



The Historical Context of Emergency Management

What You Will Learn

- The early roots of emergency management.
- The modern history of emergency management in the United States.
- How FEMA came to exist, and how it evolved during the 1980s, 1990s, and the early twenty-first century.
- The sudden changes to modern emergency management that have resulted from the September 11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

Introduction

Emergency management has ancient roots. Early hieroglyphics depict cavemen trying to deal with disasters. The Bible speaks of the many disasters that befell civilizations. In fact, the account of Moses parting the Red Sea could be interpreted as the first attempt at flood control. As long as there have been disasters, individuals and communities have tried to do something about them; however, organized attempts at dealing with disasters did not occur until much later in modern history.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the cultural, organizational, and legislative history of modern emergency management in the United States. Some of the significant events and people that shaped the emergency management discipline over the years are reviewed. Understanding the history and evolution of emergency management is important because, at different times, the concepts of emergency management have been applied differently. The definition of *emergency management* can be extremely broad and all-encompassing. Unlike other more structured disciplines, it has expanded and contracted in response to events, congressional desires, and leadership styles.

In the most recent history, events and leadership, more than anything else, have brought about dramatic changes to emergency management in the United States. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, led to massive organizational changes and programmatic shifts in emergency management. Many believe that these changes undermined the effective national system of emergency management that had evolved during the 1990s and led to the profound failure of all levels of emergency management in response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

A simple definition is that *emergency management* is the discipline dealing with risk and risk avoidance. Risk represents a broad range of issues and includes an equally diverse set of players. The range of situations that could possibly involve emergency management or the emergency management system is extensive. This supports the premise that emergency management is integral to the security of everyone's daily lives and should be integrated into daily decisions and not just called on during times of disasters.

Emergency management is an essential role of government. The Constitution tasks the states with responsibility for public health and safety—hence the responsibility for public risks—with the federal government in a secondary role. The federal role is to help when the state, local, or individual entity is overwhelmed. This fundamental philosophy continues to guide the government function of emergency management.

Based on this strong foundation, the validity of emergency management as a government function has never been in question. Entities and organizations fulfilling the emergency management function existed at the state and local level long before the federal government became involved. But, as events occurred, as political philosophies changed, and as the nation developed, the federal role in emergency management steadily increased.

In the aftermath of the failed response to Hurricane Katrina, extensive discussion has centered about emergency management, particularly the response and recovery functions. An ever-increasing presence of nonprofit organizations delivering support to their particular constituencies after Katrina has given rise to interest on the part of the nonprofit community to take on increased responsibility for disaster response. This interest can best be attributed to the underlying belief that the federal government no longer can be relied on in disaster response and recovery. Both the actions of Congress and potential changes in the political leadership at the federal level may have a very strong influence on how this plays out in the near future.

Early History: 1800–1950

In 1803, a congressional act was passed to provide financial assistance to a New Hampshire town that had been devastated by fire. This is the first example of the federal government becoming involved in a local disaster. It was not until the administration of Franklin Roosevelt began to use government as a tool to stimulate the economy that a significant investment in emergency management functions was made by the federal government.

During the 1930s, both the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the Bureau of Public Roads were given authority to make disaster loans available for repair and reconstruction of certain public facilities after disasters. The Tennessee Valley Authority was created during this time to produce hydroelectric power and, as a secondary purpose, reduce flooding in the region.

A significant piece of emergency management legislation was passed during this time. The Flood Control Act of 1934 gave the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers increased authority to design and build flood control projects. This act had a significant and long-lasting impact on emergency management in this country. The act reflected a philosophy that humans could control nature, thereby eliminating the risk of floods. Although this program would promote economic and population growth patterns along the nation's rivers, history has proven that this attempt at emergency management was shortsighted and costly.

The Cold War and the Rise of Civil Defense: 1950s

The next notable time frame for the evolution of emergency management occurs during the 1950s. The era of the Cold War presented the principal disaster risk as the potential for nuclear war and nuclear fallout. Civil defense programs proliferated across communities during this time. Individuals and communities were encouraged to build bomb shelters to protect themselves and their families from nuclear attack from the Soviet Union.

Almost every community had a civil defense director, and most states had someone who represented civil defense in their state government hierarchy. By profession, these individuals usually were retired military personnel, and their operations received little political or financial support from their state or local governments. Equally often, the civil defense responsibility was in addition to other duties.

Federal support for these activities was vested in the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), an organization with little staff or financial resources, whose main role was to provide technical assistance. In reality, the local and state civil defense directors were the first recognized face of emergency management in the United States.

A companion office to the FCDA, the Office of Defense Mobilization, was established in the Department of Defense (DoD). The primary functions of this office were to allow for quick mobilization of materials and production and stockpiling of critical materials in the event of a war. It included a function called *emergency preparedness*. In 1958, these two offices were merged into the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization.

The 1950s were a quiet time for large-scale natural disasters. Hurricane Hazel, a Category 4 hurricane, inflicted significant damage in Virginia and North Carolina in 1954; Hurricane Diane hit several mid-Atlantic and northeastern states in 1955; and Hurricane Audrey, the most damaging of the three storms, struck Louisiana and North Texas in 1957. Congressional response to these disasters followed a familiar pattern of ad hoc legislation to provide increased disaster assistance funds to the affected areas.

As the 1960s started, three major natural disaster events occurred. In a sparsely populated area of Montana, the Hebgen Lake earthquake, measuring 7.3 on the Richter scale, brought attention to the fact that the nation's earthquake risk went beyond the California borders. Also in 1960, Hurricane Donna hit the west coast of Florida, and Hurricane Carla blew into Texas in 1961. The incoming Kennedy administration decided to make a change to the federal approach. In 1961, it created the Office of Emergency Preparedness inside the White House to deal with natural disasters. Civil defense responsibilities remained in the Office of Civil Defense within the DOD.

Natural Disasters Bring Changes to Emergency Management: 1960s

As the 1960s progressed, the United States would be struck by a series of major natural disasters. The Ash Wednesday storm in 1962 devastated more than 620 miles of shoreline on the East Coast, producing more than \$300 million in damages. In 1964, an

earthquake measuring 9.2 on the Richter scale in Prince William Sound, Alaska, became front-page news throughout America and the world. This quake generated a tsunami that affected beaches as far down the Pacific Coast as California and killed 123 people. Hurricane Betsey struck in 1965, and Hurricane Camille in 1969, killing and injuring hundreds of people and causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage along the Gulf Coast.

