency responders, however, had difficulty getting where they needed to be and that resulted in a slower than normal response and mitigation of incidents. But we have learned some lessons from this event.

We improved the resources available to our highway crews and improved the sharing of information internal to government and with the public through technology and better coordination. The deployment of the Regional Information Center – a recommendation of a regional after-action review effort – is another change in the right direction. Our decision to invest in something new and innovative – to make real changes in our process – is evidence of our commitment to a regional, coordinated, cooperative approach to incident management.

We continue to work diligently; everyday both during disasters and in our day-to-day operations, to improve our situational awareness, refine our processes and procedures, and build capabilities that ensure the same mistakes do not happen again.

We continue to improve.

a. Technology

The region and Maryland utilize several technology tools to facilitate the sharing of information. I would like to share some of the key resources used by Local, State, Federal, Private Sector and Non-Profit entities within the region.

i. WebEOC

The primary system for sharing regional incident information in the NCR and, in fact, across the State of Maryland, is WebEOC. It is crisis information management software that allows decision makers to have access to real time data, entered from the field, about incidents throughout the NCR regardless of location and helps incident commanders, emergency operations centers, and support personnel manage events, resources and information to deal with emergencies.

WebEOC currently serves every county in Maryland, the Northern Virginia localities, the District of Columbia, state emergency operations centers in Maryland and Virginia, the U.S. Secret Service, and the Joint Forces Headquarters National Capital Region, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. Other groups that are tied into the system include:

- Red Cross
- Maryland - National Capital Park & Planning Commission
- Pepco
- Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission
- FBI
- Federal Reserve Board
- George Mason University
- CIA
- TSA
- FEMA – NCRC
- NRO
- Jefferson County, West Virginia
- Mount Weather Operations Center (FEMA)

The NCR has invested in purchasing, maintaining, and upgrading the system and training personnel since 2004. The use of WebEOC is consistently being refined and improved and we must continue to invest in the technology that allows us to do our jobs more effectively and efficiently. The system is being used every day and emergency management professionals across the region are constantly reviewing and assessing the system to find ways to get better.

We continue to improve.

ii. OSPREY and Map-Based Situational Awareness and Public Outreach

Since its launch in August, Maryland's public facing emergency map called OSPREY, has received over a quarter of a million hits. This represents 61% of all the hits on any Maryland government GIS map in the past 12 months and this system has only been in use since August.

This map contains a great deal of information for the public including weather radar, traffic conditions, flood plains, hurricane storm surge, real-time power outage information, and medical and citizen services.¹ It provides a visual, online tool for citizens to use for their own preparedness and to track events as they occur. We expect that this resource will continue to be a benefit to our citizens in future weather events and for manmade disruptions to provide information quickly and with the appropriate context to assist in their decision making.

In addition to the publicly available map, MEMA also utilizes OSPREY for response and recovery operations. The internal OSPREY, available to first responders and emergency managers only, includes additional information that might be considered sensitive including critical infrastructure information, shelter information, and other key information sources which are geo-located providing enhanced situational awareness. Virginia and D.C. also have similar systems and we, as a region, have invested in linking across jurisdictional lines to ensure important information is shared.

Maryland and the NCR will be holding an exercise of regional coordination of GIS systems and situational awareness on December 19. The goals will be to test systems, train staff, and evaluate our ability to ingest, analyze, and share data across government and across jurisdictions. A second follow up exercise is also planned in mid-April 2012.

We are developing new systems for response and public outreach. We exercise and train on these systems regularly looking for ways to make progress.

We continue to improve.

iii. Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS)²

The Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) is an automated data sharing, dissemination, and archiving system used every day by traffic management officials in

¹ The OSPREY Map is available to the public at www.mema.state.md.us/MEMA2/map2.html.

² For more information on RITIS please visit <http://www.cattlab.umd.edu/index.php?page=research&a=00023>.

Maryland, the District, and Virginia. RITIS improves transportation efficiency, safety, and security through the integration of existing transit and transportation management data.

RITIS provides an enhanced overall view of the region's transportation network. Participating agencies are able to view regional traffic information from each state and jurisdiction and use it to improve their operations and emergency preparedness. RITIS uses regional standardized data to enable traveler information, including web sites, paging systems, and 511. Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia each have access to each other's internal traffic management system data seamlessly through RITIS. RITIS is also available within OSPREY. Maryland continues to support the steady improvement and expansion of the information available within this system.

MEMA now uses RITIS information to identify critical roadway incidents and is using a new critical incident board to track and seek to remedy significant incidents such as personal injury accidents and incidents resulting in closure of more than one lane of significant roadways and arterials. RITIS includes data on lane closures, expected backup, and a timeline of response pulled directly from each State and the District's internal traffic management systems. In addition, through a new collaborative Transportation Task Force, the State of Maryland is developing a strike team approach to critical traffic events allowing responders to flood an area with response capability to quickly remedy any issues and move on to the next most critical area.

We have learned from past mistakes and now have processes in place to leverage the information we have to enhance our response.

We continue to improve.

iv. Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV)

Three years ago there was limited web-based real-time video of road conditions and traffic available to the Maryland residents or visitors. The video that was available was not available on smart phones and local and state systems were not integrated.

Maryland has made significant and sustained commitment to improving situational awareness using CCTV. Governor O'Malley identified CCTV as one of the State's Core Goals for a Prepared Maryland. Currently there are 541 cameras available on the Coordinated Highways Action Response Team (CHART) system, Maryland's internal traffic management system, with more on the way. These feeds can be distributed to any agency that has access to the State Highway Administration (SHA) CHART system – this is an exponential expansion of 750 percent up from 45 videos available in 2009. This video can also be sent to secure sites that can be used in command posts or desktops of agencies which do not have direct access. The video streams can also be sent to wireless devices such as smart phones.

Maryland, Montgomery County, Prince George's County and the District now share over two hundred live traffic video feeds, a capability built since the January 26 Storm. We have invested to bring this capability to every jurisdiction in the region so that all of the cameras in the NCR from various entities are available.

During the January 26 Storm it became apparent that, despite the increases in fixed camera coverage, gaps in these views still existed. As part of the State's after-action improvement from the Storm, SHA developed mobile dash cameras capable of broadcasting video from a patrol vehicle on scene to central decision makers. All Maryland State Highway Emergency Patrol vehicles are currently outfitted with portable cameras in their vehicle which will provide live streaming video which can be distributed across the network. In addition, each of MEMA's regional vehicles has a similar capability.

Video is also available from helicopters – a capability used by MEMA in the aftermath of Hurricane Irene to conduct preliminary fly-over damage assessments throughout the state. Currently SHA can view video from Baltimore County and Baltimore City helicopters with expansion to other aerial platforms as they become available including State MedEvac aircraft and local jurisdiction aircraft. An additional seventeen portable camera trailers which can be deployed wherever live video may be needed but is not available are being purchased. Even those without access to CHART can access these videos through secure web portals.

We are identifying gaps in our video coverage and creating new solutions to fill those gaps. There is now more video available to both responders and citizens than ever before.

We continue to improve.

v. Automatic Vehicle Location and Commercial Trucker Outreach

The January 26, 2011 snow storm highlighted a key issue that required a solution: in emergency weather conditions, response crews, heavy wrecker tow trucks, snow plows, and other emergency vehicles are often unable to chart a course to the site of a particular incident.

Recognizing the need for improvement, SHA developed a plan to install automatic vehicle location units in its vehicles so that the State of Maryland can more effectively track its vehicular assets and intelligently re-route them in situations where traffic prevents a swift response. The AVL units will also improve SHA's snow removal ability as they will facilitate better fleet management. These additional response vehicles will be strategically located through the Maryland portion of the NCR to quickly respond to incidents involving large vehicles, tractor trailers, and buses. To date, SHA has completed AVL installation for 96 percent of its intended fleet (883 out of 918 vehicles).

In addition to installing AVLs in State-owned vehicles, SHA has also acquired 500 additional mobile AVL units that can be temporarily installed in contracted vehicles. In snow emergencies, the State often utilizes contracted plows and equipment. The mobile units will seamlessly integrate management of contract trucks with management of State vehicles.

SHA has also expanded outreach to the private sector - it now utilizes an email group to quickly provide pertinent information to commercial truckers and trucking companies, increasing time to re-route to avoid traffic-related impacts on their deliveries. Providing trucking businesses with emergency information also helps to avoid incidents involving large commercial vehicles, which can have an exasperating affect on traffic conditions.

We looked critically at our response capabilities and made long-term strategic investments in our technological systems to ensure that our traffic managers have the information they need to allocate resources effectively and efficiently.

We continue to improve.

vi. 511³ and Citizen Traffic Spotters

Maryland 511 is Maryland's official travel information service. Maryland 511 provides travelers with reliable, current traffic and weather information, as well as links to other transportation services. Building on the data in RITIS and other sources, 511 will allow commuters to "know before they go" and adjust their route or otherwise make accommodations for traffic backups.

Unavailable during the January 26 Storm, this system will get better and better as more commuters dial 511.

After the January 26 storm, the State Highway Administrations realized that even with its many traffic cameras, road sensors and deployed personnel, the agency still was missing situational awareness from some areas. To help remedy this situation, the SHA Office of Public Information is developing a cadre of volunteer traffic spotters who will provide real-time information to the SHA Chart Center, which monitors highway condition across the state 24 hours a day.

5. The NCR has completed extensive modeling, simulation, and evacuation planning.

The region has invested in a combination of monitoring, computer modeling, computer simulation, and planning to ensure the region is capable of evacuating.

a. Evacuation Plans

It is critical to note that the January 26 Storm and Louisa Earthquake and the related traffic and transit delays were not an evacuation of the District or the region. This was nothing like an evacuation – commuters and others just passing through crisscrossed the region in all directions to get home causing congestion. An evacuation is markedly different and evacuation plans are, therefore, drafted with different assumptions in mind.

A no-notice evacuation of the region would be an unprecedented event that would, without a doubt, result in a loss of life and property and would be a massive multi-day undertaking. For the first time in recent memory, a mandatory evacuation of a portion of Maryland, the barrier island of Ocean city, was ordered. This successful, orderly, and preventative evacuation of approximately 250,000 people still took 24 hours to complete. An evacuation of the District or the NCR would be and exponentially more complicated and significantly more time consuming effort even if prior notice is available.

³ For more information please visit <http://www.md511.org/>

The region has looked critically at evacuation and has developed a model for evacuation that is being used all along the eastern seaboard. Maryland and the region continue to refine these plans, develop better more accurate models, and improve the data available to decision makers for evacuation.

The Maryland NCR (All Hazards) evacuation plan was the first comprehensive evacuation plan in the region and takes into consideration multiple scenarios within and around the NCR region. This is a four directional plan for moving traffic from North to South, East to West, South to North, and West to East. The plan includes intersection by intersection traffic management diagrams for use by law enforcement to route traffic during emergencies.

The plan also integrates the use of the transit system to move residents from the city to gathering points for evacuation further from the affected area. This portion of the plan has identified large assembly areas such as shopping malls which are a short distance from designated metro stations where evacuees can seek shelter and other facilities while awaiting transportation to off site locations outside of any red zone.

Not only does this plan address evacuating citizens away from the DC region but also accommodates plans to evacuate towards or through the NCR for other scenarios which may occur in adjacent jurisdictions. Virginia and the District are also working with the same format allowing for evacuation traffic management plans that are fully integrated across borders with Maryland and the region. West Virginia and Pennsylvania are using the same format and this assures they too will be integrated with plans in Maryland, Delaware, the District and Virginia.

Maryland State Highway Administration has also developed site-specific emergency transportation evacuation plans for several large federal facilities in the region. Each of these site specific plans is also built to be integrated into the other regional plans. The importance of this integrated planning approach is evident in the plans developed for two large federal employers located along a critical evacuation route. If these two large employers allowed all of their employees to be released by passenger vehicle it would result in near total shut down of that route. Through pre-planning, there is an established plan to allow a walk out of employees to exit the facility to pre-designated staging areas off campus where they can shelter in place or await transit vehicles to relay them to other facilities.

We continue to improve.

b. Evacuation Traffic Modeling and Simulation

Maryland also utilizes a state-of-the-art NCR Simulation and Monitoring Tool – a computer model for analyzing and predicting traffic during evacuation. Developed by the University of Maryland it includes all state and interstate routes in the Maryland portion of the region as well as interstate routes in Virginia. DHS grant funding was used to install traffic detection devices along major interstate highways and some other major routes to capture traffic entering and exiting the Beltway. New traffic monitoring, speed sensor, and volume sensors, installed with federal grant funds, will enhance Maryland's existing capabilities and will capture the volume data needed for planning as well as monitoring the traffic conditions during an event.

The model not only takes into account traffic but also transit and pedestrian movements and the interaction between pedestrian, transit, and commuter traffic on the region's roads. The model also provides the capability to monitor the transportation network and predict up to a 45 minutes into the future a view of traffic to determine when to make adjustments to the system.

An upgrade to the system, a joint effort between the University of Maryland and the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab, is currently under way to streamline the calculations which would allow users to utilize the tool from their computers and over the internet rather than through the high-powered super computers available only at the University.

Maryland SHA is also working with District of Columbia DOT on a Washington D.C. Simulation and Monitoring Tool. This new model is unique and state-of-the-art. It was built for an incident commander during a release or attack in which a quick decision must be made to either shelter in place or evacuate. The affected area is outlined by the user and the appropriate traffic analysis zones and available roadway capacities are identified. The system, once complete and fully vetted, should be able to recommend traffic control measures which may be needed to expedite the exodus of citizens such as turn prohibitions, signal timing changes, and other remedies. This goes against an older philosophy for evacuation where everyone leaves even if they are not in an affected area.

We continue to improve.

6. Conclusion

The National Capital Region looks critically at our response during disasters. The region must continue to conduct full and frank reviews to identify our shortfalls and build the capabilities we need. Our Strategy will help us do that. Our governance structure will bring together the people necessary to get it done. The collaboration of the leadership at both the Local, State, and Federal level will ensure that there is the executive oversight in place to ensure progress.

We must continue to invest in building our regional situational awareness capabilities. The region has already made significant investments in this area and should continue to do so.

We must continue to invest in communications and technology for our first responders. We do not just talk on radios anymore. We exchange data, video, and pictures. But it remains difficult to push large volumes of information, the information needed to make first responders safer and more efficient, wirelessly to and from the field. The President's vision for a Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network is a first step in the right direction in bringing public safety technology into the 21st century. This will increase first responder communications resilience and will free up other areas of spectrum for potential commercial use while also reducing the costs to public safety of maintaining multiple communications systems. The National Capital Region should invest now to implement that technology in the future.

We should be investing in the foundations of preparedness – building a resilient community and citizenry. The region, the State of Maryland, and the Nation should look for ways to educate

young people and citizens in general on emergency preparedness in the same way that kids were taught to “stop, drop, and roll” or “duck and cover.”

Maryland is already working with the region to develop Business Operations Centers to facilitate public/private sector partnership. MEMA will launch an Office of Resiliency in the New Year to coordinate these efforts. These investments in the future have to continue and the funding must be there to continue them. We must engage the private sector and leverage their resources and expertise for the greater good.

As technology evolves – our response evolves.

As gaps are exposed – our planning improves.

As our tools for communications expand – our outreach grows.

Emergency responders and managers are not being complacent – in fact the exact opposite is true. We are actively working to improve preparedness in this region and beyond.

We continue to improve.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address these issues.

Written Testimony of

THE HONORABLE TERRIE L. SUIT
SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS & HOMELAND SECURITY
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Before The Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of
Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia and Ad Hoc Subcommittee on
Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs

Regarding

National Capitol Region Emergency Preparedness

December 7, 2011

Chairman Akaka, Chairman Pryor, Ranking Member Johnson, Ranking Member Paul and distinguished members of the Subcommittees, on behalf of Governor McDonnell and the Commonwealth of Virginia, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Virginia shares an outstanding relationship with our partner jurisdictions at the local, state and federal level in the National Capitol Region (NCR). I would like to recognize our outstanding public servants, the area's first responders who are among the finest in the nation. They responded in an exemplary manner on 9/11/2001 when Arlington Virginia was directly attacked by terrorists at the Pentagon, and they continue to respond to every emergency event this region presents. We could not be prouder of them.

Virginia is home to nearly 48% of the NCR's citizens according to the 2010 census. Our NCR localities have a Manager form of government as opposed to an elected executive. These Managers or appointed Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) are vested with the authorities necessary to manage the operations of their respective jurisdictions. Our emergency professionals follow the National Response Framework, National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) when managing emergency events. With the exception of Arlington County, highways as well as primary and secondary roads in Virginia's portion of the NCR are managed by the state through the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Virginia works with our NCR partners to accomplish strategic planning and training. By statute I serve as the Governor's representative on the NCR Senior Policy Group (SPG) along with the Homeland Security Advisors and heads of emergency management for Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia as well as the Director of the Office of National Capitol Region Coordination. We meet regularly and work closely with the Chief Administrative

Officer's through CAO Homeland Security Executive Committee (CAO HSEC) where we jointly oversee the evaluation of regional goals and priorities, and determine regional Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) project funding to ensure projects are in line with the NCR strategic plan. Members of both these organizations participate in the NCR Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC). Other NCR coordinating groups include the NCR Regional Emergency Support Function (RESF) committees and the Regional Programmatic Working Groups (RPWGs) all of which collaborate to assist the NCR leadership with defining, planning and implementing strategic initiatives and with the evaluation and updating of the NCR Strategic Plan. Virginia considers the NCR Strategic Plan in making investment and strategic decisions within or which affect Virginia NCR localities. In addition, Virginia works to incorporate input from NCR partners in the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) and the Virginia Strategic Plan.

Virginia has recently completed an updated evacuation plan for Northern Virginia which assumes a "no notice" event. Participants in this planning included local, federal and District partners. Considerable planning has been done to prepare for another attack on the Pentagon to include annual exercises with participants from across the region. NCR health partners have collaborated on response plans for biological, radiologic and chemical events.

Virginia, Maryland, the District and federal government decision makers all coordinate in advance of, and during emergency events through numerous information sharing and mutual aide tools. Situational awareness information is pushed out daily to NCR participants through e-mail and text alerts covering weather events, traffic incidents, police activities and planned events.

When an emergency is pending or has occurred information is shared and coordination facilitated through e-mails, text messages and conference calls all facilitated via the Regional

Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS). Information sharing tools such as the internet based Emergency Operation Center (WEBEOC), the Virginia Interoperability Picture for Emergency Response (VIPER) and the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) provide common operating picture situational awareness. The Washington Area Warning and Alert System (WAWAS), provides a “when all else fails” means for communications to over 200 facilities.

Virginia has co-located our regional decision makers for the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), and Virginia State Police (VSP) at a 24/7 Operations Center located at the Fairfax Public Safety Tactical Operation Center (PSTOC) to facilitate face to face decision making. Additional transportation coordination is provided through Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) which is a joint program of the NCR DOTs and Metro.

NCR coordination is further facilitated through the UASI supported National Capital Region Network (NCR Net), a secure terrestrial data pathway between public safety entities and emergency operations centers. NCR Net hosts a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) CAD to CAD system allowing participants to share information and resources.

In addition to daily use radios two strategic radio caches are located in the NCR. Each cache contains approximately 500 portable radios, satellite communications capabilities, and interoperability devices that can serve as a “bridge” between the organic communications systems of NCR jurisdictions as well as federal entities.

A challenge in a “no notice” event is not having had an opportunity to communicate advance preparedness messages to the public. General preparedness messaging is ongoing. When each weather season begins, specific preparedness messages are crafted and pushed out.

Virginia is currently engaged in our Winter Preparedness Campaign. Citizens can learn how to prepare for the season by accessing www.readyvirginia.gov where they will find information on preparing a winter kit, making a family emergency plan and other best practices. This information is available to all NCR residents.

For commuters this is the time to prepare their vehicles by checking tires, washer fluids, snow chains and outfitting their vehicle with a winter preparedness kit containing warm clothing, water, and rations. During winter no commuter should leave home without wearing appropriate footwear and protective clothing. Most importantly commuters should be prepared to stay in place when road conditions are projected to be unsafe.

Transportation capacity is a primary issue during any event in the NCR. On a normal day when the workforce has a staggered commute traffic is heavily congested. The tendency during an emergency is to leave the workplace all at once creating gridlock. Staying in place is a critical component of preventing subsequent emergencies such as vehicle wrecks, hazardous material contamination, and compounded traffic delays due to abandoned or disabled vehicles. But staying in place means citizens need to plan in advance for the care of loved ones in the event they cannot get home at their regular time. Knowing the emergency plans for their children's schools and day care centers, sharing their own emergency plan with their care providers and loved ones, and using text messaging as opposed to mobile phones are all beneficial in getting through emergency. Citizens need to take personal responsibility for checking the weather conditions before they begin their commute. If unsafe conditions are forecast they should alter their commuting plans.

The NCR Public Information Officer committee has recently established the NCR Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC) at www.capitalregionupdates.gov. This site provides a single

web stop for the public to access all current NCR event information and messaging and to sign up for subscriber based text and e-mail alerts. Additionally PIOs push information to local radio, television, print, and online media during an event. These messages are coordinated and unified while allowing flexibility for varying conditions within different jurisdictions of the NCR.

Emergencies are localized events. Because of the vast geographic area of the NCR it may be sunny and cold in one part of the NCR yet snowing heavily in another. The responders and emergency officials on the ground are empowered with delegated authorities from their Principals through emergency operations plans, executive orders, state statute and local code to make the decisions that are necessary for the safety of our citizens. This bottom up framework is essential in emergency management.

Every incident provides the opportunity for lessons learned and to inform an evolving preparedness strategy. The events of January 26, as well as the earthquake have become catalysts for change. The federal Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has committed publically to making decisions earlier and not bringing the work force in when dangerous weather conditions are forecast. They have also stated they will embrace a "Stay in Place" strategy.

The strength of the Commonwealth and the NCR lies in our close working relationships and the combined expertise of our individual emergency responders and emergency officials. Abiding by the National Response Framework and employing the National Incident Management System through the Incident Command System is essential to successful emergency event management. Understanding these systems and avoiding policy decisions that will confuse, or conflict with this doctrine is critical to the NCRs ability to respond to future emergencies.

Mr. Chairman, Members, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

Statement of

**Paul A. Quander, Jr.
Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice**

**Executive Office of the Mayor
District of Columbia**

Before the

**United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the
District of Columbia**

and the

Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs

Hearing Title:

***“From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks:
Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?”***

**Wednesday, December 7, 2011
2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Dirksen Senate Office Building
Room 342**

Good afternoon Chairman Akaka and Ranking Member Johnson, Chairman Pryor and Ranking Member Paul and members of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs' Subcommittees on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia and Disaster Recovery and Intergovernmental Affairs. My name is Paul A. Quander, Jr. and I serve the District of Columbia as the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. In that role, it is my responsibility to provide direction, guidance, support and coordination to the District's public safety agencies to develop and lead interagency public safety initiatives that improve the quality of life in the District of Columbia.

The District of Columbia recognizes its unique nature and status. As the Nation's Capital, we share our borders with the Commonwealth of Virginia and the State of Maryland and the Potomac River to the east. The District is situated in the Potomac River basin, 60 miles east of the Blue Ridge/Appalachian Mountain ranges and approximately 100 miles west of the Atlantic Ocean. In the 68.3 square miles that we call home, there are 40 bridges and numerous tunnels and overpasses. There are 1500 miles of public roads in the city. All three branches of the federal government are located within the boundaries of the City, including the White House, the U.S. Capitol and the Supreme Court. Additionally, the District hosts 45,300 businesses, 17 colleges and universities and four military installations. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the District of Columbia has over 601,000 residents and our population increases each day. New construction projects continue and signs of growth and vitality show themselves everyday. The District of Columbia is an exciting place to live and, as a Native Washingtonian, I am pleased that so many others would like to call it home as well.

Each day we welcome between 600,000 to 1,000,000 people – commuters, visitors, and students - into the city on roads and rail. These commuters come into the City from Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Delaware each day. Further, the City hosts more than 15 million visitors annually according to information gathered from Destination DC and the National Park Service. Additionally, over 120 major special events are held within the City each year many of which require multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary coordination (done through the Mayor's Special Events Task Group). It is because of this that we in the District of Columbia take the management of that population very seriously. We recognize that, to effectively address the challenges that we could potentially face, we must work together regionally. Several considerations come into play: Traffic Management, Emergency Management, Communications, Interoperability, Equipment Compatibility, Training Standardization, Preparedness Messaging, and Information Sharing.

One of the many agencies that I provide oversight to is the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, HSEMA, whose mission is to support and coordinate homeland security and emergency management efforts, ensuring that the District of Columbia's all-hazards emergency operations are prepared to protect against, plan for, respond to and recover from natural and man-made hazards. This is accomplished by:

- Developing plans and procedures to ensure emergency response and recovery capabilities for all emergencies and disasters;
- Coordinating emergency resource allocation for emergencies and disaster incidents;
- Providing training for all emergency responders, city employees and the public; and
- Coordinating all major special events and street closings in the District of Columbia.

In addition, and in furtherance of its mission, HSEMA also provides public awareness and outreach programs as well as 24-hour emergency operations center capabilities and serves as one of the central points of communication during regional emergencies. One of the agency's unique capabilities is that it serves as the Regional State Administrative Agency (SAA) for the Homeland Security Grant Program for the National Capital Region (NCR). HSEMA has served in this role since 2007. From 2007 through 2011, HSEMA has been responsible for administering \$471,486,975 to jurisdictions within the NCR. From 2003 through 2006, the SAA was the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice and \$313,293,463 were administered throughout the region.

Historically, most of the funding has been Urban Areas Security Initiative funding (UASI) which, as you know, provides funding to address the unique planning, organization, equipment, training and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas. This funding has provided the NCR with the opportunity to provide meaningful support to jurisdictions allowing us to ensure that, as a region, we are addressing our challenges and preparing and equipping the "boots on the ground."

City emergency planners must consider natural, technological and national security hazards; the residual impacts from the federal enclave; the proximity of risks to critical infrastructure and key assets; and external impacts from contiguous jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia when analyzing risk and vulnerability. In September 28, 2007, HSEMA conducted a Multi-Hazard Preparedness Assessment. After considering and analyzing all the natural and human-caused hazards that face the District, including (but not limited to):

- Explosive Attack (Bombing Using Improvised Explosive Device (IEDs) and Dirty Bomb);
- Attack on Multiple Metro Stations;
- Communicable Disease; and
- Severe Weather (Three-foot Snow Storm)

The following critical infrastructure sectors were identified as vulnerable to plausible chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNE) threats:

- Chemical and Hazardous Materials Industry;
- Government Facilities;
- National Monuments and Icons;
- Postal and Shipping Services; and
- Transportation

When planning for an all-hazard emergency in the District, it is imperative to be aware of the frequency of high priority hazards the City faces and their impacts on the critical infrastructure sectors. A new Threat and Capability Assessment will be completed in 2012.

To provide greater context as it relates to the Emergency Management preparedness cycle, an element of the broader National Preparedness System which includes planning/mitigation, response, recovery and preparedness, I offer the following information about the District of Columbia's engagement model.

PLANNING - General

As the emergency management community works to address challenges that the District of Columbia faces on a daily basis we take the following planning assumptions into consideration:

- Emergencies may occur with no advance warning. Incident demands may require District agencies to respond on short notice and provide timely and effective assistance through the DRP structure. Advance planning for these efforts will be based on pre-identification of operational and resource shortfalls and contingencies.
- Emergency conditions may rapidly escalate, deplete critical resources and exceed agency response capabilities. Each District agency and volunteer organization will document and seek reimbursement, as appropriate, for expenses incurred during emergency operations.
- Agencies shall possess and maintain a level of capability to address steady-state operations, small-scale emergencies and disasters.
- The HSEMA Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will activate and utilize Emergency Liaison Officers (ELO's) to manage emergency operations and critical resources.
- Each partnering agency will prepare plans and protocols to ensure a heightened state of readiness.
- The District will utilize established communications systems and assure redundant communications capability.
- District officials will coordinate and communicate with regional and federal partners during emergencies and disasters to ensure cooperation, partnership, and mutual consideration of neighboring governments.
- District, Federal and private sector partners collaborate in advance of the event to identify planning contingencies and facilitate effective response.
- Officials will enlist regional and Federal assistance in event of emergency, diminished resources or response capabilities through mutual aid agreements with jurisdictions in the National Capital Region (NCR), through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) and through requests to FEMA.
- Emergencies involving mass casualties (100 or more) could pose logistical challenges and tax medical assets in the District and the NCR.
- Emergency responders and hospitals may have limited capability to isolate and treat casualties contaminated with chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and/or explosive material.
- Emergencies may cause injury, fatalities, property loss, and disruption of normal support systems. A large number of casualties, heavy damage to buildings and basic infrastructure, and disruption of essential public services may overwhelm District capabilities.
- Achieving and maintaining effective citizen and community preparedness reduces the immediate demands on response organizations. Public awareness and education programs are

required to ensure that residents will take appropriate advance actions to reduce their vulnerability, especially during the first 72-96 hours after an emergency or disaster.

- The District will maintain a cadre of well-trained personnel to fulfill FEMA mandates. District agencies will participate in the development of supporting plans and procedures, training opportunities, and exercises in order to achieve and maintain optimal readiness capabilities.
- The emergency planning process engages the “whole community”. The private, private non-profit and volunteer and other non-government organizations are vital to the homeland security and emergency management infrastructure. Also, the process is transparent and synchronizes coordination, collaboration and communication among multi-disciplinary stakeholders within the policy, coordination and tactical levels.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS/RESPONSE - General

The primary mission of District government agencies and key stakeholders having a role in disaster management is to reduce loss of life and property, protect residents and institutions from all hazards by administering a comprehensive community-based emergency management program. The District successfully accomplishes its mission through collaborative partnerships with District, federal, regional, non-governmental and private sector agencies. HSEMA manages emergency operations to prevent, respond and recover from natural and manmade emergencies which occur in the District of Columbia. District agencies mobilize by activating and deploying resources based on escalating incident conditions. Traditionally, emergencies are addressed using established internal departmental policies, plans, and protocols that complement and support the District Response Plan (DRP); and support the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

The District utilizes five operation levels to classify the estimated impact of an emergency event on District government operations. HSEMA provides situational awareness regarding emergency incidents; and their actual or anticipated impacts, based on the data available. HSEMA will provide guidance regarding preparedness, mitigation and protective measures, based on incident conditions. As incident conditions develop and more information becomes available, and the situation is better understood, the level may be elevated or downgraded, as conditions warrant. The operation levels will dictate the protective actions and measures taken by District agencies and other stakeholders.

- **Operation Level 1—Normal**—refers to the routine posture of District agencies as they carry out routine activities, in the absence of an emergency situation. During the course of normal operations, agencies are engaged in preparedness, training, exercise activities, maintaining resource inventories and other actions to ensure **continual** readiness. Operations plans are reviewed and equipment is tested to ensure that everything is ready, should the need arise.
- **Operation Level 2—Guarded**—is triggered by a potential or actual emergency requiring the coordinated response of select District agencies. HSEMA alerts those District agencies

and Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) that need to mobilize if the potential event escalates. Throughout this level, HSEMA provides regular status alerts and updates on the threat. A Level 2 event consists almost entirely of field operations and an onsite command structure. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is staffed with HSEMA personnel without additional ESF augmentation.

- **Operation Level 3—Elevated**—is typically triggered by an emergency or threat that requires most or all District agencies to respond or prepare to respond for a localized event that threatens life or property. A Level 3 emergency or threat consists almost entirely of field operations and onsite command structure. HSEMA alerts the District agencies and ESFs that need to take action if the emergency or threat escalates. Throughout this level, HSEMA provides regular status alerts. The EOC is staffed with HSEMA personnel and partial ESF augmentation based on resource requirements from incident commander.
- **Operation Level 4—High Risk**—requires activation of agencies necessary to support the Consequence Management Team (CMT) - a central operational organization led by HSEMA, composed of liaison officers and/or agency administrators representing all District ESFs as well as liaisons from other organizations that are engaged in or have potential roles in coordinating the response to an emergency. It is triggered by highly probable hazardous conditions and a strong potential for property damage or loss of life. A Level 4 emergency or threat may have regional implications and may strain District resources. Notifications are issued to all ESF primary agencies. HSEMA activates EOC HSEMA personnel and the necessary ESF representatives.
- **Operation Level 5—Severe Risk**—requires full activation of the CMT. It is triggered by extremely hazardous conditions that are imminent or in progress. Notifications are issued to all primary and support agencies. A Level 5 emergency may have regional implications and may require a request for regional or federal resources to support the response, as incident demands may strain District resources. The EOC is fully activated with 24-hour staffing by HSEMA personnel and all necessary ELOs.
 - The HSEMA Director in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice will assemble and activate the District Consequence Management Team (CMT, as warranted by the level of emergency (see *Emergency Operation Levels above*). The CMT provides guidance and overall management of District coordination and response operations;
 - Command of departments or agencies involved in emergency management is not altered by an event unless the Mayor declares otherwise;
 - Each department or agency director remains in command of the overall operation of his or her organization;
 - The District will activate inter-departmental and jurisdictional mutual aid agreements for cooperative response; and will maintain partnership with adjoining

political subdivisions for the purpose of reciprocal assistance during emergencies. HSEMA will maintain these mutual aid agreements;

- Normal communications and reporting channels will be used to the maximum practical extent possible. Emergency communications systems will be fully operational and will be used in the event that commercial communications systems are disrupted, saturated, or otherwise unavailable for security purposes;
- District agencies will employ their standard business continuity and business resumption planning principles to ensure the continuity of essential services; and
- Day-to-day functions that do not contribute directly to the operation may be suspended for the duration of the emergency. Efforts that would normally be required of those functions will be redirected to accomplish the emergency task.

In the event the District resources and capabilities are exceeded, the officials may contact neighboring jurisdictions to provide mutual aid in accordance with standing agreements. Also, the District may communicate with the federal government to provide supplemental financial or physical resources necessary to address the overall impacts of an emergency. The combined resources of the District, its partners, and the federal government represent a standardized emergency response system capable of responding to any emergency.

The District utilizes a pro-active approach to disaster management. During planned events or incidents that provide advance warning (special event or hurricanes) or no-notice events, Federal coordination will always occur. This coordination is necessary and becomes increasingly important during incidents, which lead to a presidential declaration under the Stafford Act.

HSEMA maintains constant contact with FEMA Region III before during and after emergencies and disasters. This coordination provides an opportunity for District and federal partners to collaborate regarding effective implementation, validation and testing of networks, programs, plans and processes. These actions ensure timely implementation of mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Also, this collaborative partnership becomes increasingly essential in facilitating efforts leading to issuance of a disaster declaration.

The HSEMA Director or other authorized representative of the Mayor serves as the District Coordinating Officer (DCO, not to be confused with the Defense Coordinating Officer designated by the U.S. Department of Defense) who coordinates requests for federal assistance. The DCO is the District's senior representative for purposes of requesting federal assistance from the USDHS under the provisions of the Stafford Act. This individual is designated in the Federal-District Agreement as the key agent for processing official requests for assistance under USDHS direction. The DCO is normally located in the Joint Field Office during the early phases of an operation and works closely with the Federal Coordinating Officer, the senior federal representative.

In addition to the groups mentioned above, two additional teams provide emergency operations support:

1. **Rapid Response Teams**—When an incident occurs, District rapid response teams are deployed in order to assess damages and determine the immediate needs from the impacted area. The teams are generally composed of HSEMA, Department of Public Works, Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and other elements with field operating capability and technical expertise, as incident conditions warrant.
2. **Joint Field Office Liaison Team**—The Joint Field Office Liaison Team is composed of District representatives from HSEMA and District ESFs that deploy to the USDHS Joint Field Office in order to establish liaison between the District operations and the federal agency operations when there has been a disaster declaration by the president.

The District government structure includes support agencies and organizations, such as other District agencies and government bodies, regional organizations, and private-sector organizations that have important roles to play in preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation due to capabilities and resources they have that may be required to support the city's emergency operations. These entities may be requested to participate in city planning and operations activities and/or provide support to the field.

- **Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC).** The Mayor's Emergency Preparedness Council monitors, evaluates, and implements the District's preparedness actions. The EPC meets quarterly and is comprised of representatives from all Emergency Support Function (ESF) primary and support agencies, as well as regional organizations, such as the DC Hospital Association, DC Water (formerly known as the DC Water and Sewer Authority), the Metropolitan Washington Area Transit Authority, and the American Red Cross.