As with previous disasters, the response was passage of ad hoc legislation for funds; however, the financial losses resulting from Hurricane Betsey's path across Florida and Louisiana started a discussion of insurance as a protection against future floods and a potential method to reduce continued government assistance after disasters. Congressional interest was prompted by the unavailability of flood protection insurance on the standard homeowner policy. Where this type of insurance was available, it was cost prohibitive. These discussions eventually led to passage of the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, which created the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

Congressman Hale Boggs of Louisiana is appropriately credited with steering this unique legislation through Congress. Unlike previous emergency management/disaster legislation, this bill sought to do something about the risk before the disaster struck. It brought the concept of *community-based mitigation* into the practice of emergency management. In simple terms, when a community joined the NFIP, in exchange for making federally subsidized, low-cost flood insurance available to its citizens, the community had to pass an ordinance restricting future development in its floodplains. The federal government also agreed to help local communities by producing maps of their community's floodplains.

The NFIP began as a voluntary program as part of a political compromise that Boggs reached with then-Senator Tom Eagleton of Missouri. As a voluntary program, few communities joined. After Hurricane Camille struck the Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi coasts in 1969, the goals of the NFIP to protect people's financial investments and reduce government disaster expenditures were not being met. It took Hurricane Agnes devastating Florida for a change to occur.

George Bernstein, brought down from New York by President Nixon to run the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA) within the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), proposed linking the mandatory purchase of flood insurance to all homeowner loans backed by federal mortgages. This change created an incentive for communities to join the NFIP because a significant portion of the home mortgage market was federally backed. This change became the Flood Insurance Act of 1972.

It is important to note how local and state governments choose to administer this flood risk program. Civil defense departments usually had responsibility to deal with risks and disasters. Although the NFIP dealt with risk and risk avoidance, responsibilities for the NFIP were sent to local planning departments and state departments of natural resources. This reaction is one illustration of the fragmented and piecemeal approach to emergency management that evolved during the 1960s and 1970s.

Critical Thinking

Can you think of any positive or negative aspects of disaster-driven evolutionary changes in the United States' emergency management system? What about for changes that occur in the absence of initiating disaster events?

The Call for a National Focus on Emergency Management: 1970s

In the 1970s, responsibility for emergency management functions was evident in more than five federal departments and agencies, including the Department of Commerce (weather, warning, and fire protection), the General Services Administration (continuity of government, stockpiling, and federal preparedness), the Treasury Department (import investigation), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (power plants), and HUD (flood insurance and disaster relief).

With passage of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, prompted by the previously mentioned hurricanes and the San Fernando earthquake of 1971, HUD possessed the most significant authority for natural disaster response and recovery through the NFIP under the FIA and the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (disaster response, temporary housing, and assistance). On the military side, there existed the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (nuclear attack) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (flood control); however, taking into account the broad range of risks and potential disasters, more than 100 federal agencies were involved in some aspect of risk and disasters.

This pattern continued down to the state and, to a lesser extent, local levels. Parallel organizations and programs added to confusion and turf wars, especially during disaster response efforts. The states and the governors grew increasingly frustrated over this fragmentation. In the absence of one clear federal lead agency in emergency management, a group of state civil defense directors, led by Lacy Suiter of Tennessee and Erie Jones of Illinois, launched an effort through the National Governor's Association to consolidate federal emergency management activities in one agency.

With the election of a fellow state governor, President Jimmy Carter of Georgia, the effort gained steam. President Carter came to Washington committed to streamlining all government agencies and seeking more control over key administrative processes. The state directors lobbied the National Governor's Association (NGA) and Congress for a consolidation of federal emergency management functions. When the Carter administration proposed such an action, it met with a receptive audience in the Senate. Congress already had expressed concerns about the lack of a coherent federal policy and the inability of states to know to whom to turn in the event of an emergency.

The federal agencies involved were not as excited about the prospect. A fundamental law of bureaucracy is a continued desire to expand control and authority, not to lose control. In a consolidation of this sort, there would be losers and winners. There was a question of which federal department or agency should house the new consolidated structure. As the debate continued, the newly organized National Association of State Directors of Emergency Preparedness championed the creation of a new independent organization, an idea that was quickly supported by the Senate.

In the midst of these discussions, an accident occurred at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant in Pennsylvania that added impetus to the consolidation effort. This accident brought national media attention to the lack of adequate off-site preparedness around commercial nuclear power plants and the role of the federal government in responding to such an event.

On June 19, 1978, President Carter transmitted to the Congress the Reorganization Plan Number 3 (3 CFR 1978, 5 U.S. Code 903). The intent of this plan was to consolidate emergency preparedness, mitigation, and response activities into one federal

emergency management organization. The president stated that the plan would establish the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and that the FEMA director would report directly to the president.

Reorganization Plan Number 3 transferred the following agencies or functions to FEMA: National Fire Prevention Control Administration (Department of Commerce), Federal Insurance Administration (HUD), Federal Broadcast System (Executive Office of the President), Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (DoD), Federal Disaster Assistance Administration (HUD), and the Federal Preparedness Agency (GSA).

Additional transfers of emergency preparedness and mitigation functions to FEMA were

- Oversight of the Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (Office of Science and Technology Policy).
- Coordination of dam safety (Office of Science and Technology Policy).
- Assistance to communities in the development of readiness plans for severe weather-related emergencies.
- Coordination of natural and nuclear disaster warning systems.
- Coordination of preparedness and planning to reduce the consequences of major terrorist incidents.

Reorganization Plan Number 3 articulated several fundamental organizational principles:

First, Federal authorities to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to major civil emergencies should be supervised by one official responsible to the President and given attention by other officials at the highest levels. Second, an effective civil defense system requires the most efficient use of all available resources. Third, whenever possible, emergency responsibilities should be extensions of federal agencies. Fourth, federal hazard mitigation activities should be closely linked with emergency preparedness and response functions.

Subsequent to congressional review and concurrence, the Federal Emergency Management Agency was officially established by Executive Order 12127 of March 31, 1979 (44 FR 19367, 3 CFR, Comp., p. 376). A second Executive Order, 12148, mandated reassignment of agencies, programs, and personnel into the new entity FEMA.

Creating the new organization made sense, but integrating the diverse programs, operations, policies, and people into a cohesive operation was a much bigger task than realized when the consolidation began. It would take extraordinary leadership and a common vision. The consolidation also created immediate political problems. By consolidating these programs and the legislation that created them, FEMA would have to answer to 23 committees and subcommittees in Congress with oversight of its programs. Unlike most other federal agencies, it would have no organic legislation to support its operations and no clear champions to look to during the congressional appropriations process.

In addition, President Carter had problems finding a director for this new organization. No large constituent group was identified with emergency management. Furthermore, the administration was facing major problems with Congress and the public because of the Iranian hostage crisis. President Carter finally reached into his own cabinet and asked John Macy, then head of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), to become director of FEMA.

John Macy's task was to unify an organization that was not only physically separated—parts of the agency were located in five different buildings around Washington—but also philosophically separate. Programs focused on nuclear war preparations were combined with programs focused on a new consciousness of the environment and floodplain management. Macy focused his efforts by emphasizing the similarities between natural hazards preparedness and civil defense by developing a new concept called the *integrated emergency management system* (IEMS). This system was an all-hazards approach that included direction, control, and warning as functions common to all emergencies from small, isolated events, to the ultimate emergency of nuclear attack.

For all his good efforts, FEMA continued to operate as individual entities pursuing their own interests and answering to their different congressional bosses. It was a period of few major disasters, so virtually nobody noticed this problem of disjointedness.

Civil Defense Reappears as Nuclear Attack Planning: 1980s

The early and mid-1980s saw FEMA facing many challenges but no significant natural disasters. The absence of the need for a coherent federal response to disasters, as was called for by Congress when it approved the establishment of FEMA, allowed FEMA to continue to exist as an organization of many parts.

In 1982, President Reagan appointed Louis O. Guiffrida as director of FEMA. Guiffrida, a California friend of Ed Meese, one of the president's closest advisors, had a background in training and terrorism preparedness at the state government level. General Guiffrida proceeded to reorganize FEMA consistent with administration policies and his background. Top priority was placed on government preparedness for a nuclear attack. Resources within the agency were realigned, and additional budget authority was sought to enhance and elevate the national security responsibilities of the agency. With no real role for the states in these national security activities, the state directors who had lobbied for the creation of FEMA saw their authority and federal funding decline.

Guiffrida also angered one of the only other visible constituents of the agency, the fire services community. Guiffrida diminished the authority of the U.S. Fire Administration by making it part of FEMA's Directorate of Training and Education. The newly acquired campus at Emmetsburg, Maryland, was intended to become the preeminent National Emergency Training Center (NETC).

During Guiffrida's tenure, FEMA faced several unusual challenges that stretched its authority, including asserting FEMA into the lead role for continuity of civilian government in the aftermath of a nuclear attack, managing the federal response to the contamination at Love Canal and Times Beach, Missouri, and the Cuban refugee crisis. Although Guiffrida managed to bring the agency physically together in a new headquarters building in southwest Washington, severe morale problems persisted.

Dislike of Guiffrida's style and questions about FEMA's operations came to the attention of U.S. Representative Al Gore of Tennessee, who then served on the House Science and Technology Committee. As the congressional hearings proceeded, the Department of Justice and a grand jury began investigations of senior political officials at FEMA. These inquiries led to the resignation of Guiffrida and top aides in response to a variety of charges, including misuse of government funds, but the shake-up marked a milestone of sorts: FEMA and emergency management had made it into the comic strip *Doonesbury*.

President Reagan then selected General Julius Becton to be director of FEMA. General Becton was a retired military general and had been the director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the State Department. General Becton is credited uniformly with restoring integrity to the operations and appropriations of the agency. From a policy standpoint, he continued to emphasize the programs of his predecessor but in a less visible manner. Becton expanded the duties of FEMA when he was asked by the DoD to take over the program dealing with the off-site cleanup of chemical stockpiles on DoD bases. This program was fraught with problems, and bad feelings existed between the communities and the bases over the funds available to the communities for the cleanup. FEMA had minimal technical expertise to administer this program and was dependent on the DoD and the Army for the funding. This situation led to political problems for the agency and did not lead to significant advancements in local emergency management operations, as promised by the DoD.

At one point in his tenure, General Becton ranked the programs in FEMA by level of importance. Of the more than 20 major programs, the earthquake, hurricane, and flood programs ranked near the bottom. This priority seems logical, based on the absence of any significant natural hazards, but this situation is noteworthy in the context that it continued the pattern of isolating resources for national security priorities without recognizing the potential of a major natural disaster.

This issue was raised by then Senator Al Gore in hearings on FEMA's responsibilities as lead agency for the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP). Senator Gore, reacting to a scientific report that said there could be up to 200,000 casualties from an earthquake occurring on the New Madrid fault, believed that FEMA's priorities were misplaced. The legislation that created the NEHRP called on FEMA to develop a plan for how the federal government would respond to a catastrophic earthquake. This Federal Response Plan would later become the operating Bible for all the federal agencies response operations. Senator Gore concluded that FEMA needed to spend more time working with its federal, state, and local partners on natural hazards planning.

An Agency in Trouble: 1989–1992

As Congress debated, and finally passed, major reform of federal disaster policy as part of the Stewart McKinney–Robert Stafford Act, the promise of FEMA and its ability to support a national emergency management system remained in doubt.

As the 1980s closed, FEMA was an agency in trouble. It suffered from severe morale problems, disparate leadership, and conflicts with its partners at the state and local level over agency spending and priorities.

With a new administration being formed, President George H. W. Bush named Wallace Stickney as director of FEMA. Stickney was from New Hampshire and a friend of John Sununu, who was then President George H. W. Bush's chief of staff. Stickney came to the director's position having been a staff person at the New England Regional Office of the Environmental Protection Agency and a volunteer fireman. His emergency management credentials were minimal, and his selection was poorly received by many of the state directors. At the same time, the political appointees named to FEMA's regional director positions—the first line of FEMA's response system—were equally lacking in emergency management experience. These appointments would prove to have dire consequences for FEMA and the American public.

In 1989, two devastating natural disasters called the continued existence of FEMA into question. In September, Hurricane Hugo slammed into North Carolina and South Carolina after first hitting Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. It was the worst hurricane in a decade, with more than \$15 billion in damages and 85 deaths. FEMA was slow to respond, waiting for the process to work and the governors to decide what to do. Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) personally called the FEMA director and asked for help, but the agency moved slowly. Hollings went on national television to berate FEMA in some of the most colorful language ever, calling the agency the “sorriest bunch of bureaucratic jackasses.”

Less than a month later, the Bay Area of California was rocked by the Loma Prieta earthquake as the 1989 World Series got under way in Oakland Stadium. FEMA was not prepared to respond, but it was lucky. Although FEMA had spent the last decade focused on nuclear attack planning, FEMA’s state partners in emergency management, especially in California, had been preparing for a more realistic risk, an earthquake. Damages were high, but few lives were lost. This outcome was a testament to good mitigation practices in building codes and construction that were adopted in California, and some good luck relative to the time when the earthquake hit.