The EPC is co-chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice and the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) Director and staffed by HSEMA. Specifically, the EPC is charged with:

- Continually reexamining the overall state of emergency and disaster readiness of the District of Columbia;
 - Making recommendations on improving District homeland security and emergency management infrastructure, including coordinating planning, response, and recovery from emergency and disaster events as well as emerging threats.
- **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).** COG is a regional organization of Washington area local governments composed of 19 local

governments, including the District of Columbia. In general, COG provides a forum for consensus-building and policy-making and is critical to implementing intergovernmental policies, plans, and programs. In the area of emergency planning for the region, COG has worked with the District and surrounding jurisdictions to develop regional emergency plans and agreements in a range of areas, including fire, rescue, the Metro transit system, transportation, water and power supply, and snow emergencies. Ensuring consistency in the DRP and regional agreements is vital to working effectively to prepare for and respond to potential emergencies in the region.

Notification

- The HSEMA EOC will notify relevant agencies in accordance with its Emergency Response Notification Matrix. The matrix identifies key personnel and agencies that are notified during a confirmed or unconfirmed emergency that has affected or could affect the District.
- HSEMA contacts FEMA Region III and other select regional and federal response partners based on the severity of the emergency and the potential for the incident to create an impact outside District boundaries.
- In a major disaster, the HSEMA Director notifies the USDHS/FEMA Region III and USDHS/FEMA Office of National Capital Region Coordination through the NRCC.
- Following an alert relating to an emergency deemed significant by the HSEMA director, HSEMA convenes a conference call with the Mayor and key advisory personnel to discuss the situation, evaluate the City's operation level; and provide direction regarding future courses of action.
- CMT members may be notified to convene at HSEMA for an initial meeting, depending on the nature of the emergency. CMT members or alternates remain on call to meet at any time during the response.

Activation

- With an increase to Operation Level 4 or 5 HSEMA informs ESF primary agencies of the CMT activation and provides a time for each activated ESF to report to HSEMA as a member of the CMT.
- Primary agencies are responsible for activation of their support agencies, if required.
- The CMT assembles at HSEMA to assist in assessing the impact of the situation, collecting damage information, and determining requirements.
- The CMT briefs the Mayor or the Mayor's designated liaison officer at the EOC on the situation assessment. This information is evaluated to determine the need for the declaration of a State of Emergency.

- As set forth in the Stafford Act, the Mayor must seek a presidential declaration by submitting a written request to the president through the FEMA regional office. Both District and federal officials conduct a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) to estimate the extent of the disaster and its impact. This may, but not always, be included in the declaration request. In this request, the Mayor certifies that the combined District resources are insufficient and that the situation is beyond their recovery capabilities. Following a FEMA regional and national office review of the request and the findings of the preliminary damage assessment, FEMA provides the president an analysis of the situation and a recommended course of action.
- The CMT Logistics Section supports the establishment of a Joint Field Office and mobilization center(s).
- The JIC is established, as required, to provide a central point for coordinating emergency public/crisis information activities.
- The CMT coordinates damage assessment and selection of locations for field facilities. Also, it coordinates mission assignments for direct assistance and procurement of goods and services.
- ESFs, under the direction of an incident commander, act quickly to determine the impact of an emergency on their own capabilities and to identify, mobilize, and deploy resources to support response activities in the affected area.

Continuing Actions

- The EOC augments the CMT to full operations with the addition of staff, including ELOs.
- The CMT is located at HSEMA and assumes command responsibility for coordinating emergency assistance by identifying needs and priorities.
- The ELOs in the EOC coordinate District assistance under their respective ESF missions. To the extent necessary and possible, they maintain contact with their regional and federal counterparts.
- The CMT Policy Group convenes as needed to address policy issues such as allocation of scarce District resources.
- The JIC conducts briefings for media, Mayor's Office of Community Relations and Services/Office of Neighborhood Engagement, District Council Members, and Members of Congress and staff as appropriate.
- Working with environmental agencies, the District Environmental Officer identifies environmental and historic assets that might require consideration under the law as response and recovery efforts are implemented.
- Once immediate response missions and lifesaving activities conclude, emergency teams are demobilized and the emphasis shifts from response to recovery operations. During response operations, the CMT Information and Planning Section develop a demobilization plan for the CMT.

Operational Cycle

The decision-making process of the CMT is enhanced through an operational cycle of planning and execution, which ensures that incident action plans are developed and executed to achieve incident goals and objectives. The operational cycle may begin with the scheduling of a planned event, the identification of a credible threat, or with the initial response to an actual or impending event.

Information Collection, Analysis and Dissemination

Situational Awareness is the ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening as an event unfolds. From the CMT perspective, this means knowing: where emergency needs are greatest; what assets are needed; how to get assets into areas where they are needed; and what the status is of assets as they move on-scene and perform actions.

The ability to maintain situational awareness occurs through effective communication of event information from and to Mayor, Command Staff, and General Staff; ESF Primary and Support Agencies; and on-scene personnel. Situational awareness may be maintained and/or improved by:

- Following and completing actions specified in the IAP;
- Recognizing and making others aware when actions deviate from standard procedures;
- Monitoring the performance of immediate team members;
- Providing information in advance when possible;
- Identifying potential or existing problems;
- Continually assessing and reassessing action plan progress as it relates to Policy Group objectives;
- Updating information on WebEOC (a Web-enabled crisis information management system) and on Regional Boards; and
- Clarifying expectations and outcomes with other team members.

The documentation of actions is paramount to effective communications. Individuals with emergency event information can use this information to adjust their actions. When individuals input emergency event information into an information system (such as WebEOC), in an accurate and timely fashion, that information is available to every agency connected to the system. Accurate and timely documentation of event actions into information systems and situation reports provide all agencies involved in the event with the effective communication they need to maintain situational awareness.

Communication

As described above in the Incident Life Cycle section, the HSEMA EOC will take the lead in communications during an emergency for the District of Columbia. During activation, HSEMA will notify relevant agencies in accordance with the current Emergency Response Notification Matrix. HSEMA will contact select regional and federal response partners based on the severity of the emergency and the potential for the incident to create an impact outside District boundaries.

In a major disaster, the HSEMA Director will notify the USDHS/FEMA Office of National Capital Region Coordination. CMT members may be notified to convene at HSEMA for an initial meeting, depending on the nature of the emergency. CMT members or alternates remain on call to meet at any time during the response.

Integration of Response and Recovery

Following an emergency, immediate response operations for saving lives, protecting property, and meeting basic human needs have precedence over longer-term objectives of recovery. However, initial recovery planning should commence at once and in tandem with response operations. Actual recovery operations will be initiated commensurate with District priorities and based on availability of resources immediately required for response operations. In recognition that certain response and recovery activities may be conducted concurrently, coordination at all levels is essential to ensure consistent District and federal actions throughout the emergency.

RECOVERY – General

Recovery Operations

The CMT Operations Section is the central coordination point among District, regional and federal agencies, and voluntary organizations for delivering recovery assistance programs. The Community Services and Infrastructure Support Branches of the Operations Staff Section assess District recovery needs at the outset of the emergency and the relevant time frames for program delivery. The branches ensure that District agencies with appropriate recovery assistance programs are notified of the emergency event and share relevant applicant and damage information with all involved agencies.

Stand Down/Demobilization

Once incident goals and objectives have been achieved and/or a centralized District coordination presence is no longer required, the CMT implements the demobilization plan to transfer responsibilities to recovery assistance program oversight and monitoring. Following complete demobilization, responsibilities transition back to normal District agency functions.

After-action Reporting

Following an emergency, the DCCO submits an after-action report through the CMT Information and Planning Section to HSEMA, detailing problems encountered and key issues affecting District performance. Data from these issues and targeted reviews are analyzed and provided, as appropriate, to HSEMA management and to the EPC for consideration. After a major disaster or unique emergency operation, HSEMA may convene an interagency forum to identify lessons learned from the incident. Each District agency involved in the emergency is encouraged to keep records of departmental activities to assist in preparing its internal after-action report.

Mitigation Actions

Mitigation opportunities should be actively considered throughout emergency operations. Decisions made during response and recovery operations can either enhance or hinder subsequent mitigation activities. The urgency to rebuild as soon as possible must be weighed against the longer-term goal of reducing future risk and lessening possible impacts should another emergency occur.

As we transition to discuss regional issues, we are not able to do so without speaking to the collaboration that the National Capital Region enjoys because of the work of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). The MWCOG provides an opportunity for partners from across the region to discuss and strategize around regional issues.

The District of Columbia's MWCOG involvement includes (but is not limited to):

- MWCOG Board level representation
- City-County Administrative Officer/Homeland Security Executive Committee
- Emergency Preparedness Council
- National Capital Region Senior Policy Group
- Emergency Support Function (ESF 1-16) Regional Working Groups
- Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee
- Transportation Committee
- NCR Exercise and Training Oversight Panel
- NCR Critical Infrastructure Protection Working Group
- NCR Executive Interoperability Committee
- Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response (IMR)

As a practical matter, the District of Columbia could not do what it does each day in serving its constituents and stakeholders if it did not have a strong relationship with partners within our borders to include our Federal partners. Each day, we work with any number of entities from the National Park Service and the Park Police to the FBI and Secret Service to the Department of Homeland Security and the Office of the National Capital Region Coordination of FEMA and the Office of Personnel Management. Effective coordination and relationship building cannot wait for a crisis, it must be developed and nurtured on an on-going basis.

Likewise, we work on a daily basis with our colleagues from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the State of Maryland and the cities and counties from each that make up the National Capital Region. Aside from the regularly scheduled calls that the Senior Policy Group has to discuss regional issues, the District's representatives, the Director and Deputy Director of HSEMA, attend monthly meetings during which time regional strategies are discussed.

Perhaps the greatest example of regional coordination as it relates to emergency management is the development of the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Program (MATOC). The goals for the MATOC Program include:

- Strengthening multi-agency coordination among transportation response agencies during incidents;
- Improving the technological systems by which transportation agencies can share data with each other to aid incident management;
- Improving the quality and timeliness of the information available through current sources on transportation systems conditions especially during incidents;
- Coordinating with existing systems;
- Coordinating with emergency management and public safety agencies.

Much of the information shared through MATOC and through our individual Departments of Transportation occurs seamlessly and links with our Emergency Management Agencies. In the District of Columbia, we have a 24-hour/365-day Joint All-Hazards Operations Center at HSEMA and the Traffic Management Center function of the District Department of Transportation is co-located within HSEMA. This allows for the continuous flow of data and information to our Emergency Operations Specialists who are responsible for communicating to stakeholders and to the public about traffic management challenges. The decision to centralize personnel and equipment stemmed directly from challenges related to information management over a series of events including the January 26, 2011 snowstorm. The Joint All-Hazards Operations Center at HSEMA also serves as the central point of communication for MWCOG "RICCS" alerts. The Regional Incident Communication Coordination System (RICCS) allows users to communicate with regional partners on critical issues that impact the entire region. Messages can be sent using this system at any time to groups of users designated. The system is tested daily to ensure its reliability.

The District of Columbia is involved in training and exercise activities from planning through execution. We have several members who have a seat at the regional Exercise and Training Oversight Panel table. Additionally, as we develop exercises and training opportunities for District stakeholders, we make space available for regional partners to participate. Investments have been made dating back to 2003 on systems and equipment. We value those investments and recognize that, without proper training and exercise, skills could soften. We will continue to ensure that our teams are fully prepared – no matter their mission. Further to ensure our ongoing readiness, the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency has developed an entire division dedicated to the goal of community outreach and engagement and has a calendar with over 300 outreach events scheduled each year. We work with the region to share a common message recognizing that the community engagement needs of the District vary from the needs of our regional partners.

As we look at the challenge of living in a multi-jurisdictional region, the challenges are obvious – we are multi-jurisdictional. While many believe that a central decision-making body will provide an answer, perhaps the best solution is to continue to address our systemic issues by improving existing systems and enhancing relationships. A solution that the NCR Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response has developed as a start is the Regional Information Center (RIC) that, in its initial phase, will be housed at the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. Until now, we as a region have not had a person or team of people specifically focused on/dedicated to regional issues that took many factors into consideration – not just transportation. That is what the NCR Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response is proposing. The Regional Information Center will help to inform decision makers so that they will be able to better serve their constituencies – something that we have not had before.

In all of our efforts, both local and regional, the goal is to continuously improve. Aggressive outreach efforts are underway to ensure that every resident, business and government agency understands their role in preparedness. Our success as a region and as a city depends on everyone working together. The authority of one State cannot usurp the authority of a Commonwealth. Neither can the Commonwealth override that of the District. With such being the case, it is in all of our best interests to look to ways to work within our systems to develop solutions. The panel before you today works in cooperation with one another. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Steward Beckham
From Senator Daniel K. Akaka**

**From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the
Next Disaster?
December 7, 2011**

1. The Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response recommended in its November 9, 2011, report that the National Capital Region (NCR) establish a Regional Incident Coordination Program with staff dedicated to monitoring the NCR as a whole. This staff would be responsible for collecting and distributing information to regional decision-makers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and would be located at the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. NCR officials have announced an intention to hire two full-time employees to staff the Program.

- a. Please discuss how NCR officials determined that two full-time employees would be adequate to fulfill the Program's proposed function?

Response: NCR jurisdictions have successfully been working together for decades to achieve regional coordination. In order for the NCR to continue to evolve with the demands of new technology and of a growing regional population, the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response (Steering Committee) agreed to develop the Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program as a pilot program to test new efforts to ensure streamlined coordination and communication. The Steering Committee determined that the minimum number of staff that would be effective and cost efficient to carry out the planning and coordination is a two person staff, where one employee (Coordinator) oversees the planning, overall coordination and works closely with the NCR jurisdictions, while the other employee (Specialist) is the research focused person working behind the scenes to provide support to the Coordinator.

- b. How will these positions be funded?

Response: NCR State and local officials intend to fund these positions using the Homeland Security Grant Program.

- c. What entity within the NCR is responsible for hiring these employees?

Response: The Steering Committee determined that the most logical location to place the Regional Incident Coordination Program is at a 24 hour/seven day facility with access to operational and planning staff. Currently, the only jurisdiction with such capability in the NCR is the District of Columbia. As such, the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency will serve as the host for the RIC Program. Leadership from each NCR jurisdiction will be responsible for hiring. On a day to day basis, the RIC Program employees will be supervised by HSEMA, however, an Ad Hoc Steering Committee has been

developed for a period of eight months to oversee and monitor the progress of the program and to receive monthly updates from the Coordinator. HSEMA awarded a subgrant to the Metropolitan Councils on Government (COG) through a Request for Resumes to hire the Coordinator. Applications are being accepted until January 31, 2012. A Technical Selection Committee consisting of a representative from each jurisdiction will then meet to review, interview and select applicants on February 10, 2012. It is anticipated that the Coordinator for the RIC Program will start in early March 2012.

2. Critics of the NCR's current decision-making structure and response capabilities have cited the systems in the New York and London metropolitan areas as successful models. What elements, if any, of those systems or other national or international models should be implemented in the NCR to improve decision-making or response efforts?

Response: The New York City and London metropolitan areas may utilize successful decision-making and response structures that address their needs; however, they are cities under one single governance entity. The NCR has recently researched decision-making models across the country from Boston, New York, Harris County, Texas to San Francisco. One recent study prepared by the Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Systems Engineering and Development Institute, brings to light that the mayors of major central cities, such as in New York and London, "play a lead role in decision making, delegation of decision making to their agencies and as spokespersons"; however, "none of these areas have the jurisdictional complexity of the NCR and while the central cities have great influence over the decision making of neighboring jurisdictions, they have no lead authority over those localities."

The demands, circumstances and demographic makeup of the NCR differ from that of New York and London. The NCR is a multi-layer geographical area consisting of a state, a commonwealth, and a city. Within those boundaries are several jurisdictions and counties with their own local governance structures and elected leadership. During an emergency or an event, the NCR works in cooperation and coordination with one another keeping in mind the policies and political structures that already exist.

The NCR has an ongoing effort to explore how to incorporate some of the best practices found across the country into the NCR model; some have already been incorporated.. For instance, Harris County, Texas serves 34 cities including Houston, and has an effective approach that allows information to be gathered and shared across jurisdictional lines. The information sharing is managed by a public information officer, which collects information in a database like system for the county. A similar system was put in place in the NCR in December by the release of the Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC) located at www.capitolregionupdates.gov. Overall, there is not a "one size fits all" model that the NCR can adopt or implement as is. However, NCR leaders are committed to looking at the various models across the country and incorporating those elements that work for the NCR.

3. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, entitled *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need*

for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals (GAO-04-433), recommended that the Department of Homeland Security work with NCR partners to ensure emergency preparedness grants are managed in a way that maximizes their effectiveness. Please provide an update on the status of implementing GAO's recommendation.

Response: The 2004 GAO report noted three principal challenges for the management of first responder grants in the Region: establishment of preparedness standards, development of a strategic plan, and the tracking of various streams of federal homeland security funding to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Preparedness Standards: The Emergency Management Assessment Program provided valuable information in establishing a baseline for first responder preparedness in the NCR. Since then, the NCR has continued to work closely to conduct gap analyses on specific areas including medical surge and public health capabilities, interoperability and data sharing, tactical response capabilities, including IED and CBRNE.

Strategic Plan: In 2004, the NCR adopted an initial Homeland Security Strategic Plan. Since then, the Strategic Plan has matured through its two updates first in 2006 and most recently in 2010. The Strategic Plan is capabilities based, sets measureable objectives and represents extensive stakeholder input.

Tracking of Various Streams of Federal Homeland Security Funding to Avoid Duplication: Since 2004, the State Administrative Agent has implemented tools that not only automate the tracking of UASI projects, but collect information on other sources of funding. The NCR has long looked at other resources of funding such as state and local contributions, surplus DOD equipment, assets of the National Guard and Joint Force Headquarters NCR, in addition to other federal grants such as from the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services.

Since the 2004 publication of the referenced GAO report, the NCR has made enormous strides in increasing collaboration, ensuring that all grant funds are used for high-priority projects, and in overall program management. NCR officials have created a centralized database for all NCR grant projects, upon which they can draw for detailed project plans and status. The D.C., Maryland, and Virginia Senior Policy Group (SPG) officials and the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) from the NCR jurisdictions consider and determine all projects for grant funding. The local lead for the proposed projects must persuade the SPG and CAOs as to the effectiveness of the envisioned effort and its alignment with the NCR Strategic Plan in order for it to be considered for funding. As with other geographic areas, FEMA GPD tracks and audits grants to the NCR to ensure effective use of funds consistent with the NCR strategic plan and investment justifications submitted as part of the grants process.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Steward D. Beckham**

Director
Office of National Capital Region Coordination
Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

From Chairman Mark Pryor

**Joint SDRIA/OGM Subcommittee hearing "From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is
the National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?"
December 7, 2011**

1. In FY 2011, federal grants for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response were reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars, and may be reduced further in the future. In an environment of at best stable or declining resources, on what basis will the NCR determine its funding priorities? Has the NCR assessed the costs of sustaining prior initiatives? If so, what has been the result of that assessment?

Response: In 2010, the NCR updated the NCR's Homeland Security Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan outlines priority capabilities that the Region will focus on over the next three to five years and defines the framework for achieving those capabilities. Among others, the Strategic Plan reaffirms the commitment of NCR leaders to ensure that previous investments are maintained and refreshed as required.

Projects submitted for consideration of UASI funding are required to include estimates for sustainment funding and identify sources of future funding. For FY12 UASI sustainment costs are estimated at \$30M. Alternative funding sources, alternative approaches to accomplish the deliverables, and cost-saving measures are considered as part of the project selection process. (As a federal entity, NCR cannot vote on grant projects; state and local partners have the lead for determining grant projects and jurisdictional funding).

2. Since 2004, the GAO has urged the NCR to take a holistic look at the region's disaster preparedness and response capabilities, including the totality of the resources--financial and in-kind--that are available to the NCR for this purpose. However, the NCR has focused largely on UASI grants, which are specifically focused on regional preparedness, but are only one source of funds available within the NCR and are intended to be supplemental to the resources available to its member jurisdictions. How does the region consider the totality of available resources--including the use of grants by NCR jurisdictions--in assessing the region's preparedness and capabilities?

Response: The allocation of scarce resources is a top priority for area leadership. Since 2004, the State Administrative Agent has implemented tools that not only automate the tracking of UASI projects, but collect information on other sources of funding. The NCR has long looked at other resources of funding such as state and local contributions, surplus DOD

equipment, assets of the National Guard and Joint Force Headquarters NCR, in addition to other federal grants such as from the Department of Justice, Department of Commerce, and Health and Human Services.

The NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan identifies priorities for local, state, and federal grant funds investment. Additionally, leaders in the broad governance structure (e.g., Senior Policy Group, Chief Administrative Officers, and Emergency Preparedness Council) work to identify a wide variety of resources to improve the NCR's preparedness capabilities. The Senior Policy Group and local Chief Administrative Officers hold regular management review sessions, anchored by the Strategic Plan, to review progress and discuss gaps while also examining alternative funding sources, governance and cost-sharing models. This allows decision makers to identify priorities for scarce grant funds with a global view – not simply focused on UASI. However, there is recognition that there needs to be a more systematic approach to aligning and coordinating the various resource streams. As one step, the NCR is working to develop a readily accessible database of various funding streams.

3. At the hearing, members of the Senior Policy Group noted that the best course for employees in the region would be to "stay in place" when a major storm hits. However, parents' willingness to "stay in place" is influenced by their concern for their children--not only those in school, but those in day care centers. For example, if a day care center cannot keep children beyond six pm, parents will need to get on the road. Considering these challenges, what is the NCR's plan for implementing "stay in place," and providing incentives for doing so?

Response: The Office of Personnel Management developed the stay in place operating status announcement as an additional tool to help protect the Federal workforce during certain severe weather events or emergencies, such as danger from exposure to outside contaminants in the event of a release into the atmosphere of hazardous materials such as radiological, biological, or chemical containments. The hope by OPM is that this announcement would be used rarely, if at all, and most likely only for a brief period of time. The stay in place announcement would be issued solely for the safety of the Federal workforce.

Successfully implementing this protective action relies on the continuing education of both Federal and non-Federal employees in the NCR. The NCR recently did public messaging focused on the Ready.gov messages emphasizing the importance of being informed, making a plan (including contingencies for after-hours child care), building a kit and getting involved. The NCR recently unveiled its new communications tool to communicate emergency information to residents of the NCR – it's a Web portal, www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov. Through this online resource, residents can stay connected to local jurisdictional news (through a combined RSS feed of local news releases), localized weather from the National Weather Service, traffic and transit alerts, tips on how to prepare for emergencies and much more.

For its part, NCRC has created a Federal Workforce Preparedness Program, which focuses on emergency preparedness and education of the Federal Workforce. Within this framework, NCRC has developed an Independent Study Course on Emergency and Disaster

Preparedness for Federal Employees in the NCR. This course will be a foundational course for the new DHS Employee Preparedness Initiative and will be required for DHS employees.

NCRC has also drafted Emergency Preparedness for Federal Employees in the National Capital Region, a guide to encourage Federal employees in the NCR to take practical steps to better prepare themselves and their families for emergencies that could threaten our homes, workplaces, and communities. Additionally, NCRC staff members organize and conduct outreach road shows with other agencies during National Preparedness Month to inform the Federal workforce about personal and family preparedness specific to the NCR.

4. Events such as the August earthquake were similar to 9/11 in the respect that the Region's telecommunications capacity was quickly exceeded. How did this affect public safety agencies' ability to communicate warnings or information to the public? Moreover, isn't the public's inability to communicate emergency information amongst itself also important to a successful response?

Response: Immediately following the August earthquake, NCR landline and cellular communications were limited because of very high use volume. The high use also limited user access to the Government Emergency Telecommunications Systems (GETS) and the Wireless Priority Service (WPS), which grants priority to emergency government and public safety calls during times of emergency. These difficulties were short-lived and it should be noted that emergency operations centers and public safety officials were able to communicate with each other following the earthquake without any issues. OPM was able to communicate with partners via the Washington Area Warning Alert System (WAWAS), as well as landline communication with the Metropolitan Council of Governments, DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency and the General Services Agency. The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, signed by the President on February 22nd, would provide funding, additional radio frequency resources and a strong governance structure to enable an interoperable, state-of-the-art public safety broadband network to permit alerts, messages and other data transmissions during emergencies.

WAWAS enabled Federal agencies to share status updates, damage assessments, and information about transportation capabilities, including the operating status of bridges, roadways, and the Metrorail and Amtrak systems. Additionally, the Region's public safety officials used the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) to communicate among each other. The Fairfax County Department of Emergency Management recorded the first RICCS message within 15 minutes of the earthquake. At 2:50 p.m., MWCOG personnel sent the first request for a RICCS conference call to 110 NCR partners, including Federal personnel, chief administrative officers and the regional ESF-5 core group. Forty-seven partners participated on this call, sharing information about their on-going damage assessments. The RICCS system distributed 21 messages in the 14 hours immediately after the earthquake. MWCOG also conducted two conference calls during that time. RICCS and WAWAS worked as intended throughout the earthquake response.

Communications to and among the public are important to a successful response. As discussed above, the NCR recently unveiled its new communications tool to communicate

emergency information to residents of the NCR a Web portal at www.CapitalRegionUpdates.gov. Capital Region Updates features day-to-day news from the jurisdictions of the National Capital Region; during a regional emergency or major weather event across the NCR, the site will feature incident updates and life-safety news and instructions for residents.

Additionally, there are efforts underway to educate the public on low bandwidth methods for communications that can be used during an emergency such as Twitter, Facebook, or even SMS text messaging that can meet the public's communications needs while relieving some of the burden on bandwidth caused when employees and residents in the NCR simultaneously seek to make a cell phone call. In fact, FEMA Administrator Fugate recently visited a regional meeting of public information officers where he discussed his own family plan which includes using Facebook and texting to communicate during an emergency.

5. We understand that prior DHS administrations had created a "First Hour Checklist" for the NCR—a kind of "pre-scripted" plan for who does what during the first hour of an event in the NCR. Does such a document still exist and was it used in the August Earthquake, for example. Can you describe it in greater detail, such as what types of situations is it used?

Response: The First Hour Checklist (attached at the end of this document) was created by an effort led by NCRC in coordination with the Senior Policy Group, Chief Administrative Officers, and Regional Emergency Support Functions (RESFs). The First Hour Checklist is an all hazards guide intended to assist Senior Policy Group members, Chief Administrative Officers, and Emergency Managers in assessing what has happened during a regional disaster (or threat of a disaster). The checklist can be used to guide multi-jurisdictional discussions and conference calls by helping to quickly review the status of initial actions that may already be in place and then determining additional protective actions and coordination decisions that be necessary.

During the August earthquake, the First Hour Checklist was used by OPM and other partners to assist in gaining situational awareness, determining response status, reviewing the status of initial protective actions, evaluating public information needs, determining next steps, and initiating RICCS notification.

6. During our hearing we often heard terms like "collaboration" "cooperation" "partnerships" and "coordination." Do you measure how well the Region's collaborates? Can you define "successful" collaboration? What would a successfully collaborated response look like? To what extent do you consider timeliness in your assessment of collaboration?

Response: Collaboration is a standard way of doing business in the NCR. NCR partners collaborate with each other in a myriad of ways everyday that are not the subject of performance measures. In the context of response, collaboration is guided by the National Response Framework (NRF), under which emergencies are managed locally. After disasters or exercises, officials in the National Capital Region typically conduct after action reviews (AARs), the primary means by which officials evaluate a variety of factors, including

collaboration among regional partners under the guidelines set forth under the NRF and described below.

During disasters, Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia maintain their sovereign authorities and work with FEMA Region III, located in Philadelphia, to receive any direct assistance for unmet needs or other aid approved by the President under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act. During incidents in any NCR state, or within the District of Columbia, the local jurisdiction maintains lead authority and addresses emergencies as they arise. If a jurisdiction is overwhelmed by the incident, the District and nearby states may, through their participation in both the NCR Mutual Aid Agreement and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), request and receive assistance from neighboring states.

When emergencies occur in the U.S. Capitol, the U.S. Capitol Police respond first and assume incident command. Per the National Incident Management System and as required under the National Response Framework, the incident commander maintains responsibility for coordinating the engagement of any additional responding authorities or resources. In a larger, multi-jurisdictional event with a Stafford Act Declaration, the jurisdictional coordination will be managed by a Unified Command Group within a Joint Field Office. Local jurisdictions lead incident response, and FEMA facilitates local coordination with federal partners through the National Watch Center (NWC) at FEMA Headquarters and the Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) Watch in Region III.

When an incident is underway inside the NCR, the NCR Watch Desk, which is funded and staffed by the NCRC, supports watch operations and facilitates information exchange with our NCR partners. NCRC has a specific performance measure for the timeliness of reports issued by the NCR Watch Desk.

Additionally, during weather events, conference calls are conducted between the National Weather Service, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), transportation agencies (e.g., WMATA, DDOT, MDOT, VDOT), state and local law enforcement and others. These calls are hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments.



First Hour Checklist for Regional Emergencies

Guide for Senior Policy Group, Chief Administrative Officers,
and Emergency Managers in the National Capital Region

PURPOSE

This first hour checklist will assist Senior Policy Group members, Chief Administrative Officers, and Emergency Managers in the National Capital Region to assess what has happened during a regional disaster (or the threat of a disaster).

This checklist can be used to guide multi-jurisdictional discussions and conference calls by helping to quickly review the status of initial actions that may already be in place and then determining additional protective actions and coordinated decisions that may be necessary.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FOR ANY INCIDENT

- ☐ 1. Gain Regional Situational Awareness
- ☐ 2. Determine Response Status
- ☐ 3. Review Status of Initial Protective Actions (Schools, Workforce, and Transportation)
- ☐ 4. Consider Additional Protective Actions
- ☐ 5. Evaluate Public Information Needs
- ☐ 6. Determine Next Steps
- ☐ 7. Initiation of RICCS

1 REGIONAL SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

- ☐ If an incident occurred, what happened, including where and when?
 - What is incident (natural disaster, accident, terrorism)?
 - Estimated many injuries/fatalities?
 - Estimated damage to or status of critical infrastructures (transportation, power, medical, water)?
- ☐ If incident has not occurred, what is latest information/intelligence about threats to the region? What are the potential impacts?

2 RESPONSE STATUS

- ☐ Who is leading the response or investigation?
- ☐ What assets/agencies are on scene, available, or needed?
- ☐ What is the threat status and/or emergency declarations status (federal, state, local)?

3 INITIAL PROTECTIVE ACTIONS (SCHOOLS, WORKFORCE, AND TRANSPORTATION)

- ☐ Has any initial protective action occurred for schools (e.g., lockdown)?
- ☐ Has any initial protective action occurred for citizens and the workforce (e.g., shelter in place)?

SCHOOLS, WORKFORCE, AND TRANSPORTATION — CONTINUED

- ☐ How have special populations been addressed?
- ☐ Has any initial protective action occurred for transportation (e.g., public transit operational, HOV restrictions lifted)?
- ☐ What schools/workforce facilities are in the hazard area?
- ☐ What other protective actions (see section 4) should be considered, and who else should be involved in discussions (e.g., OPM for workforce, WMATA for transportation, superintendent for schools)?

4 ADDITIONAL PROTECTIVE ACTIONS

- ☐ What additional protective actions may be needed to protect affected general public, schools, workforce, etc.?
 - Evacuation, in-place protection, quarantine, school/work dismissal, cancellation
- ☐ How can you prepare for response?
 - Activate emergency operations centers, joint information centers, health services sector, mass care facilities, transportation assets, mutual aid agreements, public advisories
- ☐ What considerations should be made when making protective action decisions? Many factors play a role in decisions and should be evaluated case-by-case. The following are general considerations.
 - For a threat or hazard involving regional impact (e.g., hurricane or nuclear device), consider partial or full-scale evacuation of potentially impacted area.
 - For a threat or hazard involving local impact, consider partial local evacuation unless addressed below.
 - For a short air release of toxic chemical (e.g., brief plume), consider sheltering in place initially downwind of release.
 - For long air release of toxic chemical (e.g., continuously leaking), consider local evacuation of persons downwind of release.
 - For an explosion, consider evacuating the impacted area and consider secondary devices.
 - For infectious contamination, depending on type, consider quarantine, requesting strategic national stockpile, and/or mass prophylaxis.
 - For dirty bomb, consider sheltering initially and then evacuation of persons downwind.
 - For flooding, consider evacuation of impacted area.

5 EMERGENCY PUBLIC INFORMATION

- ☐ What should be communicated, when, how, and by whom?
- ☐ What information has been communicated to the general public/schools/workforce, and is the message uniform and consistent across all jurisdictions involved?

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Updated 09/2011

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Dean S. Hunter**
Deputy Director
Facilities, Security, and Contracting
U.S. Office of Personnel Management

From Chairman Mark Pryor

**Joint SDRIA/OGM Subcommittee hearing “From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the
National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?”
December 7, 2011**

1. At the hearing, members of the Senior Policy Group noted that the best course for employees in the region would be to "stay in place" when a major storm hits. However, parents' willingness to "stay in place" is influenced by their concern for their children--not only those in school, but those in day care centers. For example, if a day care center cannot keep children beyond six pm, parents will need to get on the road. Considering these challenges, what is the NCR's plan for implementing "stay in place," and providing incentives for doing so?

Answer: OPM developed the Shelter-In-Place (SIP) operating status announcement as an additional tool to help protect the Federal workforce during certain severe weather events (e.g., tornadoes) or emergencies, such as danger from exposure to outside contaminants in the event of a release into the atmosphere of hazardous materials such as radiological, biological, or chemical contaminants. Hopefully, this announcement would be used rarely, if at all, and most likely only for a brief period of time. The SIP announcement would communicate to agencies, employees, and the public that Federal offices are temporarily closed. A SIP announcement would be issued solely for the safety of the Federal workforce.

News articles have speculated on the use of SIP during snowstorms. Bear in mind that OPM is committed to making operating status decisions as far in advance as feasible to reduce uncertainty and minimize demands on transportation infrastructure. OPM would not likely issue a SIP during a snowstorm, but if it did, it would likely be only after issuing several other operating status announcements that would have allowed employees to avoid commuting to the worksite in the first place (i.e., unscheduled leave or unscheduled telework) or a staggered early departure with a final departure time.

For example, if 2 or more inches of snow is forecast for the workday, OPM would likely announce “OPEN WITH OPTION FOR UNSCHEDULED LEAVE OR UNSCHEDULED TELEWORK” by 4:00 a.m., before the workday begins, so that employees would have an option to avoid commuting to work. If later forecasts predict the snowstorm will intensify and move faster than originally predicted and will impact DC during the later part of the workday, OPM would likely announce “OPEN – 2 HOUR(S) STAGGERED EARLY DEPARTURE – ALL EMPLOYEES MUST DEPART NO LATER THAN 1:00 P.M. AT WHICH TIME FEDERAL OFFICES ARE CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC.” This would

enable Federal employees to exit the city prior to onset of the storm. Of course, this announcement will only be effective if employees and agencies follow this guidance and make sure that employees leave by the stated closure time. Finally, if the storm hits hard, as predicted, local authorities may begin to close major roads or recommend staying off the roads for safety reasons. Local authorities might also recommend, and OPM may issue, a "SHELTER-IN-PLACE" announcement until conditions improve. (This would be a very rare situation.) The SIP announcement would impact those Federal employees who did not follow the "no later than" departure time announcement. Therefore, we believe the actual impact of a SIP would be minimal during a snow emergency.

If the event causing the SIP were literally a matter of life and death, such as exposure to chemical contaminants, we believe most employees would agree that it is better to be safe, indoors, with inconveniences, rather than risking their lives outdoors.

Employees cannot be forced to shelter-in-place so it is essential that we educate the Federal population on the benefits of such actions well in advance of an event. We have encouraged personnel to visit Ready.gov and make a family plan in preparation for all hazards. We have conducted table-top exercises with emergency managers throughout the region and are working closely with FEMA ONCRC in developing a web-based preparedness course and an NCR Federal Workforce Preparedness brochure.

During an event, it is important that messaging to the public be consistent across the various jurisdictions. The Regional Information and Virtual Joint Information Centers, as outlined in the MWCOG Report of the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response, provide a means for providing a common operating picture and consistent communications across the region.

2. Events such as the August earthquake were similar to 9/11 in the respect that the Region's telecommunications capacity was quickly exceeded.
 - a. How did this affect public safety agencies' ability to communicate warnings or information to the public?
 - b. Moreover, isn't the public's inability to communicate emergency information amongst itself also important to successful response?

Answer: During the initial moments immediately following the August 23rd earthquake, OPM was unable to successfully access the Government Emergency Telecommunications System (GETS) for use of landline telephones, as well as Wireless Priority Service for cell phone usage. These difficulties were short-lived and we were successful in obtaining situational awareness through the Washington Area Warning Alert System, as well as through landline contact with MWCOG, DC HSEMA, FEMA and GSA, among others.

The public's ability to communicate amongst itself is important during an emergency situation. OPM provides up-to-date information during weather emergencies on multiple platforms, including our Facebook page and @USOPM twitter handle. Social media

allows the public to quickly share or retweet official information, which is especially helpful with those who are not watching the news or reading our website. Those conversations are an added benefit in getting the word out during emergencies.