A few years later, FEMA was not so lucky. In August 1992, Hurricane Andrew struck Florida and Louisiana and Hurricane Iniki struck Hawaii within months of each other. FEMA was not ready, and neither were FEMA’s partners at the state level. The agency’s failure to respond was witnessed by Americans all across the country as major news organizations followed the crisis. The efficacy of FEMA as the national emergency response agency was in doubt. President Bush dispatched then secretary of transportation Andrew Card to take over the response operation and sent in the military.

It was not just FEMA that failed in Hurricane Andrew, it was the process and the system. In Hurricane Andrew, FEMA recognized the need to apply all its resources to the response and began to use its national security assets for the first time in a natural disaster response—but it was too late. Starting with Hurricane Hugo, public concern over natural disasters was high. People wanted and expected the government to be there to help in their time of need. FEMA seemed incapable of carrying out the essential government function of emergency management.

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki, there were calls for abolishing FEMA. Investigations by the General Accounting Office (GAO) and other government and nongovernment watchdog groups called for major reforms. None of this was lost on the incoming Clinton administration. As governor of Arkansas, President Clinton had experience responding to several major flooding disasters and realized how important an effective response and quick recovery were to communities and voters. At his side throughout these disasters was James Lee Witt, former county judge and administrator of Yell County and, later, the state director for Emergency Management in Arkansas.

The Witt Revolution: 1993–2001

When President Clinton nominated James Lee Witt to be director of FEMA, he breathed life back into FEMA and brought a new style of leadership to the troubled agency. Witt was the first director of FEMA with emergency management experience. He was from the constituency that had played a major role in creating FEMA but had been forgotten—the state directors. With Witt, President Clinton had credibility and, more important, a skilled politician who knew the importance of building partnerships and serving customers.

Witt came in with a mandate to restore the trust of the American people that their government would be there for them during times of crisis. He initiated sweeping reforms inside and outside the agency. Inside FEMA, he reached out to all employees, implemented customer service training, and reorganized the agency to break down bottlenecks. He supported application of new technologies to the delivery of disaster services and focused on mitigation and risk avoidance. Outside the agency, he strengthened the relationships with state and local emergency managers and built new ones with Congress, within the administration, and with the media. Open communications internally and externally was one of the hallmarks of the Witt years at FEMA.

Witt's leadership and the changes he made were quickly tested as the nation experienced an unprecedented series of natural disasters. The Midwest floods in 1993 resulted in major disaster declarations in nine states. The Midwest floods called into question the value of some of the flood control measures initiated long ago as part of the 1930s Army Corps of Engineers' legislation. FEMA's successful response to these floods brought the opportunity to change the focus of postdisaster recovery by initiating the largest voluntary buyout and relocation program to date in an effort to move people out of the floodplain and out of harm's way.

The Northridge, California earthquake quickly followed the Midwest floods in 1994 (Figures 1-1 and 1-2). Northridge tested all the new streamlined approaches and technology advancements for delivery of services and created some more. Throughout the next several years, FEMA and its state and local partners would face every possible natural hazard, including killer tornadoes, ice storms, hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and drought.



FIGURE 1-1 Midwest floods, June 1994. Homes, businesses, and personal property were all destroyed by the high flood levels. A total of 534 counties in nine states were declared for federal disaster aid. As a result of the floods, 168,340 people registered for federal assistance. FEMA News Photo.



FIGURE 1–2 Northridge, California, earthquake, January 17, 1994. Many roads, including bridges and elevated highways, were damaged by the 6.7 magnitude earthquake. Approximately 114,000 residential and commercial structures were damaged and 72 deaths were attributed to the earthquake. Damage costs were estimated at \$25 billion. FEMA News Photo.

When President Clinton elevated Witt as director of FEMA to be a member of his cabinet, the value and importance of emergency management was recognized. Witt used this promotion as an opportunity to lobby the nation's governors to include their state emergency management directors in their cabinets.

The Oklahoma City bombing in April 1995 represented a new phase in the evolution of emergency management. This event, following the first bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City in 1992, raised the issue of America's preparedness for terrorism events. Because emergency management responsibilities are defined by risks and the consequences of those risks, responding to terrorist threats was included. The Oklahoma City bombing tested this thesis and set the stage for interagency disagreements over which agency would be in charge of terrorism.

The Nunn-Lugar legislation of 1995 left the question open as to who would be the lead agency on terrorism. Many people fault FEMA leadership for not quickly claiming that role, and the late 1990s were marked by several different agencies and departments having a role in terrorism planning. The question of who is the first responder to a terrorism incident—fire, police, emergency management, or emergency medical services—was closely examined, with no clear answers. The state directors were looking for FEMA to claim the leadership role. In an uncharacteristic way, the leadership of FEMA vacillated on this issue. Terrorism was certainly part of the all-hazards approach to emergency management championed by FEMA, but the resources and technologies needed to address specific issues such as biochemical warfare and weapons of mass destruction events seemed well beyond the reach of the current emergency management structure.



FIGURE 1-3 Franklin, Virginia, September 21, 1999. Hurricane Floyd left the downtown section of Franklin under six feet of water. The water had begun to recede, as shown by the high-water marks, but hazards still included propane tanks, gas tanks, chemical barrels, and pesticides. Photo by Liz Roll/FEMA News Photo.

While this debate continued, FEMA took an important step in its commitment to disaster mitigation by launching a national initiative to promote a new community-based approach, Project Impact: Building Disaster-Resistant Communities. This project was designed to mainstream emergency management and mitigation practices into every community in America. It went back to the roots of emergency management. It asked a community to identify risks and establish a plan to reduce those risks. It asked communities to establish partnerships that included all the local stakeholders, including, for the first time, the business sector.

The goal of Project Impact was to incorporate decisions about risk and risk avoidance into the community's everyday decision-making processes. By building a disaster-resistant community, the community would promote sustainable economic development, protect and enhance its natural resources, and ensure a better quality of life for its citizens. Project Impact had ambitious goals and was well received by the communities and Congress. It was designed to create a broader constituency, a grassroots campaign, for emergency management issues.

As the decade ended without any major technological glitches from Y2K, FEMA was recognized as the preeminent emergency management system in the world. It was emulated in other countries, and Witt became an ambassador for emergency management overseas. Hurricane Mitch saw a change in American foreign policy toward promoting and supporting community-based mitigation projects. State and local emergency management programs had grown and their value recognized and supported by society. Private-sector and business continuity programs were flourishing.