Because public safety agencies do not have a nationwide interoperable broadband network dedicated for public safety purposes they often use commercial networks for data communications. As the communications issues following the earthquake illustrate, public safety requires its own advanced data network. For this reason, the Administration continues to urge passage of the Public Safety Spectrum and Wireless Innovation Act (S. 911) and the American Jobs Act (S. 1549), which would provide the spectrum, funding and governance for a nationwide interoperable public safety broadband network.

3. We understand that prior DHS administrations had created a "First Hour Checklist" for the NCR—a kind of "pre-scripted" plan for who does what during the first hour of an event in the NCR. Does such a document still exist and was it used in the August Earthquake or other recent events? Can you describe it in greater detail, such as the types of situations it is used for?

Answer: The First Hour Checklist for Regional Emergencies provides a broad framework for assessing a regional disaster and implementing protective actions. OPM followed the provisions of the Checklist during the August 23rd earthquake, including gaining situational awareness, determining response status, reviewing the status of initial protective actions, considering additional protective actions, evaluating public information needs, determining next steps, and initiating RICC notifications.

4. During our hearing we often heard terms like "collaboration" "cooperation" "partnerships" and "coordination." Do measure how well the Region's collaborates? Can you define "successful" collaboration? What would a successfully collaborated response look like? To what extent do you consider timeliness in your assessment of collaboration?

Answer: Successful collaboration involves the ability for all stakeholders to exchange timely and accurate information to render and coordinate operational decisions within their respective jurisdictions. From an OPM perspective, obtaining situational awareness from our partners at the Federal, State and local levels in the disciplines of emergency management, law enforcement, and transportation, among others, aids OPM in our determination of the operating status of the Federal government. In turn, the OPM status decision provides information to Federal, State, and local entities which can be used to assist in the determination of their own operational decisions.

Interagency after action efforts serve as a primary tool to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative efforts. These review efforts allow for an examination of lessons learned and the implementation of policy changes, as appropriate. As an example, after action reviews of the January 26, 2011 snowstorm by both the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and Chief Human Capital Officers, were key factors driving policy changes to OPM's *Washington, DC Area Dismissal and Closure Procedures*.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Richard Muth
From Senator Daniel K. Akaka**

**From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the
Next Disaster?
December 7, 2011**

1. The Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response recommended in its November 9, 2011, report that the National Capital Region (NCR) establish a Regional Incident Coordination Program with staff dedicated to monitoring the NCR as a whole. This staff would be responsible for collecting and distributing information to regional decision-makers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and would be located at the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. NCR officials have announced an intention to hire two full-time employees to staff the Program.
 - a. Please discuss how NCR officials determined that two full-time employees would be adequate to fulfill the Program's proposed function?

NCR jurisdictions have successfully been working together for over a decade to achieve regional coordination. In order for the NCR to continue to evolve with the demands of new technology and of a growing regional population, the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response ("Steering Committee") agreed to develop the Regional Incident Coordination Program as a pilot program to test out new efforts to ensure streamlined coordination and communication. The Steering Committee determined that the minimum number of staff that would be effective and cost efficient to carry out the planning and coordination is a two person staff, where one employee (Coordinator) oversees the planning, overall coordination and works closely with the NCR jurisdictions, while the other employee (Specialist) is the research focused personnel working behind the scenes to provide support to the Coordinator.

- b. How will these positions be funded?

These positions will be funded using the Homeland Security Grant Program funds.

- c. What entity within the NCR is responsible for hiring these employees?

The Steering Committee determined that the most logical location to place the Regional Incident Coordination Program is at a 24/7 (hours/days) facility with access to operational and planning staff. Currently, the only jurisdiction with such capability in the NCR is the District of Columbia. As such, the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency will serve as the host for the RIC program. Selected representatives from each NCR jurisdiction will be responsible for the hiring of employees. In terms of supervision, Regional Incident Coordination employees will be supervised by HSEMA on a day to day basis, however, an Ad Hoc Steering Committee has been developed for a period of eight months to oversee and monitor the progress of the program and to receive monthly updates from the Coordinator. HSEMA awarded a subgrant to the Metropolitan Councils on Government (COG) through a Request for Resumes to hire the Coordinator. Applications are being accepted until January 31, 2012. A Technical

Selection Committee consisting of a representative from each jurisdiction will then meet to review, interview and select applicants on February 10, 2012. The Coordinator will be hired with an anticipated start date in early March 2012.

2. Critics of the NCR's current decision-making structure and response capabilities have cited the systems in the New York and London metropolitan areas as successful models. What elements, if any, of those systems or other national or international models should be implemented in the NCR to improve decision-making or response efforts?

The National Capital Region has studied various decision-making models – both international models and the systems used by New York City and Harris County, Texas (Houston). In multi-jurisdictional decision-making situations (both in the U.S. and abroad), a dominant governmental entity tends to be in the lead (e.g., the national government or a major city). Public outreach structures are similar in the NCR as in other regions studied: information is shared through a variety of means (opt-in alerts to your mobile phone; awareness campaigns; systems communicating through broadcast television and radio). The New York City and London models are not applicable to the decision-making authority within the NCR as these two dominant jurisdictions indisputably lead the region. The region has reviewed and studied various models and is seeking to utilize best-practices from a variety of different locations both domestically and abroad. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be adopted wholesale for the NCR.

No other metropolitan area in the U.S. has the combination of characteristics that the NCR has in terms of the size, location and nature of the area's governmental entities. Based on this uniqueness, it was Congress that enabled the National Capital Mutual Aid Agreement. Some incident management models, such as those in foreign countries or U.S. regions located solely in one state or with a dominant jurisdiction, are not appropriate for the NCR due to this region's unique multi-jurisdictional nature.

Finally, the National Capital Region is not an operational entity. While extensive collaboration and coordination take place daily, there are no NCR police cars, no NCR transportation department response vehicles, no NCR fire trucks, and no NCR owned traffic lights. Each governmental entity in the region is part of a sovereign jurisdiction with independent elected leadership. No jurisdiction, that we are aware of, has fully centralized response decision-making across politically independent jurisdictions in a region. Instead, multi-jurisdictional regions collaborate and coordinate – sharing information and resources – using the National Response Framework, National Incident Management System, mutual aid agreements, and traditional emergency management tenets.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Richard Muth
Director**

Maryland Emergency Management Agency
State of Maryland

From Chairman Mark Pryor

**Joint SDRIA/OGM Subcommittee hearing “From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the
National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?”
December 7, 2011**

1. The traffic gridlock that ensued on 9/11/2001 demonstrated the need for a coordinated evacuation plan for the NCR that has been tested and exercised. One essential component of such a plan is functioning, coordinated traffic signals. Nonfunctioning traffic signals at even a few key intersections can back up traffic for many blocks in multiple directions. In fact, nonfunctioning traffic signals contributed to the traffic problems that accompanied the January 2011 snowstorm. According to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, ten years after 9/11 the region still does not have backup power for traffic signals along key evacuation routes in the NCR. What are the reasons for not making these improvements? Why has this been apparently a low priority within the NCR, given the key role that functioning traffic signals play in any evacuation of the area?

Traffic challenges the National Capital Region during fair weather and foul. The three Departments of Transportation in the region all work together daily to improve citizen commutes on all of the modes of transportation and have expanded collaboration with the development of the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Group (MATOC).

Traffic signal difficulties were a factor in delayed and inconvenient commutes but other significant issues also contributed including traffic accidents, abandoned vehicles, and delayed departures by large segments of the working public. All of these issues led to congestion during the very worst of the storm. The Maryland Department of Transportation is already working on transitioning from incandescent to LED traffic lights. These new LED lights more efficiently utilize power and make providing battery backup power both more technologically and financially feasible. As this transition continues and depending on the availability of funding, a greater number of such lights in critical, high priority intersections where two or more major arterials come together will have backup power available during any hazard.

During a true evacuation, traffic signals would likely not be the preferred method of directing traffic at critical intersections. Individual intersection traffic management plans would be preferred for key intersections in Maryland. Under these plans, law enforcement or other responders would be manning individual intersections along designated evacuation routes and directing traffic according to the individual plans. In order to facilitate the quick and orderly

flow of traffic during an evacuation Maryland Department of Transportation officials have included these plans in GIS files used by emergency managers and state highway officials.

2. **Since 2004, the GAO has urged the NCR to take a holistic look at the region's disaster preparedness and response capabilities, including the totality of the resources--financial and in-kind--that are available to the NCR for this purpose. However, the NCR has focused largely on UASI grants, which are specifically focused on regional preparedness, but are only one source of funds available within the NCR and are intended to be supplemental to the resources available to its member jurisdictions. How does the region consider the totality of available resources--including the use of grants by NCR jurisdictions--in assessing the region's preparedness and capabilities?**

The Strategic Plan was built on a strong foundation of regional collaboration and stakeholder participation including extensive participation by the State of Maryland. This Plan outlines priority capabilities, those key capabilities needed by the region for response during natural disaster or terrorist attack. The region is developing and strengthening these capabilities with all of its partners in a coordinated, efficient, and effective manner. As stewards of the public trust and its resources, we are committed to exercising rigorous oversight to implement this Strategic Plan through a comprehensive process of regional planning and performance measurement.

In the past year, we have updated information on our spending history, expanded our identification of alternate funding sources, and put in place metrics to measure progress in achieving capabilities. We have also put into place milestones and indicators to help us chart our progress in implementing the Plan. As we begin a new planning cycle we are doubling down on our efforts to use all our data streams on risk, on project management, and on better approaches to anchor our oversight and management in the strategic plan. This process builds on past experiences and should yield a more transparent and consistent way to bring state and local leadership together with the responders at the local level to ensure accountability and the best use of our resources.

We recognize, however, that there needs to be a more systematic approach to aligning and coordinating the various funding streams. As a result, we are working to develop a readily accessible database of funds that are spent or could be spent to achieve the capabilities identified in our strategic plan.

In terms of response, the region has always looked at the totality of resources available to responders through mutual aid agreements and regional planning. Our first responders have been supplemented by investments from various grant streams, local funding, and state funding – and in planning for any response we have always taken into account every resource available

3. **At the hearing, members of the Senior Policy Group noted that the best course for employees in the region would be to "stay in place" when a major storm hits. However, parents' willingness to "stay in place" is influenced by their concern for their children--not only those in school, but those in day care centers. For example, if a day care center cannot keep children beyond six pm, parents will need to get on the road. Considering**

these challenges, what is the NCR's plan for implementing "stay in place," and providing incentives for doing so?

- a. To what extent do the governments within the NCR coordinate with child care centers within your jurisdictions?**

The State of Maryland requires that each school "shall develop an emergency plan" that "deals with contingencies of man-made, technological, and natural hazards."¹ In addition, child care centers in Maryland are required to have a minimum of one employee that has completed emergency preparedness training, and must prepare a written emergency and disaster plan for that center including evacuating, relocation, shelter in place, notification of parents and providing children with special needs.²

Maryland and the local jurisdictions that make up the NCR also conduct regular community outreach and preparedness training. A critical message in these trainings is the need for parents to familiarize themselves with their children's school and day-care emergency plans. These outreach efforts continue. In January 2012, Maryland Emergency Management Agency Opened the Office of Resilience which will oversee and coordinate volunteer, citizen preparedness and private sector preparedness efforts throughout the state.

- 4. In FY 2011, federal grants for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response were reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars, and may be reduced further in the future. In an environment of at uncertain and declining resources, on what basis will the NCR determine its funding priorities? Has the NCR assessed the costs of sustaining prior initiatives? If so, what has been the result of that assessment?**

The NCR is committed to making investments strategically. The Senior Policy Group and local jurisdiction Chief Administrative Officers continue to hold management review sessions anchored on the priorities identified in the 2010 NCR Strategic Plan. These reviews allow the executive leadership within the NCR to examine the totality of regional efforts in homeland security and emergency management – both UASI funded efforts and efforts funded through other grant streams, state funds, or local funds – and to determine priorities for funding and develop sustainment and maintenance models for critical programs.

A critical and central purpose of these reviews is to determine the required sustainment for programs across the region and to determine what if any resources outside of UASI are available or should be available for sustaining those programs. The SPG and CAO's are working to consolidate programs, transition critical projects from grant funding to local budgets, and to identify areas where priorities should or could shift. According to preliminary estimates, sustainment of all existing projects will cost approximately \$30 million in the next year. The region's local governments are examining several projects to transition to alternative funding sources.

- 5. Events such as the August earthquake were similar to 9/11 in the respect that the Region's telecommunications capacity was quickly exceeded. How did this affect public**

¹ Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.02.02.03

² Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.16.10.01

**safety agencies' ability to communicate warnings or information to the public?
Moreover, isn't the public's inability to communicate emergency information amongst
itself also important to a successful response?**

The earthquake highlighted that during events of significance (including every New Year's Eve at 12:01) cell phone systems become overloaded and calls from mobile phones will not go through. This is a feature of modern life. Public safety radio communications were not impacted at all. Land lines were open, 911 centers were not impacted. This is a result of a significant effort in the region to ensure that our first responders have interoperable and redundant communications no matter the situation.

Localities are currently providing the public information via email, text messages, Twitter, Facebook and on government agency websites. The Virtual Joint Information Center, available at <http://www.capitalert.gov/>, is another method for communications with the public during an event. These methods of communication (in addition to radio and TV) functioned well during the earthquake.

There are efforts underway to educate the public on low bandwidth methods for communications that can be used during an emergency such as Twitter, Facebook, or even SMS text messaging that can meet the public's communications needs while relieving some of the burden on bandwidth caused when the region simultaneously seeks to make a cell phone call. FEMA Director Fugate, in fact, visited a regional meeting of public information personnel where he discussed value of texting and social media for families in communicating during an emergency.

- 6. We understand that prior DHS administrations had created a "First Hour Checklist" for the NCR—a kind of "pre-scripted" plan for who does what during the first hour of an event in the NCR. Does such a document still exist and was it used in the August Earthquake, for example. Can you describe it in greater detail, such as what types of situations it is used for?**

The First Hour Checklist is a regional document used and developed as part of an effort led by FEMA's Office of National Capital Region Coordination and including input and collaboration with the regional work groups, SPG and local CAOs. This document still exists and was used during the August Earthquake. The First Hour Checklist applies to regional events of different scales and type. Supporting documents and processes have also been developed including communications wallet cards for executive leadership with quick contact info, an SPG email list serve, and a continuously available conference line.

In Maryland we've focused on providing guidance to our watch centers and our responders on how to react in an unexpected and evolving event as well. Maryland has developed a series of Emergency Checklists used to systematically identify the correct course of action. Our no-notice checklist leads personnel in our watch center through a series of assessments meant to identify the problem, analyze the risk, and provide for the next steps including notifications to leadership and the public. We now have hazard specific checklists for hurricanes, winter weather, and terrorism ready to be implemented when an event occurs.

7. To what extent are the region's emergency preparedness entities coordinating with businesses in the National Capital Region (NCR)? How can these partnerships be strengthened and leveraged to improve efficiencies in disaster preparedness and response?

In 2008, Maryland invested federal grant funds into developing a system, process, and the legal agreements to engage the private sector for resources during emergencies for the entire region. As a result, Maryland has entered into agreements with forty-two (42) different vendors/private companies that can provide logistical or resource support during an emergency.

Building on this effort, in January 2012, Maryland Emergency Management Agency started the Office of Resilience. This new office will be focused on building relationships and engaging the private sector and citizens in preparedness and response efforts. A significant part of the office's charge will be to develop a Business Operations Center and model for Business Operations Centers for the use of all of FEMA Region 3 (which includes Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, District of Columbia, Virginia, and West Virginia). A Business Operation Center (BOC) is a way of organizing a coalition of certain businesses to facilitate the exchange of information and resource sharing between the private sector and government during emergencies. The BOC is an element of and resource to the State Emergency Operations Center offering a point of entry for businesses and private sector entities into the State's response, situational awareness, information sharing, and resource management efforts.

**Responses to Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Terrie Suit – Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, Virginia.
From Senator Daniel K. Akaka**

**From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the
Next Disaster?
December 7, 2011**

1. The Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response recommended in its November 9, 2011, report that the National Capital Region (NCR) establish a Regional Incident Coordination Program with staff dedicated to monitoring the NCR as a whole. This staff would be responsible for collecting and distributing information to regional decision-makers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and would be located at the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. NCR officials have announced an intention to hire two full-time employees to staff the Program.

- a. Please discuss how NCR officials determined that two full-time employees would be adequate to fulfill the Program's proposed function?

Answer: The Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response is a workgroup of the Metro Washington Council of Governments (COG). Neither the Governor of Virginia, nor his designee (the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security), is a member of COG nor is the Governor or his designee eligible to be a member per the COG bylaws. Neither the Governor nor his designee was requested by COG to participate as a member or guest in this workgroup. Because this office was not a participant in this workgroup we cannot provide a response to this question. This question would be best directed to Members of the COG Board or staff to the workgroup.

- b. How will these positions be funded?

Answer: A request for funding from the Urban Area Security Initiative Grant for the National Capitol Region has been communicated to the National Capitol Region Senior Policy Group of which Secretary Suit is a member.

- c. What entity within the NCR is responsible for hiring these employees?

Answer: The COG Request for Qualifications Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program Manager Document provided to the Secretary by COG states the following:

"COG will seek a Contractor to be the Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program Manager for the region. The Contractor will be located at the District of Columbia's (DC) Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) and will have access to additional staff and

situational awareness resources to carry out the RIC Program functions. The Contractor will report to and be supervised on a day-to-day basis by the Director of DC HSEMA or her designee. The IMR Steering Committee, augmented by state and local emergency managers, will serve as the "RIC Oversight Group". It will establish performance standards and monitor RIC program outcomes."

The Virginia Office of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, has identified a representative from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management to serve on this selection committee.

2. Critics of the NCR's current decision-making structure and response capabilities have cited the systems in the New York and London metropolitan areas as successful models. What elements, if any, of those systems or other national or international models should be implemented in the NCR to improve decision-making or response efforts?

Answer: The decision making structure in the NCR follows the National Response Framework and the National Incident Response System (NIMS) as well as the Incident Command System (ICS). This is the structure endorsed by federal, state and local policy makers. Additionally, compliance and certification in this system is required by the Department of Homeland Security in order to participate in Federal Homeland Security Grants. Virginia subscribes to this system of decision making and coordination with our partners in the NCR. This system is practiced by all partners in the NCR at all levels of government. Continued planning, training and exercising with this system will improve decision-making and response efforts.

**Responses to Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Ms. Terrie Suit
Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security
The Commonwealth of Virginia**

From Chairman Mark Pryor

**Joint SDRIA/OGM Subcommittee hearing “From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the
National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?”
December 7, 2011**

1. The traffic gridlock that ensued on 9/11/2001 demonstrated the need for a coordinated evacuation plan for the NCR that has been tested and exercised. One essential component of such a plan is functioning, coordinated traffic signals. Nonfunctioning traffic signals at even a few key intersections can back up traffic for many blocks in multiple directions. In fact, nonfunctioning traffic signals contributed to the traffic problems that accompanied the January 2011 snowstorm. According to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, ten years after 9/11 the region still does not have backup power for traffic signals along key evacuation routes in the NCR. What are the reasons for not making these improvements? Why has this been apparently a low priority within the NCR, given the key role that functioning traffic signals play in any evacuation of the area?

Answer: The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is responsible for approximately 1300 traffic signals in the NCR and has been converting the traffic signals to energy efficient LED from incandescent bulbs; this effort is approximately 95% complete. Following that effort, they have installed backup power systems at approximately 300 signals and continue that process. Since the LED lights use considerably less energy than the incandescent bulbs, the battery backup systems have a much more effective lifespan. Backup power is a high priority to VDOT. Currently VDOT is prioritizing battery backup systems along primary evacuation routes Rt. 1, Rt. 7 and Rt. 29. Non-functioning traffic signals were one of several factors in the delayed commutes during the January snowstorm. Other factors equally impacted the situation including downed power lines, abandoned vehicles, and commuters delaying their departures until after road conditions had already deteriorated. The NCR is constantly working on all aspects of transportation and evacuation issues, including planning, coordination, and situational awareness throughout the VA, MD and DC regions. Virginia applauds the new OPM commitment to make workforce attendance and departure decisions well in advance of hazardous weather and to provide better enforcement of those decisions.

2. In FY 2011, federal grants for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response were reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars, and may be reduced further in the future. In an environment of at uncertain and declining resources, on what basis will the NCR determine its funding priorities? Has the NCR assessed the costs of sustaining prior initiatives? If so, what has been the result of that assessment?

Answer: Funding priority is given to those projects that will provide the highest public safety capability improvement, the most substantial threat/risk reduction or mitigation impact, and which leverage or affect multiple projects resulting in regional benefits that are in line with the goals in the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan. The NCR UASI senior leaders have been tracking sustainment costs and comparing those expenses to new project expenses since the FY2006 UASI grant cycle. For the last two grant cycles every project submitted for consideration of UASI funding has been required to include estimates for sustainment funding and to identify sources of future funding.

3. Since 2004, the GAO has urged the NCR to take a holistic look at the region's disaster preparedness and response capabilities, including the totality of the resources--financial and in-kind--that are available to the NCR for this purpose. However, the NCR has focused largely on UASI grants, which are specifically focused on regional preparedness, but are only one source of funds available within the NCR and are intended to be supplemental to the resources available to its member jurisdictions. How does the region consider the totality of available resources--including the use of grants by NCR jurisdictions--in assessing the region's preparedness and capabilities?

Answer: The NCR homeland security program is inclusive of all resources. Many projects that are developed leverage funding from multiple sources including UASI local share, UASI state share, state homeland security funds, EMPG (Emergency Management Preparedness Grant) funds, HHS grants, local budgeted dollars, and state budget dollars. Additionally, the NCR leverages partnerships at every opportunity in order to accomplish preparedness goals at no, or reduced, cost. These include working with private partners, colleges and universities, and the military. All projects considered for UASI grant funding must identify other potential funding sources as well as identifying future costs and alternative funding methods.

4. At the hearing, members of the Senior Policy Group noted that the best course for employees in the region would be to "stay in place" when a major storm hits. However, parents' willingness to "stay in place" is influenced by their concern for their children--not only those in school, but those in day care centers. For example, if a day care center cannot keep children beyond six pm, parents will need to get on the road. Considering these challenges, what is the NCR's plan for implementing "stay in place," and providing incentives for doing so?
 - a. To what extent do the governments within the NCR coordinate with child care centers within your jurisdictions?

Answer: Stay in place requires a behavioral change in the way our citizens react to as well as think about emergencies. This can only be accomplished through aggressive public education campaigns. NCR emergency officials have developed and continue to develop these education campaigns through public media, web based information sources, partnerships with both public and private employers, and social networking

sites. A vital aspect of family emergency planning is planning for the care of children. Virginia day daycare facilities are required to have emergency operation plans which must be approved by the Virginia Child Day Care Council (a regulatory body). Virginia daycare centers are encouraged to work with the school systems and local or state emergency management offices to develop these emergency plans and ensure that they include; emergency hours/staffing policies, communication policies, and procedures for coordinating with families. In addition, all licensed child care facilities are required to provide to parents, prior to the child's first day of attendance, the center's policies for the arrival and departure of children when a child is not picked up during emergency situations including but not limited to inclement weather or natural disasters. Information for developing plans that provide for the care of children during emergency events is provided by both local governments and the State. Families have been encouraged by state and local governments to be knowledgeable about their care providers plans at all times.

5. Events such as the August earthquake were similar to 9/11 in the respect that the Region's telecommunications capacity was quickly exceeded. How did this affect public safety agencies' ability to communicate warnings or information to the public? Moreover, isn't the public's inability to communicate emergency information amongst itself also important to a successful response?

Answer: First responder communications were not impacted by the August earthquake. First responders were able to communicate seamlessly across the region within their agencies, with other agencies, with other jurisdictions, and with the public. NCR first responders communicate with the public through a "system of systems" to ensure that public safety messages are distributed through multiple outlets. In addition to coordinating with the media, these systems include: free text alerts which the public can sign up for, Reverse 911 (which allows the localities to call all land lines within a specific geographic area), NCR 211 website (which provides human services information for the NCR), local government websites, the VJIC website (see below), and social media such as Face Book and Twitter. The Northern Virginia Emergency Response System (NVERS) has developed <http://nvers.org/> where they provide information on Northern Virginia regional events in addition to posting information to Face Book and Twitter. The VJIC is a recently launched, NCR wide, one stop, web site for current or breaking emergency news and information at www.capitalregionupdates.gov.

The public's ability to communicate during an emergency is very important. All personal preparedness outreach at the local, state, and regional level include information on how to prepare for an emergency including actions to take in anticipation of communications outages. Virginia has developed a downloadable tip sheet about phone use during disasters which is available at www.readyvirginia.gov and is pushed out to the public in preparedness campaigns. Federal action to facilitate increased capacity for personal mobile communication devices could help to improve the ability of the public to communicate during a disaster, but, given the likelihood of

communication outages the public is encouraged to make contingency plans now in the event they will not be able to communicate during an emergency, and to share those plans with friends and loved ones today.

6. We understand that prior DHS administrations had created a “First Hour Checklist” for the NCR—a kind of “pre-scripted” plan for who does what during the first hour of an event in the NCR. Does such a document still exist and was it used in the August Earthquake, for example. Can you describe it in greater detail, such as what types of situations it is used for?

Answer: The NCR First Hour Checklist still exists and is/has been used during all emergency situations as well as exercises and training events. It was originally developed by the DHS Office of National Capital Region Coordination in coordination with the NCR Senior Policy Group (SPG) and the NCR Chief Administrative Officials (CAOs). The Checklist was recently updated by the NCR Exercise and Training Oversight Panel (ETOP). The document was developed to assist SPG members, CAOs, and emergency managers in assessing a regional event and to guide regional collaboration. The checklist helps review the status of initial actions and determines additional protective actions and regionally coordinated decisions that may be necessary.

7. The Washington Metropolitan Council of Government has recently released a study for improving protection and response in the Region. One of the recommendations in this study identifies the need to “Improve Real-Time Information to the Media and the Public”, and recommends the implementation of a Virtual- Joint Information Center (V-JIC) that would support the rapid release of real-time information to the media and the public. I understand that this center will be housed in Fairfax County.
- Who will be the lead jurisdiction to house the Joint Information Center for deciding what will be posted on the V-JIC public website, and who will develop and approve the messages and information that would come out of this JIC?
 - Also, I am concerned that there may be some conflict between this information center – run out of Fairfax county – and the 24/7 incidence coordination center that is run out of the District’s operations center. Are you developing procedures and protocols to address any leadership conflicts?

Answer: Fairfax County developed the VJIC aka: www.capitolregionupdates.gov website with internal funds and will continue to host and administer it on behalf of the NCR for the public’s use. The website is an easy access one stop location which features information from the many different jurisdictions and organizations of the NCR including links and sign up options for emergency alerts. The VJIC is an online portal for the public’s use and information, it is not a staffed, in-person, non-public information center. There is no conflict between the VJIC and the 24/7 Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) being established at DCHSEMA.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Paul Quander
From Senator Daniel K. Akaka**

**From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the National Capital Region Prepared for the
Next Disaster?
December 7, 2011**

1. The Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response recommended in its November 9, 2011, report that the National Capital Region (NCR) establish a Regional Incident Coordination Program with staff dedicated to monitoring the NCR as a whole. This staff would be responsible for collecting and distributing information to regional decision-makers 24 hours a day, seven days a week and would be located at the D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency. NCR officials have announced an intention to hire two full-time employees to staff the Program.
 - a. Please discuss how NCR officials determined that two full-time employees would be adequate to fulfill the Program's proposed function?

NCR jurisdictions have successfully been working together for over a decade to achieve regional coordination. In order for the NCR to continue to evolve with the demands of new technology and of a growing regional population, the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response ("Steering Committee") agreed to develop the Regional Incident Coordination Program as a pilot program to test out new efforts to ensure streamlined coordination and communication. The Steering Committee determined that the minimum number of staff that would be effective and cost efficient to carry out the planning and coordination is a two person staff, where one employee (Coordinator) oversees the planning, overall coordination and works closely with the NCR jurisdictions, while the other employee (Specialist) is the research focused personnel working behind the scenes to provide support to the Coordinator.

- b. How will these positions be funded?

These positions will be funded using the Homeland Security Grant Program funds.

- c. What entity within the NCR is responsible for hiring these employees?

The Steering Committee determined that the most logical location to place the Regional Incident Coordination Program is at a 24/7 (hours/days) facility with access to operational and planning staff. Currently, the only jurisdiction with such capability in the NCR is the District of Columbia. As such, the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency will serve as the host for the RIC program. Selected representatives from each NCR jurisdiction will be responsible for the hiring of employees. In terms of supervision, Regional Incident Coordination employees will be supervised by HSEMA on a day to day basis, however, an Ad Hoc Steering Committee has been developed for a period of eight months to oversee and monitor the progress of the program and to receive monthly updates from the Coordinator. HSEMA awarded a subgrant to the Metropolitan Councils on Government (COG) through a Request for Resumes to hire the Coordinator. Applications are being accepted until January 31, 2012. A Technical

Selection Committee consisting of a representative from each jurisdiction will then meet to review, interview and select applicants on February 10, 2012. The Coordinator will be hired with an anticipated start date in early March 2012.

2. Critics of the NCR's current decision-making structure and response capabilities have cited the systems in the New York and London metropolitan areas as successful models. What elements, if any, of those systems or other national or international models should be implemented in the NCR to improve decision-making or response efforts?

We agree that New York City and London metropolitan area have successful decision-making and response structures that address their needs. However, New York and London are but one city under the governance of one individual. Their demands, circumstances and demographic makeup completely differ from that of the NCR. We are a multi-layer geographical area consisting of a state, a commonwealth, and a city. Within those boundaries are several jurisdictions and counties with their own local governance structures and elected leadership. During an emergency or an event, we work in cooperation and coordination with one another keeping in mind the policies and structures that already exist.

The NCR has researched decision-making models such as Harris County, TX's approach to multi-jurisdictional problem solving and plans to explore how some of the best practices can be implemented and incorporated into the NCR's existing capacities. Harris County, TX serves 34 cities including Houston (the largest city in Texas) and has an effective approach that allows information to be gathered and shared cross jurisdictionally within their county. The information sharing is managed by a public information officer, which collects information in a database like system for the county and is similar to the concept of a Joint Information Center (JIC). This model has limitations due to the underlying nature of the JIC that serves primarily as a repository for information, and does not function to interpret or push information out.

Overall, there is not a "one size fits all" model that the NCR can adopt or implement as is. What we can do is to look at the models like the ones from New York, London and Harris County and take elements that could work for our region to develop an approach that is uniquely for NCR.

Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Paul Quander
 Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice
 District of Columbia

From Chairman Mark Pryor

**Joint SDRIA/OGM Subcommittee hearing “From Earthquakes to Terrorist Attacks: Is the
 National Capital Region Prepared for the Next Disaster?”
 December 7, 2011**

1. **The traffic gridlock that ensued on 9/11/2001 demonstrated the need for a coordinated evacuation plan for the NCR that has been tested and exercised. One essential component of such a plan is functioning, coordinated traffic signals. Nonfunctioning traffic signals at even a few key intersections can back up traffic for many blocks in multiple directions. In fact, nonfunctioning traffic signals contributed to the traffic problems that accompanied the January 2011 snowstorm. According to the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, ten years after 9/11 the region still does not have backup power for traffic signals along key evacuation routes in the NCR. What are the reasons for not making these improvements? Why has this been apparently a low priority within the NCR, given the key role that functioning traffic signals play in any evacuation of the area?**

The District of Columbia understands the importance of functioning traffic signals and the role they play in an evacuation and have demonstrated the prioritization of this need through several projects that address backup power for traffic signals along key evacuation routes. These current and past projects include:

Improving Network Communications: Currently, District Department Of Transportation (DDOT) is in the midst of updating the twisted pair network (a type of cable typically used by older telephone networks) to Internet Provider (IP) based network (a communications protocol that establishes internet connection). This will allow DDOT to create a standalone IP based network for communications with the District's Traffic signal and Information Transportation Systems (ITS). **Bottom line:** The upgrade from twisted pair to IP based network will improve the redundancy and resilience with the traffic signal system to address power outages and other emergencies.

Battery Based Power Source: DDOT initiated a project in 2009 to deploy battery based uninterruptable power sources (UPS) at 124 critical signalized intersections DDOT has upgraded 95 percent of the traffic signals in the District to LED based (Light Emitting Diode). The LED signals are more efficient and reduced the current draw of energy at standard intersections from about 30 amps to approximately 13 amps. The systems are always on line and do not require any human intervention to activate, and can operate for at least 6 hours on a full charge. These systems were permanently bolted on to existing traffic cabinets and wired through an automatic transfer switch designed to seamlessly switch to battery, when the utility power

drops below a certain threshold. The UPS units were supplied with the capability of communicating through the traffic signal system central database, and will be monitored remotely in the future (central software upgrade development is currently pending).

Bottom line: Battery based power source provides an efficient and reliable alternative source of energy for traffic signals and can operate for up to 6 hours should the primary source of electricity become unavailable.

Increasing Capacity with Backup Generators: In 2006, DDOT procured 200 emergency backup generators as a part of an ongoing project to upgrade traffic signal equipment at approximately 465 signalized intersections. The 200 generators are enclosed in secure, portable cabinets and designed to be temporarily attached to Cabinets along evacuation routes. The traffic controller cabinets along the evacuation routes were outfitted with automatic transfer switches, and quick connectors. The generators can be deployed by a two man crew and only require basic hand tools to attach to the traffic cabinet. DDOT has tasked the traffic signal contractors to automatically deploy generators to any intersection that have been outfitted with generator ports during an emergency. The generators are checked and refueled every three hours, and can run signals for several days. **Bottom line:** The District's tested and exercised generators offer an alternative backup power source along evacuation routes should the primary source of electricity become unavailable.

The District will continue to prioritize efforts that will improve transportation planning along NCR evacuation routes. This includes the development of a Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination Annex that provides guidance on how the NCR, DDOT and other stakeholders will work together during regional emergency that affects the NCR transportation networks. Also, in the spring of 2012, DDOT will embark upon updating the District evacuation plans to ensure that they work in conjunction with Maryland and Virginia, who have updated their evacuation plans in the past two years..

2. Since 2004, the GAO has urged the NCR to take a holistic look at the region's disaster preparedness and response capabilities, including the totality of the resources--financial and in-kind--that are available to the NCR for this purpose. However, the NCR has focused largely on UASI grants, which are specifically focused on regional preparedness, but are only one source of funds available within the NCR and are intended to be supplemental to the resources available to its member jurisdictions. How does the region consider the totality of available resources--including the use of grants by NCR jurisdictions--in assessing the region's preparedness and capabilities?

The NCR Strategic Plan was built on a strong foundation of regional collaboration and stakeholder participation including extensive participation by the District of Columbia, State of Maryland and Commonwealth of Virginia. This Plan outlines priority capabilities, those key capabilities needed by the region for response during natural disaster or terrorist attack. The region is developing and strengthening these capabilities with all of its partners in a coordinated, efficient, and effective manner. As stewards of the public trust and its resources, we are committed to exercising rigorous oversight to implement this Plan through a comprehensive process of regional planning and performance measurement. The SPG and local CAOs are all committed to anchoring regional investment on the strategic plan.

In the past year, we have updated information on our spending history, expanded our identification of alternate funding sources, and put in place metrics to measure progress in achieving capabilities. We have also put into place milestones and indicators to help us chart our progress in implementing the Plan. As we begin a new planning cycle we are doubling down on our efforts to use all our data streams on risk, on project management, and on better approaches to anchor our oversight and management in the strategic plan. This process builds on past experiences and should yield a more transparent and consistent way to bring state and local leadership together with the responders at the local level to ensure accountability and the best use of our resources.

We recognize, however, that there needs to be a more systematic approach to aligning and coordinating the various funding streams. As a result, we are working to develop a readily accessible database of funds that are spent or could be spent to achieve the capabilities identified in our strategic plan.

In terms of response, the region has always looked at the totality of resources available to responders through mutual aid agreements and regional planning. Our first responders have been supplemented by investments from various grant streams, local funding, and state funding -- and in planning for any response we have always taken into account every resource available. In 2006, local leaders in the NCR estimated that for every five dollars invested from UASI, local jurisdictions invest nearly ninety-five dollars.

3. At the hearing, members of the Senior Policy Group noted that the best course for employees in the region would be to "stay in place" when a major storm hits. However, parents' willingness to "stay in place" is influenced by their concern for their children--not only those in school, but those in day care centers. For example, if a day care center cannot keep children beyond six pm, parents will need to get on the road. Considering these challenges, what is the NCR's plan for implementing "stay in place," and providing incentives for doing so?
- a. To what extent do the governments within the NCR coordinate with child care centers within your jurisdictions?