The role and responsibility and the partnerships supporting emergency management had significantly increased, and its budget and stature had grown. Good emergency

management became a way to get economic and environmental issues on the table; it became a staple of discussion relative to a community's quality of life.

The profession of emergency management was attracting a different type of individual. Political and management skills were critical, and candidates for state, local, and private emergency management positions were now being judged on their training and experience rather than their relationship to the community's political leadership. Undergraduate and advanced degree programs in emergency management were flourishing at more than 65 national colleges and universities. It was now a respected, challenging, and sought-after profession.

Terrorism Becomes the Major Focus: 2001

With the election of George W. Bush, a new FEMA director, Joe Allbaugh, was named to head the agency. As a former chief of staff to Governor Bush in Texas and President Bush's campaign manager in the 2000 presidential race, Allbaugh had a close personal relationship with the president. As demonstrated by Witt and Clinton, this was viewed as a positive for the agency. His lack of emergency management background was not an issue during his confirmation hearings.

Allbaugh got off to a rocky start when the administration decided to eliminate funding for the popular Project Impact. Immediately after this decision was announced, the 6.8 magnitude Nisqually earthquake shook Seattle, Washington. Seattle happened to be one of the most successful Project Impact communities. The mayor of Seattle appeared on national television and credited Project Impact as responsible for why there was almost no damage from the quake. Later that evening, Vice President Dick Cheney was asked why the program was being eliminated, and he replied by saying there were questions about its effectiveness. As FEMA's budget proceeded through the appropriations process, Congress put funding back into the Project Impact.

As part of major reorganization of the agency, Allbaugh recreated the Office of National Preparedness (ONP). This office was first established in the 1980s during the Guiffrida reign, for planning for World War III, and eliminated by Witt in 1992. This action raised some concerns among FEMA's constituents and FEMA staff members. However, this time the mission of the office was focused on terrorism.

In a September 10, 2001, speech, Director Allbaugh spoke about his priorities as being firefighters, disaster mitigation, and catastrophic preparedness. These words seem prophetic in light of the events of September 11. As the events of that tragic day unfolded, FEMA activated the Federal Response Plan and response operations proceeded as expected in New York and Virginia. Most of the agency's senior leaders, including the director, were in Montana attending the annual meeting of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA), an organization that represents state emergency management directors. The strength of the U.S. emergency management system was proven; however, as hundreds of response personnel initiated their operations within just minutes of the onset of events.

The Creation of the Department of Homeland Security: 2001–2005

Almost immediately following the terrorist attacks, the president created by executive order the Office of Homeland Security within the White House. The same day that

announcement was made, Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge was sworn in to lead the office with the rank of assistant to the president. The office had only 120 employees and what was derided as a prohibitively small budget in light of the gravity of the events the nation had just witnessed and began to be seen as just another government bureaucracy.

In March of 2002, President Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive-3 (HSPD-3), which stated that

The Nation requires a Homeland Security Advisory System to provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to Federal, State, and local authorities and to the American people. Such a system would provide warnings in the form of a set of graduated "Threat Conditions" that would increase as the risk of the threat increases. At each Threat Condition, Federal departments and agencies would implement a corresponding set of "Protective Measures" to further reduce vulnerability or increase response capability during a period of heightened alert.

This system is intended to create a common vocabulary, context, and structure for an ongoing national discussion about the nature of the threats that confront the homeland and the appropriate measures that should be taken in response. It seeks to inform and facilitate decisions appropriate to different levels of government and to private citizens at home and at work.

What resulted was the widely recognizable five-color coded homeland security advisory system. The homeland security advisory system repeatedly has raised and lowered the nation's alert levels between elevated (yellow) and high (orange) several times since the system's inception but has done so with less frequency as standards for such movements have been established.

On November 25, 2002, President Bush signed into law the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HS Act; Public Law 107-296), and announced that former Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge would become secretary of a new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to be created through this legislation. This act, which authorized the greatest federal government reorganization since President Harry Truman joined the various branches of the armed forces under the Department of Defense, was charged with a threefold mission of protecting the United States from further terrorist attacks, reducing the nation's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimizing the damage from potential terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

The sweeping reorganization into the new department, which officially opened its doors on January 24, 2003, joined together over 179,000 federal employees from 22 existing federal agencies under a single, cabinet-level organization. The legislation also included several changes within other federal agencies that were only remotely affiliated with DHS.

The creation of DHS was the culmination of an evolutionary legislative process that began largely in response to criticism that increased federal intelligence interagency cooperation could have prevented the September 11 terrorist attacks. Both the White House and Congress recognized that a Homeland Security czar would require both a staff and a large budget to succeed and so began deliberations to create a new cabinet-level department that would fuse many of the security-related agencies dispersed throughout the federal government.

For several months during the second half of 2002, Congress jockeyed between different versions of the Homeland Security bill in an effort to establish legislation that was passable yet effective. Lawmakers were particularly mired on the issue of the rights of employees—an issue that prolonged the legal process considerably. Furthermore, efforts to incorporate many of the intelligence-gathering and investigative law enforcement agencies, namely the National Security Agency (NSA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), into the legislation failed.

Despite these delays and setbacks, after the 2002 midterm elections, the Republican seats gained in both the House and Senate gave the president the leverage he needed to pass the bill without further deliberation (H.R., 299–121 on November 13, 2002; Senate, 90–9 on November 19, 2002). Although the passage of this act represented a significant milestone, the implementation phase presented a tremendous challenge, a concern expressed by several leaders from the agencies that were to be absorbed. On November 25, 2002, President Bush submitted his reorganization plan (as required by the legislation), which mapped out the schedule, methodology, and budget for the monumental task.

Beginning March 1, 2003, almost all the federal agencies named in the act began their move, whether literally or symbolically, into the new department. Those remaining followed on June 1, 2003, with all incidental transfers completed by September 1, 2003. Although a handful of these agencies remained intact after the move, most were fully incorporated into one of four new directorates: Border and Transportation Security (BTS), Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP), Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), and Science and Technology (S&T). A fifth directorate, Management, incorporated parts of the existing administrative and support offices within the merged agencies.

Secretary Ridge was given exactly one year to develop a comprehensive structural framework for DHS and to name new leadership for all five directorates and other offices created under the legislation.

In addition to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, the HS Act made several changes to other federal agencies and their programs and created several new programs. A list of the most significant is presented below:

- Established a National Homeland Security Council within the Executive Office of the President, which assesses U.S. objectives, commitments, and risks in the interest of Homeland Security; oversees and reviews federal homeland security policies; and makes recommendations to the president.
- Transferred the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of Justice (DOJ).
- Explicitly prohibits both the creation of a national ID card and the proposed Citizen Corps Terrorism Information and Prevention System (Operation TIPS, which encouraged transportation workers, postal workers, and public utility employees to identify and report suspicious activities linked to terrorism and crime). The act also reaffirmed the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the use of the Armed Forces in law enforcement activities except under constitutional or congressional authority (the Coast Guard is exempt from this act).
- The Arming Pilots against Terrorism Act, incorporated into the HS Act, allows pilots to defend aircraft cockpits with firearms or other “less-than-lethal weapons” against acts of criminal violence or air piracy and provides antiterrorism training to flight crews.

- The Critical Infrastructure Information Act (2002), incorporated in the HS Act, exempts certain components of critical infrastructure from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) regulations.
- The Johnny Michael Spann Patriot Trusts, created to provide support for surviving spouses, children, or dependent parents, grandparents, or siblings of various federal employees who die in the line of duty as result of terrorist attacks, military operations, intelligence operations, or law enforcements operations.

On March 1, 2003, Joe Albaugh, in a memo to the FEMA staff, announced that he was resigning as FEMA director. Michael Brown, formerly general counsel to FEMA and acting deputy director was named as the acting director of FEMA within the DHS Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate. Mike Brown came to FEMA because of his long, personal friendship with Albaugh. His academic training was in law, and prior to coming to FEMA, he had been the executive director of the Arabian Horse Association based in Colorado. On his resume, Brown indicated that he had experience in local emergency management, which would come under question in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

With the DHS establishment moving forward, FEMA entered a 2004 hurricane season that was marked by four major hurricanes impacting the state of Florida. Because of that election year's overall political nature and with the state of Florida being regarded as key in deciding the outcome of the presidential election (as well as the fact that the sitting president's brother, Jeb Bush, was the state's governor), a great deal of effort was expended to ensure that the federal response to these hurricanes appeared to go well. However, it also was recognized that the state of Florida has one of the most effective state emergency management systems in the country and this state-level organization actually was "calling the shots." The senior political management at DHS worked with the Florida governor's office to ensure the response and recovery went smoothly, but the loss of resources, departure of experienced staff members, and lack of effective leadership was steadily eroding the FEMA structure. In fact, many long-time professional FEMA staff members commented, after the 2004 hurricane season that year, that each subsequent hurricane would draw media attention away from any failures or mistakes before they became public. However, subsequent to the 2004 presidential election, several investigative press reports and the DHS Office of Inspector General would document and criticize abuses in excess delivery of financial assistance to nonvictims of the hurricanes, particularly in Miami and Dade County (DHS Office of the Inspector General, "Audit of FEMA's Individuals and Households Program in Miami-Dade County, Florida, for Hurricane Frances," OIG-05-20, available at http://www.dhs.gov/xoig/assets/mgmttrpts/OIG_05-20_May05.pdf).

On November 30, 2004, following the presidential election, DHS secretary Ridge announced his resignation. Former mayor Rudy Giuliani, a star of the September 11 response, recommended the nomination of NYPD commissioner Bernard Kerik for the position. His nomination was withdrawn quickly due to questions about an undocumented immigrant he employed at his home, Federal Judge Michael Chertoff was named to lead the agency. On February 16, 2005, Michael Chertoff was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to lead the Department of Homeland Security.

On July 13, 2005, DHS secretary Michael Chertoff released a six-point agenda that would be used to guide a reorganization of the department aimed at streamlining

its efforts. The agenda followed an initial review that Chertoff initiated immediately on assuming the leadership position. The review was designed to closely examine the department to discover ways in which leadership could better manage risk in terms of threat, vulnerability, and consequence; set priorities on policies and operational missions according to this risk-based approach; and establish a series of preventive and protective steps that would increase security at multiple levels. According to the six-point agenda, changes at the DHS would focus on

- Increasing overall preparedness, particularly for catastrophic events.
- Creating better transportation security systems to move people and cargo more securely and efficiently.
- Strengthening border security and interior enforcement and reforming immigration processes.
- Enhancing information sharing (with partners).
- Improving financial management, human resource development, procurement, and information technology within the department.
- Realigning the department's organization to maximize mission performance.

As part of the proposed reorganization, virtually all the remaining preparedness capabilities in FEMA, including the U.S. Fire Administration, would be moved to the new Office of Preparedness. The exception was the Emergency Management Institute (EMI). Although the EMI training function always was considered part of preparedness, senior level FEMA officials argued that its courses supported the response and recovery functions of FEMA. The new FEMA office would focus exclusively on response and recovery.

Under the initial DHS organization (Figure 1–4), the Emergency Preparedness and Response directorate contained most of the pre-DHS FEMA functions and staff. Under the Chertoff reorganization, EP&R was eliminated and the director of FEMA, formerly the undersecretary for EP&R, now became an office director. The reorganization was somewhat unclear regarding who actually would be in charge in a disaster, since responsibility for the new national incident management system (NIMS) is vested in the director of operations coordination.

The reorganization raised several policy issues, including whether the “all hazards” approach had been abandoned in exchange for a focus on catastrophic events, such as a nuclear war, as evidenced through the creation of a domestic nuclear detection office. Mitigation, the cornerstone of emergency management, was not even recognized, although the National Flood Insurance Program and the other natural hazards mitigation efforts would be part of the FEMA office.

Under this Chertoff reorganization, the structure of federal emergency management and disaster assistance functions were returned to the pre-FEMA status. The responsibilities and capabilities for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery were now spread out among several entities within the Department of Homeland Security. Policy decisions had been exercised to focus most of the human and financial resources on catastrophic threats of bioterrorism, and terrorism.