The NCR has made significant use of the Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Grant Program¹ (RCPGP) to assess the likely responses that the public would have to a "shelter-in-place" or "stay-in-place" order so that we can better understand what methods to use to best achieve compliance. We are also studying which factors are likely to influence the decision-making process of individuals (children, other family members, their understanding of the incident, etc.) so that we can ensure that local, state and federal government agencies can take the steps necessary and provide the information needed to encourage compliance with a "shelter-in-place" or "stay-in-place" policy. Historically, the concept of "shelter-in-place" or "stay-in-place" was originally developed to ensure the appropriate response as it relates to the accidental or intentional release of hazardous materials (chemical, biological or radiological) in which the primary driving factors behind keeping people indoors is to limit additional exposure to the danger and additional resulting casualties. Through the RCPGP funds, we are looking to understand the public's perception and behavioral patterns during emergency situations of all types in order to develop appropriate solutions and to create a culture of preparedness.

Given the immense logistical challenges presented when an unscheduled increase in traffic in occurs, we have found that it is good policy/practice to encourage people to stay where they are when an incident occurs until responder agencies can ensure that travel is safe. The District continues to provide information to the public through community outreach, trainings and is developing educational materials to inform the public about "stay-in-place" policies to combat against an individual's natural inclination to panic during emergencies. The District also considers federal recommendations from the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) when developing their employee dismissal and closure policies for DC Agencies. Most recently, DC reviewed OPM's updated recommendations² that included developing telework policies to allow workers to conduct work offsite, and reinforcing the "shelter-in-place" or "stay-in-place" procedures to determine how the policy changes will impact the District.

The District is currently exploring new opportunities to partner with the business community and hospitality industry to develop incentives such as discounted meals and accommodations for

¹ Study of behavioral patterns and what factors affect a "shelter in place" decision (2008 RCPGP - 8RCPG791-01, \$979,173) and shelter in place training (2011 RCPGP - pending - \$417,878)

² US Office of Personnel Management Press Release, December 1, 2011. Available online at: <http://www.opm.gov/news/opm-director-john-berry-discusses-updated-2012-dismissal-and-closure-procedures,1741.aspx>

District residents, workers, and visitors to stay off the roads when there are extreme conditions to allow public works and public safety agencies to clear roads, to stagger traffic congestion and to ensure the safety of all drivers.

The District has existing policies and requirements that provide guidelines on how child care facilities should prepare for and operate during emergencies. This includes policies on evacuation and "staying-in-place". In addition to requiring such facilities to have medical supplies (i.e. first aid kits), the District of Columbia Municipal Regulation³ requires that child care facilities "*conduct practice evacuation drills... at least ever two (2) months*". Child care facilities are also required to "*develop and implement specific procedures for the safe and prompt evacuation of infants, toddlers and non-ambulatory children*". The District also embeds stay-in-place policies within this regulation and requires the development of "*written emergency contingency plans and procedures to be followed in case of fire, natural or man-made disaster, loss of power, heat or water service, unsafe indoor temperatures, and any other dangerous environmental condition. These shall include procedures for evacuation as well as for sheltering in place, as deemed appropriate or as directed by authorized government officials.*" The District's child care facilities have the capacity to monitor children after work hours and have the appropriate resources and plans in place to ensure the safety of everyone under their care. We will continue to work with them to ensure that their emergency plans are current and that they stay informed during emergency situations.

³DCMR 29 Public Welfare (369 Emergency Preparedness and First Aid). Available online at: http://nrckids.org/STATES/DC/dcmr29.htm#0_pgflid-1026108

- 4. In FY 2011, federal grants for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response were reduced by hundreds of millions of dollars, and may be reduced further in the future. In an environment of at uncertain and declining resources, on what basis will the NCR determine its funding priorities? Has the NCR assessed the costs of sustaining prior initiatives? If so, what has been the result of that assessment?**

The NCR is committed to making investments strategically. The Senior Policy Group (SPG) and local jurisdiction Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) continue to hold management review sessions anchored on the priorities identified in the 2010 NCR Strategic Plan. These reviews allow the executive leadership within the NCR to examine the totality of regional efforts in homeland security and emergency management – both UASI funded efforts and efforts funded through other grant streams, state funds, or local funds – and to determine priorities for funding and develop sustainment and maintenance models for critical programs.

A critical and central purpose of these reviews is to determine the required sustainment for programs across the region and to determine what if any resources outside of UASI are available or should be available for sustaining those programs. The SPG and CAOs are working to consolidate programs, transition critical projects from grant funding to local budgets, and to identify areas where priorities should or could shift. According to preliminary estimates, sustainment of all existing projects will cost approximately \$30 million in the next year. The region's local governments are examining several projects to transition to alternative funding sources.

5. **Events such as the August earthquake were similar to 9/11 in the respect that the Region's telecommunications capacity was quickly exceeded. How did this affect public safety agencies' ability to communicate warnings or information to the public? Moreover, isn't the public's inability to communicate emergency information amongst itself also important to a successful response?**

The primary mechanisms used by public safety agencies to communicate with each other and with the public were not affected by the earthquake. While many people have become accustomed to the convenience of mobile phone usage, everyone who uses a mobile phone should understand that those services will be extremely limited or inaccessible during a major event during which many people attempt to place simultaneous calls. This occurs every year on New Year's Eve and is likely to occur during any event that generates an abnormally high volume of mobile phone calls within a given mobile phone network. The earthquake did not cause any damage to telecommunications infrastructure, but the volume of simultaneous calls overloaded mobile phone networks. For this reason, DC and the other jurisdictions in the NCR primarily rely on systems and technology other than mobile phones to meet critical communication needs.

Public safety agencies communicate via land-line phone (the most reliable method), radio communications and through e-mail. In a scenario that disrupts land-line phones or radio communications, a limited number of satellite phones are available for emergency management and executive leadership to communicate. We also exercise our capabilities regularly and as a result, after the earthquake many public safety partners automatically deployed to the Emergency Operations Center housed at the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency to ensure continuity of operations.

Our goal is to develop a culture of preparedness which begins with educating and empowering our residents to take the initiative to make individual and family preparedness plans through grassroots community outreach and education. The NCR complements our outreach efforts by engaging and informing the public through technology mediums. At the local level, DC and the other jurisdictions in the NCR can get information from:

- **Email or text message alerts** by signing up <http://www.capitalert.gov/>, where targeted areas can be sent phone calls to a land line,
- **Local government public information officers** through a joint information center that provides updates from around the region, (<http://www.capitalregionupdates.gov>), and
- **Social media** mediums such as Facebook and Twitter are successfully increasing the presence of public safety and emergency information to the public.

At the federal and national level, there are several resources that provide the public emergency information including:

- **Emergency Alert System (EAS)** which allows everyone from local jurisdictional leadership to the President of the United States to address the American Public during emergencies,

- **Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS)** which disseminates emergency alerts to mobile devices and aggregates information such as local emergency operation centers and the National Weather Service to participating wireless providers, and
- **Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)** which is an alert and warning system that allows local, state, and federal authorities that enable them to alert and warn their respective communities via multiple communications methods.

6. According to the COG's recent review of the response to the January 2011 Snowstorm, your 24/7 emergency operations center (EOC) is taking on two additional staff in order to provide region-wide incident coordination.
- a. Who will be the lead jurisdiction for deciding what will be communicated to all the other jurisdictions, and who will develop and approve the messages and information that would come out of this JIC?
 - b. We are also concerned that there may be some conflict between this coordination center – run under DC's budget – and the Virtual-Joint Information Center run out of Fairfax County. Are you developing procedures and protocols to address any leadership conflicts?

The Steering Committee on Incident Management Response ("Steering Committee"), which represents public safety, emergency management, transportation, federal government, private sector and public officials from NCR jurisdictions recommended establishing the Regional Incident Coordination Program (RIC). The RIC Program will have two staff members, where one employee (Coordinator) oversees the planning, overall coordination and works closely with the NCR jurisdictions, while the other employee (Specialist) is the research focused personnel working behind the scenes to provide support to the Coordinator. The Steering Committee agreed that the Coordinator will be responsible for developing and approving messages that will be communicated to NCR jurisdictions. Communication strategies and protocols will also be developed by the Coordinator within 90 days of hire with guidance from an Ad Hoc Steering Committee consisting of members of the original Steering Committee to oversee and monitor the progress of the program and to receive monthly updates on progress. The Coordinator's anticipated start date will be March 2012. The Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program will be housed at DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency and is neither a joint information center nor an emergency operations center.

The leadership entities for both the Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC) and RIC Program have the same players that have been making collaborative and coordinated decisions in the NCR. Each jurisdiction has designated lead contacts that inform and provide information to the VJIC and the RIC Programs. The Regional Incident Coordination Program and the VJIC are two entities that serve very different purposes. The VJIC is a "one-stop shop" website for the public to access all current NCR event information, news and messaging (available online at <http://www.capitalregionupdates.gov>). Essentially, the VJIC is an information bank, where the direction of information is incoming one way. While the RIC Program is driven to analyze, synthesize, fact check and connect related and relevant information to give local jurisdiction context and regional picture of individual and multiple events. The RIC Program also looks at the patterns of occurring events to determine the root cause and whether they are related to one another in order to understand its regional impact. The information the RIC Program receives originate from local NCR jurisdictions and are consolidated together to determine the regional picture, consequences and impacts to communities and for message development with recommended action steps that are communicated back to local jurisdictions, and inevitably to the general public to aid them in their decision making.

7. To what extent are the region's emergency preparedness entities coordinating with businesses in the National Capital Region (NCR)? How can these partnerships be strengthened and leveraged to improve efficiencies in disaster preparedness and response?

At the regional level, the business community has a seat at the Regional Emergency State Functions groups (i.e. fire, emergency management, transportation and public health) and Regional Programmatic Working Groups (i.e. critical infrastructure protection, health and medical, and exercises and trainings) which is coordinated and managed by the Metropolitan Washington Councils on Government (COG). The business community is also engaged in NCR priorities as participants of the Steering Committee on Incident Management Response that developed the RIC Program.

The District's partnership with the business community are currently being strengthened and leveraged at every opportunity. Our existing efforts are outlined below:

- **Engaging Local Partners:** The District has and continues to engage the business community, in particular the Business Improvement District, Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce and the District's hospitality industry, by involving them in exercises, trainings and planning efforts. The District will have its next city-wide exercise in April 2012, and will use a scenario specifically designed to engage the business community.
- **Establishing Private Sector Partnerships:** DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) recently established the Strategic Analysis and Information Sharing Division which will a) Identify information requirements the private sector needs to protect assets and mitigate threats, b) Develop sector specific mitigation, resiliency, and continuity of operations plans and c) Enter asset information into the Automated Critical Asset Management System (ACAMS, a web-enabled information services portal that helps state and local governments build critical infrastructure/key resource protection programs in their local jurisdictions) to promote asset protection, emergency response, and information sharing.
- **Providing Ward Based Training and Exercises:** HSEMA will also provide stakeholders in each of the District's eight Wards with an opportunity to engage in exercises focusing on emergency preparedness issues germane to each Ward to build community preparedness and address requirements for access and functional needs populations. In addition, HSEMA will work with residents to increase their participation in exercises, which fosters the collaborative process and partnership. HSEMA believes Ward-based training, exercises, and tabletops will build upon and integrate current efforts including the revision of the District Response Plan, Community Emergency Management Plans, Ward based community outreach efforts, special needs planning, as well as outreach efforts to communities where English is a second language.

BACKGROUND
FROM EARTHQUAKES TO TERRORIST ATTACKS: IS THE NATIONAL CAPITAL
REGION PREPARED FOR THE NEXT DISASTER
DECEMBER 9, 2009

Background

The Washington, DC region has experienced a number of emergencies in 2011 such as Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee during September, the East Coast Earthquake in August, and the January 2011 snowstorm. These events highlighted the critical importance of protecting the millions who live and work in the region, as well as the utmost national concern of protecting the seat of federal government and the center of command-and-control for our Nation's military and diplomatic missions. In particular, the unsuccessful responses to recent events like the East Coast earthquake and the January 2011 snowstorm have renewed concerns that there are still crucial leadership gaps and communications challenges, which could result in a national tragedy in the event of a terrorist attack or catastrophic disaster. Both personal and official cell phone services were interrupted following the earthquake, and a cell phone service that was supposed to grant priority to emergency government and public safety calls failed. Further, both events resulted in traffic gridlock region-wide as federal employees and their private sector counterparts clogged the roads for hours, complicating local governments' efforts to effectively respond.

National Capital Region

The NCR is a statutorily-designated region comprised of the District of Columbia (DC), Maryland, Virginia, 11 local jurisdictions, three branches of federal government, and over five million residents.¹ Given the various jurisdictions involved as well as the various man-made and natural threats it faces, the NCR presents unique emergency preparedness and coordination challenges.

The original purposes of the NCR, created in the National Capital Planning Act of 1952, included coordinating and unifying policies in planning federal and local development in the interest of order, public safety, and economic growth.² After the September 11, 2001, attacks in the Washington, DC area, the NCR focused its efforts on strengthening regional coordination in order to improve emergency preparedness and response. Because no single jurisdiction has sufficient capabilities to address all major emergencies and events, jurisdictions rely on one another through mutual aid agreements.

The NCR is supported by multiple organizations and entities:

- The **Office of National Capital Regional Coordination (ONCRC)**, which is located within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), was created in response to the NCR's coordination challenges

¹ *National Capital Region - Office of National Capital Region Coordination*, FEMA, http://www.fema.gov/about/offices/ncr/content_multi_image_0019.shtm (last visited Dec. 1, 2011).

² National Capital Planning Act of 1952, Public Law 82-592, 66 Stat. 781 (codified at 40 U.S.C. § 8711 *et seq.*).

with the federal government.³ The ONCRC facilitates access to federal grants,⁴ assesses NCR homeland security needs, provides NCR components with information and technical support, serves as a federal conduit for NCR component input, works with NCR components and the private sector on training and preparedness activities, and coordinates with other federal agencies on NCR-related issues.⁵

- The **Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG)** is a regional organization of Washington, DC area local governments. The COG was founded in 1957 to serve as the coordination point for many of the NCR's activities, ranging from public health to transportation. The COG includes elected officials from 21 local governments, the state legislatures of Maryland and Virginia, and Congress.⁶
- The District of Columbia, the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Virginia, area local governments, and the ONCRC coordinate homeland security activities in the NCR through the **NCR Homeland Security Program**.⁷
 - This program is headed by the **Senior Policy Group (SPG)**, which consists of senior officials that report directly to the principals of DC, Maryland, Virginia, and ONCRC.⁸ The SPG was established by the Governors of Maryland and Virginia, the Mayor of DC, and the Advisor to the President for Homeland Security to provide "executive level" focus to the region's homeland security issues and to ensure full integration of NCR activities with statewide efforts.⁹ The SPG is charged with defining and implementing strategic objectives, increasing the NCR's regional preparedness and response capabilities, reducing vulnerability to terrorist attack, and overseeing the allocation and implementation of federal grant funding for the NCR.
 - The SPG works closely with the **Chief Administrative Officers Committee (CAO)** to manage NCR homeland security programs. The CAO is a committee within COG composed of operational personnel from local governments, such as chief administrative officers and city and county managers. CAO is supported by four regional working groups and 16 regional emergency support function (R-ESF) committees to advance preparedness in the region.¹⁰

³ Homeland Security Act of 2002 § 882 (codified at 6 U.S.C. § 462).

⁴ FEMA's Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) administers a variety of grant programs including the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI). SHSP grants are used to implement State Homeland Security Strategies and 25 percent of funds must go to law enforcement terrorism prevention activities. UASI grants are used to specifically address the needs of high-threat, high density urban areas and 25 percent of funds must go to law enforcement terrorism prevention activities.

⁵ Homeland Security Act of 2002 § 882.

⁶ *About COG*, METROPOLITAN WASH. COUNCIL OF GOV'TS, <http://www.mwcog.org/about/> (last visited Dec. 1, 2011).

⁷ *About the NCR Program*, NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HOMELAND SECURITY PROGRAM, <http://www.ncrhomelandsecurity.org/overview.asp> (last visited Dec. 1, 2011).

⁸ *The War on Terrorism, How Prepared is the Nation's Capital?: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight of Gov't Mgmt., the Fed. Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov't Affairs*, 109th Cong. 14 (2005), available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109shrg23158/pdf/CHRG-109shrg23158.pdf>.

⁹ NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN, APPENDICES, at H-3 (2010), available at <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/o15fXFc20101001065908.pdf>.

¹⁰ *Id.* at B-3 –B-10

- The SPG consults with the **NCR Emergency Preparedness Council (NCREPC)**, which was established by COG to serve as an advisory body that makes policy recommendations and oversees the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan.¹¹ The NCREPC provides a broader NCR stakeholder perspective and is comprised of local elected officials, directors of emergency management agencies, transportation representatives from DC, Maryland, and Virginia, relevant COG committees, and may include DHS, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), FEMA, the General Services Administration and organizations representing the private and non-profit sectors.¹²

Regional Strategic Planning

In 2004, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that the NCR faced several emergency preparedness challenges. For instance, the NCR lacked preparedness performance standards, a coordinated region-wide plan for enhancing NCR preparedness, and reliable data on available federal grant funds and how they were spent.¹³ GAO recommended that DHS, through the ONCRC, work with the NCR to develop a strategic plan; monitor the plan's implementation to ensure that funds are used in a way that promotes effective expenditures; and identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness.¹⁴

The Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia (OGM Subcommittee) held a series of hearings in July 2005, March 2006, and September 2006 on the preparedness capabilities of the NCR. At the July 2005 hearing, GAO testified that the recommendations from the 2004 GAO report had not yet been fully implemented. More specifically, GAO testified that the regional strategic plan had been drafted but not finalized; that there was still no automated, uniform system to track non-UASI grant funds within the NCR, and more systematic tracking of all homeland security grant funding was needed; and that, to date, no systematic gap analysis has been completed for the region. GAO emphasized the importance of coordinating federal homeland security grants and resources to effectively respond to emergencies.¹⁵

At the March 2006 hearing, the OGM Subcommittee requested that GAO provide an assessment of the NCR's strategic planning efforts. Although GAO commended the ONCRC and the NCR components for working closely on emergency preparedness needs and strategic planning, GAO testified that a strategic plan was still not in place.¹⁶

¹¹ *Id.* at B-2; *National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council – Description*, METROPOLITAN WASH. COUNCIL OF GOV'TS, http://www.mwcog.org/committee/committee/default.asp?COMMITTEE_ID=40 (last visited Dec. 1, 2011).

¹² *National Capital Region Emergency Preparedness Council – Description*.

¹³ U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-04-433, *HOMELAND SECURITY: MANAGEMENT OF FIRST RESPONDER GRANTS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION REFLECTS THE NEED FOR COORDINATED PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE GOALS 36* (2004), available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04433.pdf>.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 37.

¹⁵ *The War on Terrorism, How Prepared is the Nation's Capital?: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight of Gov't Mgmt., the Fed. Workforce, and the District of Columbia*, at 5–6, 30–31.

¹⁶ *The War on Terrorism: How Prepared is the Nation's Capital?—Part II: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight of Gov't Mgmt., the Fed. Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Comm. on Homeland Security and*

In September 2006, the NCR completed the Homeland Security Strategic Plan, which the OGM Subcommittee examined at its hearing that same month. The Plan had four goals—improved coordination, community engagement, prevention and protection, and response and recovery—and each of the goals had objectives and initiatives.¹⁷ GAO generally applauded the plan, but suggested that it could be improved by clarifying the performance measures and incorporating a comprehensive regional risk assessment.¹⁸

The NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan was updated in September 2010 and contains four goals, each with objectives and initiatives: ensure interoperable communications capabilities; enhance information sharing and situational awareness; enhance the protection of critical infrastructure; and develop and maintain regional core capabilities.¹⁹ Investment plans will be completed for the various objectives and initiatives to outline costs and describe how to quantifiably assess implementation, progress, and results over a three year period. Additionally, annual work plans will list the priority projects for that year from the strategic and investment plans, and annual performance management plans will include metrics and indicators to monitor and evaluate progress in implementation.²⁰ GAO will provide a preliminary assessment of the 2010 Plan at this hearing.

Decision-Making in a Crisis

State and local governments are responsible for operational planning and incident management for their respective jurisdictions within the NCR and serve as the primary decision-makers during a crisis. Authorities within these jurisdictions manage operations and incidents in accordance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Framework (NRF). Regardless of the size or scope of incidents, NIMS provides the template for managing incidents, while the NRF outlines the structure and mechanisms for incident response.²¹

For determining “who is in charge” during an incident, the NCR relies on the procedures of the Incident Command System (ICS) contained in NIMS. The ICS delineates responsibilities based on where the incident occurs, the type of incident, and the stage of the incident.²² For example, during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Pentagon, the Chief of the Arlington County Fire Department was designated the Incident Commander and NCR partners provided

Gov't Affairs, 109th Cong. 12–13 (2006), available at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/congress/senate/pdf/109hr/27755.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Securing the National Capital Region: An Examination of the NCR's Strategic Plan: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Oversight of Gov't Mgmt., the Fed. Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Comm. on Homeland Security and Gov't Affairs*, 109th Cong. (2006), available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-109shrg30603/html/CHRG-109shrg30603.htm>.

¹⁸ U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO-06-1096T, HOMELAND SECURITY: ASSESSMENT OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION STRATEGIC PLAN 2–3 (2006), available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d061096t.pdf>.

¹⁹ NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN 7–14 (2010), available at <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/pF5fXfG20101001065843.pdf>.

²⁰ *Id.* at 16–17.

²¹ NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGIC PLAN APPENDICES at C-3 (2010).

²² *Id.* at C-4.

operational and resource support. When state and local response capabilities are overwhelmed during an incident, the Governor of the state, or the Mayor of DC, can request federal assistance. If the President authorizes federal assistance, FEMA coordinates federal resources to support the state in disaster response and recovery efforts.

The recent emergency response efforts to the January 26, 2011, snowstorm and the East Coast Earthquake on August 23, 2011, renewed concerns with the NCR's ability to quickly gain the regional situational awareness that is critical to decision-making and to disseminate clear and consistent messages to the public. The numerous jurisdictions in the NCR, without clear lines of decision-making authority, create particular challenges to quick response. These challenges have led to discussion of fundamental restructuring of NCR emergency management to provide for more centralized decision-making during unexpected or rapidly evolving regional incidents.²³

Communication

The NCR jurisdictions have established numerous systems to communicate in the event of an emergency situation. These communication systems focus on providing situational awareness among NCR jurisdictions and their first responders, a means of collaborative decision-making among and across multiple jurisdictions and agencies within the region, and warning and information from these jurisdictions to the public and the news media.

All emergency management operations in the NCR are equipped with Web Emergency Operation Centers (WebEOCs), which allow information to be securely shared. However, there currently is no jurisdiction or agency with the capability to provide situational awareness to the whole region.²⁴ With respect to transportation situational awareness, the NCR created the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) program in 2009 which is supported by the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS), an automated system that compiles and consolidates real time traffic and transit information. The transportation departments of the District, Maryland and Virginia jointly fund and staff the operations of MATOC to operate 16 hours a day and five days a week. However, both programs have not been fully developed. At the time of the January 26, 2011, snowstorm, MATOC was sending information only to transportation officials; it has since started sending information to emergency management officials as well.²⁵

Another tool is the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS), which allows regional decision makers to consult with each other before and during emergency situations.²⁶ However, the January 26, 2011, snowstorm revealed that improvements are needed

²³ See REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE 2 (2011), available at <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/o15eWVs20111109124445.pdf> (concluding that centralizing NCR incident management may not be feasible or desirable); *contra* Initial Summary Comments on the draft of the Incident Management and Response Report from Dave Snyder, Vice Mayor of Falls Church, Virginia (Oct. 18, 2011) (on file with the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee) (arguing that fundamental institutional restructuring to centralize decision-making and communication are needed).

²⁴ REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE at 1.

²⁵ *Id.* at 10-11, 16.

²⁶ *Id.* at 2, 12.

to this system to enhance information sharing and to help officials make better informed decisions.²⁷

Finally, emergency management offices in the NCR employ Public Information Officers (PIOs), who disseminate information before, during, and after emergencies and major events through outreach to the media, press releases, advisories, government web sites, and social media programs. However, no central source exists where regional PIOs can coordinate during emergencies and share real-time information with other officials, area residents, and the media.²⁸ The NCR is developing a Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC) to serve as a news aggregator, automatically posting information from all local governments in the NCR. The objective of the VJIC, which will be operated by Fairfax County on behalf of the region, is for the rapid release of regional emergency information to the public and the media, including coordinated messaging. Furthermore, it will provide status updates on traffic, weather, and utilities.²⁹

Federal Workforce Emergency Policies

OPM is responsible for providing dismissal and closure policy guidance to federal agencies in the Washington, DC area during emergencies. However, OPM's guidance is limited because it only applies to Executive Agencies inside the "beltway" and covered agencies have the authority to determine their own operating status.³⁰ OPM serves as the federal point of contact with municipal governments and regional entities and consults with these groups prior to making a decision regarding operating status.³¹ When a decision is made, OPM notifies the White House, Chief Human Capital Officers, the Legislative Branch, and NCR components, and posts the announcement on its website.³² OPM has had some recent difficulties responding to regional events impacting federal operations in the Washington, DC area. For example, during the August 2011 earthquake, OPM faced challenges in obtaining situational awareness, which prevented it from quickly determining and announcing dismissal guidance.³³ Furthermore, OPM failed to release timely information during the January 26, 2011, snowstorm, which left many employees who left as the snow started stuck in traffic for many hours.³⁴

²⁷ *Id.* at 17.

²⁸ *Id.* at 2.

²⁹ *Id.* at 12.

³⁰ OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MGMT., WASHINGTON, DC AREA DISMISSAL AND CLOSURE PROCEDURES 1 (2011), available at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>. Agencies located in adjacent areas outside the beltway may choose to apply the same guidance. *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² Information provided to Committee staff by OPM on November 22, 2011.

³³ *Streamlining Emergency Management, Improving Preparedness, and Cutting Costs: Hearing Before House Subcomm. on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Mgmt., Comm. on Transportation and Infrastructure*, 112th Cong. 2-3 (2011) (written statement of Dean Hunter, Deputy Director, Facilities, Security, and Contracting, OPM), available at <http://democrats.transportation.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-economic-development-public-buildings-and-emergency-management-hearing->

³⁴ REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE at 5.

On December 1, 2011, OPM released a revised dismissal and closure policy to provide new and updated operating status announcements. These announcements now include the following options:

- Staggered early departure a specific number of hours earlier than an employee's normal work schedule;
- Staggered early departure by a specific time;
- Shelter-in-place; and
- Immediate departure of employees from their offices.

Additionally, the policy removes unscheduled telework as an option when OPM calls for early departure.³⁵ The revised policy is intended to improve the OPM decision framework, and ensure the safety of federal employees and continuity of government operations.

Report of the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response

Following the January 26, 2011, snowstorm, the COG established a Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response to identify improvements to regional incident management. In November, the Steering Committee recommended providing funding to operate the MATOC 24 hours a day and seven days a week; upgrading the RICCS system; and improving communication between employers, schools, and utility providers.³⁶ Regarding decision making, the Steering Committee recommended that officials expand mutual aid plans and create both a Regional Incident Coordination Program, which would be responsible for monitoring the region, aggregating and distributing information, and a Regional Incident Coordination Oversight Group.³⁷ Regarding communication among NCR stakeholders, the Steering Committee recommended that emergency managers share information between WebEOCs, transportation officials integrate their data into WebEOCs, emergency managers and transportation officials conduct regional exercises to test plans and coordination capabilities, and PIOs use the VJIC and social media to communicate between officials and to the public, as well as educate the public on sheltering in place.³⁸ The COG accepted the Steering Committee's recommendations and plans to use UASI grant funds to establish two full-time positions to monitor the region and aggregate and share information with officials via the Regional Incident Coordination Program. The COG also plans to use UASI funds to develop an emergency application for smart phones and to support the RITIS.³⁹

GAO Request

In October, the chairs of the SDRIA and OGM subcommittees transmitted a joint request that GAO further examine effectiveness and efficiency of our current system of all-hazards

³⁵ OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MGMT., WASHINGTON, DC AREA DISMISSAL AND CLOSURE PROCEDURES (2011), *available at* <http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/dismissal.pdf>.

³⁶ REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSE at 6–21.

³⁷ *Id.* at 27–28.

³⁸ *Id.* at 10–15.

³⁹ Information provided to Committee staff by the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response on November 28, 2011.

preparation and protection of the NCR. We asked GAO to assess the roles and responsibilities of the ONCRC and the NCR in preparedness and response activities, especially in rapid, no-notice events that lack a single incident point and impact the whole region; the region's strategic planning, communication capabilities among key stakeholders; and areas to improve efficiencies and effectiveness in leadership, coordination, and decision-making authority in a crisis. GAO has accepted this request and will begin its work in the spring of 2012.

Relevant Legislation

Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296), was signed into law by President George W. Bush on November 25, 2002. Section 882 of the law established the Office for National Capital Region Coordination and provided responsibilities, including overseeing and coordinating Federal programs for and relationships with State, local, and regional authorities in the NCR.

Additional Information

Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security, United States Senate, *Preparing the National Capital Region for a Pandemic*, S. Hrg. 110-451, September 28, 2007.

Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Homeland Security, United States Senate, *Securing the National Capital Region: An Examination of the NCR's Strategic Plan*, S. Hrg. 109-943, September 28, 2006.

Committee on Government Reform, United States House of Representatives, *Regional Insecurity: DHS Grants to the National Capital Area*, S. Hrg. 109-193, June 15, 2006.

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**STATEMENT
OF
DAVID F. SNYDER
ON
NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND PUBLIC
COMMUNICATIONS**

On September 11, 2001, and in connection with many incidents since, among them “tractor man” and this year’s snow storm and earthquake, the National Capital Region (“the Region”) emergency decision-making proved fragmented and ineffective; the Region’s transportation system broke down; little useful public information was disseminated; and much of the public did exactly the wrong thing, actually putting people in harm’s way. So far, this flawed response to regional incidents has not, itself, caused loss of life, but the next regional incident, unless handled differently, might have tragic results.

Despite the dedication and hard work of the Region’s elected officials and public servants, these and other incidents demonstrate that the Region has a deeply flawed model for emergency decision-making and public communications that fails when regional incidents are either unexpected or develop rapidly in an unexpected way. This issue would be significant enough for any metropolitan region the size of Washington, DC, but it becomes a matter of utmost national concern when it involves, as it does here, the seat of the national government and the home to universities, major tourist attractions, embassies, and international organizations.

The Region's Emergency Decision-Making Structures and Model Are Deeply Flawed.

To manage regional incidents, the Region currently relies on a model of decision-making and public communications dissemination that is based on conference calls and ad hoc communications and coordination. When there is adequate time for this model to work, the Region does well enough, but when a regional incident is unexpected or develops in ways unforeseen, it breaks down. The failure of this model is not the result of a lack of competent and dedicated public servants, but instead results from the absence of a single point of regional decision-making and an accountable regional staff responsible for overall incident management and communication with the public.

In addition to flaws in the regional decision-making model for management and public communication, there are specific gaps and weaknesses. For example, private employers are not tied in effectively with government, resulting either in the absence of or even the incorrect release of decisions and information to their employees. This is particularly important considering that in many regional incident scenarios, the sheltering-in-place message needs to be communicated to and followed by all sectors of the region, not just government entities.

Regional Efforts Have So Far Failed to Address the Flaws in the Decision-Making Structures and Model.

Since September 11, 2001, there have been many regional emergency planning initiatives, drills, studies and reports. But all of these efforts, including the October 26, 2011 Report of the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response ("Steering Committee Report") do not effectively deal with the flawed decision-making model that is the basis for the region's failures.

The Steering Committee Report accurately describes and admits, as others have done before, the continuing poor performance of the Region's emergency response and public communications organizational and management structures during *unexpected or rapidly evolving regional incidents*. Examples from this year alone include the January 26, 2011 snow event, the August 23, 2011 earthquake,

and the October 10, 2011 incident in which a person was struck on Metro's Orange Line. As the Steering Committee Report correctly states: "...the region has performed well in preparing and responding to planned events and many forecasted storms, but it must do better during unexpected events, such as storms that become stronger than forecast, earthquakes and potential terrorist attacks." Page 3-4.

The fundamental flaws underlying this poor performance fall into two categories: ineffective regional operations coordination and ineffective regional public communications—both the result of a fragmented structural decision-making model, not the often-heroic efforts of agency staffs. Regrettably, after documenting the poor performance, the Steering Committee Report then fails to meaningfully address the underlying structural problems, perpetuating with only modest modification, existing decision-making and public communication institutional structures that have shown repeatedly they do not—and cannot—work.

The Steering Committee Report rejects fundamental institutional restructuring and adoption of a new model of decision-making that would assure more rational and coordinated decision-making and communication. In this regard, the report's discussion under Focus Area 4, Strengthen and Focus Decision-Making, is particularly telling, and this sentence more than any other: "Based on its review, the Committee finds no new, applicable decision-making authority to propose to the NCR." Page 24.

Contrary to the Steering Committee's over-riding decision to accept the status quo, our fundamental objective should be eliminating the Region's current structural barriers to effective decision-making through the adoption of a different model. Here are just two of the possible approaches that could be followed:

- Authorize an agency or person to function at the top of the decision-making pyramid for the Region. All other agencies and personnel would be subject to direction from this chief body or individual. This authority might be bestowed either by agreement of the regional parties, by interstate compact, or by direction from Congress.

- Require that the key public entities agree to serve as a board of directors to set in place plans and protocols and designate and fund an accountable, regional professional staff with the responsibility to provide the Region's management for operations and public communications when a regional event occurs. By prior agreement, the directions this staff issues would be carried out by the staffs of the various agencies.

Either of these approaches would actually address the flaws in the current model. The Steering Committee Report's recommendations, however, do not. Instead, the report only endorses modest improvements now being pursued (Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination and the Virtual Joint Communications Center) and adds another (Regional Incident Coordination Program) that do not correct the fundamental flaws in the model. As the Steering Committee Report states: "...the Committee does not recommend that officials pursue the creation of a new central, decision-making authority." Page 26.

Flaws in the Public Communication Model Are Particularly Important.

Focus Area 2 of the Steering Committee Report, including its discussion of the consistent failures in regional public information, is particularly critical. Again, instead of addressing the fragmented structure and decision-making model in the region for communications messaging, the report simply calls for more ways to "share" information and emphasizes the multiple channels for putting information out. That is not the issue.

The fundamental regional communications issue is the absence of a designated staff to decide on the correct regional messages and assure that they are effectively distributed. Again the report falls short, recommending only the creation of a Virtual Joint Information Center (V-JIC) with no single, accountable staff in 24/7 charge of deciding what the regional message is that will be put out through the V-JIC or through all other media. In essence, without a change in the decision-making structure and model, this is simply an electronic version of the same fragmented decision-making for public communications now in place and one that has repeatedly failed, again despite the strong efforts of agency staffs.

The report's position that the V-JIC really solves the public communications problem is nothing more than the electronic equivalent of a conference call instead of an in-person meeting to make regional operational decisions during a crisis. The public communications recommendation therefore fails to address the fundamental flaw with the current decision-making structure that has no single, accountable entity in effective charge of quickly deciding the regional public message(s) and assuring they are communicated through all appropriate channels.

The Region's underlying decision-making structures and models have failed the public in connection with unexpected or rapidly evolving incidents, despite having been updated with technology, and these structures and models likely will continue to fall short in similar circumstances. Unfortunately, the recent Steering Committee Report fails to effectively address these fundamental flaws, by endorsing the existing regional decision-making structures and models, albeit with some modest improvements.

Conclusion

Regional incidents that are either unexpected or that rapidly develop in an unforeseen way regularly overwhelm the National Capital Region's ability to respond to them and communicate effectively with the public. This is a direct result of failed decision-making structures and models. Unfortunately, the Region's past efforts and the recent Steering Committee Report, do not recommend better, more effective decision-making structures and models for the region. The inability to provide a solution to the core issue—namely the absence of a single and accountable regional decision-making authority for regional response and public messaging during a regional incident—will likely assure that the Region will fail its people again when unexpected or rapidly evolving regional incidents occur. Prompt and dramatic action to change the Region's decision-making structures and model is essential to prevent future failures and needless loss of life, economic harm, and widespread disruption.

Mr. Snyder is currently the Vice Mayor of the City of Falls Church, serving in his fifth, four-year City Council term. He has previously been both Mayor and Vice Mayor. He serves on, and has chaired, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board, the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, and the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission. He is also a member of the Council of Government's Emergency Preparedness Council and is a life member of a Washington, DC-area rescue squad. This statement reflects his own views.