This situation was very similar to the one that existed prior to the creation of FEMA in 1979: Federal emergency management and disaster assistance capabilities were located in numerous federal departments and agencies scattered across the federal

Department of Homeland Security
Organization Chart—Policy
(proposed end state)

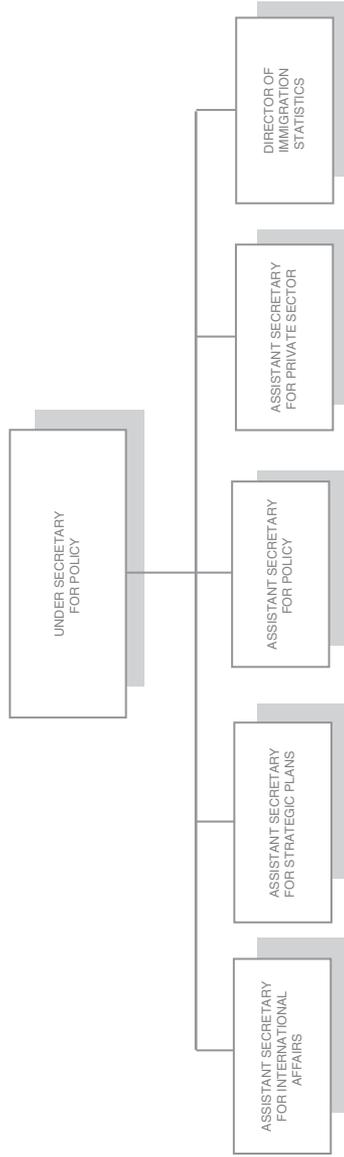


FIGURE 1-4 (Cont'd)

Department of Homeland Security
Organization Chart—Preparedness
(proposed end state)

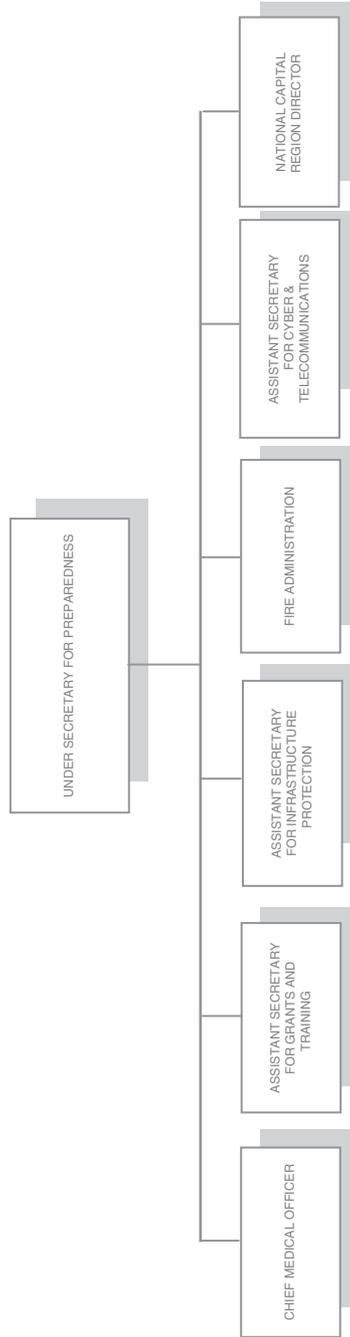


FIGURE 1-4 (Cont'd)

government and in the White House. In this case, instead of being scattered across the federal government, they were scattered within the fledgling Department of Homeland Security. Before this reorganization, FEMA programs were constantly being tasked and taxed to provide financial and human resources to support higher priority programs in DHS. By taking apart the core programs of FEMA, it became even easier to reassign its resources and diminish its mission within DHS.

Mike Brown's role in this reorganization has never been fully illuminated. At the time, on paper, he was on a par with other undersecretaries within DHS. However, having no personal connections with Secretary Chertoff and no political clout within the administration, because his connection had departed with Joe Albaugh, he apparently chose not to fight to keep FEMA together. He did argue that the FEMA name should remain just like the Coast Guard was able to keep its name, however.

The Hurricane Katrina Debacle: 2005

As Secretary Chertoff was proceeding with his reorganization, scientists like Max Mayfield (the director of the National Hurricane Center) and renowned hurricane experts such as Dr. William Gray were predicting another active hurricane season. As with any hurricane season, the greatest concern was a major storm hitting the Gulf Coast, particularly low-lying New Orleans.

Under James Lee Witt, the risk of a Category 5 hurricane impacting New Orleans was considered one of the three possible worst case disaster scenarios. In fact, since the 1980s, FEMA funds had been used to contract multiple evacuation studies of the New Orleans area. In 1995, a national exercise of the federal response plan, entitled "Response 95," used a New Orleans hurricane scenario. This particular exercise was never completed because on the first day of play, a major flood event impacted the Gulf Coast (including the site of the exercise play, New Orleans) and abruptly ended the exercise.

As the nation would discover in the aftermath of Katrina, another disaster exercise, termed "Hurricane Pam," was convened and completed in July 2004, with appropriate follow-up requirements to correct the problems and deficiencies discovered during the exercise recorded. Unfortunately, the funding to support these corrective actions, adequately budgeted by FEMA, became part of a funding reallocation requested of FEMA by DHS management to support other DHS priorities.

The Senate report on Katrina best describes what occurred during those fateful hours and days in late August. The specific danger that Katrina posed to the Gulf Coast became clear on the afternoon of Friday, August 26, when forecasters at the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service saw that the storm was turning west. First in phone calls to Louisiana emergency management officials and then in their 5 PM EDT Katrina forecast and accompanying briefings, they alerted both Louisiana and Mississippi that the track of the storm was now expected to shift significantly to the west of its original track to the Florida panhandle. The National Hurricane Center warned that Katrina could be a Category 4 or even 5 by landfall. By the next morning, Weather Service officials directly confirmed to the governor of Louisiana and other state and local officials that New Orleans was squarely at risk.

Over the weekend, there continued a drumbeat of warnings: FEMA held videoconferences on both days, in which the danger of Katrina and the particular risks to

New Orleans were discussed; Max Mayfield of the Hurricane Center called the governors of the affected states, something he had done only once before in his 33-year career; and President Bush took the unusual step of declaring a disaster in advance of an emergency event for the states in the projected impact zone.

But, however vigorous these preparations, ineffective leadership, poor advance planning, and an unwillingness to devote sufficient resources to emergency management over the long term doomed them to fail when Katrina struck. Despite the understanding of the Gulf Coast's particular vulnerability to hurricane devastation, officials braced for Katrina with full awareness of critical deficiencies in their plans and gaping holes in their resources. While Katrina's destructive force could not be denied, state and local officials did not marshal enough of the resources at their disposal. Adding to these shortfalls, years of inadequate funding of federal, state, and local emergency functions left them incapable of fully carrying out their missions to protect the public and care for victims. (Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared," available at http://hsgac.senate.gov/_files/Katrina/ExecSum.pdf, 2006).

More than 1,800 people died. As a result of Hurricane Katrina, tens of thousands were displaced and suffered for days in places like the Superdome, on freeway ramps, and on tops of roofs while waiting for rescue. Thousands lost their homes and were separated from loved ones. The dislocation, chaos, and desperation that lingered for days and weeks after the storm was a direct result of the failure of government at all levels to plan, prepare for, and respond aggressively to the storm. Failure can be assessed at all levels, but when President Bush signed the federal declaration of disaster and announced it in the Rose Garden, *before* Katrina actually made landfall, the federal government through DHS/FEMA took the primary responsibility for the stewardship of the response to this storm's aftermath. And, by any objective evaluation of the response, it was a colossal failure.

The Lead-up to the Katrina Debacle

In many respects, FEMA's Katrina failures were a predictable outgrowth of steps that were taken over the course of the Bush administration. First, in the aftermath of September 11, FEMA lost its status as an independent agency—and its direct access to the president—when it was absorbed into the newly created Department of Homeland Security. The director of FEMA was no longer on a par with the cabinet secretaries FEMA had to task and direct during disasters. At the state level, many states created their own offices of homeland security that subsumed emergency management or were competitive structures, further complicating emergency response organization.

Second, FEMA personnel and funds, including money for preparedness and mitigation intended for state and local agencies, were redistributed to support other higher priorities within DHS. The result of these actions was that the agency was even further hollowed out.

Third, the federal response plan was restructured into the national response plan to accommodate the new DHS arrangements and the operational oversight role of the department's secretary. A new level of bureaucracy was added with the creation of the principal federal official (PFO) as the new coordinator in a disaster. Where previously the director of FEMA had maintained a clear line of authority and accountability, the

existence of a new PFO created confusion over who would be in charge in a disaster. As a result, the necessary civilian and military assets were not deployed to facilitate the evacuations and provide supplies to the evacuation shelters before Katrina hit. FEMA also failed to work with the governors on how to use the National Guard. These problems were exacerbated by the inexperience of both brand-new DHS Secretary Chertoff and the relatively new FEMA director, Michael Brown.

A fourth factor was the dramatic post-September 11 change from a focus on “all-hazards” management, in which responders prepare for calamities according to plans that apply regardless of their precise nature, to a focus on terrorism that led to significantly weakened national capabilities. At all levels of government, approximately 75 percent of available resources for emergency management activities were applied to terrorism. Preparing, mitigating, or responding to natural disasters like floods, tornadoes, or hurricanes was subordinated to a narrow, if understandable, focus on terrorism. That reprioritization depleted capabilities to respond to disasters at all levels of government.

A final factor to be considered is the political philosophy of the Bush administration about the role of government. Early in his tenure as director of FEMA, Joe Albaugh referred to FEMA as a “bloated agency” and compared the disaster programs to an entitlement program. It was his philosophy that disasters were state and local issues. Since Albaugh was a close friend and advisor to President Bush and had served as his chief of staff while Bush was governor of Texas, his thoughts probably reflect somewhat on the Bush philosophy. In addition, reflecting back on the rapid response to the 2004 Florida hurricanes, one could draw the conclusion that the administration just did not care about the people of New Orleans. In any event, the failure of the political leadership at all levels, particularly in Louisiana, which is continuing in a very slow-moving recovery, needs to be considered as a fundamental cause for the problems of Katrina.

Post-Katrina Changes

In the rush to examine and investigate what went wrong, and take corrective actions, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate engaged in extensive hearings and investigations. The White House dispatched Frances Townsend, assistant to the president for Homeland Security, to conduct a thorough review of what went wrong and to generate corrective recommendations. The administration’s report, “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned,” was released in February 2006. It was a weighty document, which included 125 recommendations and 11 critical actions that needed to be completed by June 1, the start of the 2006 hurricane season. However, the report, just like the Hurricane Katrina event, reflected the administration’s lack of understanding and lack of accountability for disaster response and recovery.

These organizational and leadership issues were not easily swept away. Senators Clinton and Mikulski introduced legislation to restore FEMA to its independent status and make the director’s position a cabinet member. This legislation went nowhere. Powerful forces on the Senate Committee on Homeland Security blocked these efforts, particularly Senator Joe Lieberman who had been instrumental in DHS’s creation and clearly did not want his creation tampered with. Senator Lieberman was joined by Republican Committee chair Susan Collins, who would not even consider moving FEMA out. After a series of hearings and investigations both the House and Senate Committees on Homeland Security issued reports, all of which are detailed in later chapters.

Supported by these reports and a public demanding action, the 109th Congress passed revised federal emergency management policies that vested more power in the president, reorganized the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and enhanced and clarified the mission, functions, and authorities of both the agency and its parent organization, the Department of Homeland Security.

Six statutes enacted by the 109th Congress are notable in that they contain changes that apply to future federal emergency management actions. These public laws include the following:

- The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006.
- The Security and Accountability for Every Port Act of 2005, known as the SAFE Port Act.
- The Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act of 2006.
- The Federal Judiciary Emergency Special Sessions Act of 2005.
- The Student Grant Hurricane and Disaster Relief Act.
- The John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

Most of these statutes contain relatively few actual changes to federal authorities related to emergencies and disasters. The Post-Katrina Act, however, contains many changes that have long-term consequences for FEMA and other federal entities. That statute reorganizes FEMA, expands its statutory authority, and imposes new conditions and requirements on the operations of the agency. In addition to the public laws noted already, Congress enacted supplemental appropriations, one-time waivers of requirements, and temporary extensions solely associated with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. (Congressional Research Service, “Federal Emergency Management Policy Changes after Hurricane Katrina, a Summary of Statutory Provisions,” available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesecc/RL33729.pdf>, December 15, 2006).

The Post-Katrina Act requires that the DHS reconsolidate all the emergency management functions (including preparedness) into FEMA, elevates the status of FEMA within the department, protects the FEMA assets from reassignment within the DHS, and gives FEMA enhanced organizational autonomy. In addition, the Act provides for FEMA to maintain 10 regional offices. It adds to FEMA a National Advisory Council, Regional Advisory Councils, a disability coordinator, a small state and rural advocate, and regional strike teams. They provide autonomy for the FEMA administrator (formerly director) to communicate directly with Congress.

As this edition is being written, the DHS and FEMA are working on implementing all these changes along with undertaking another major revision on the national response plan. After the resignation (or firing) of Mike Brown shortly after Katrina hit, David Paulison was nominated and confirmed as FEMA director, now administrator. Paulison had been serving as the U.S. fire administrator and has had a long and distinguished career in the fire service in Florida. His elevation to the top position was well received by the fire service constituencies, who long felt that they had not received their due within FEMA and the emergency management community. As with fire and police, the emergency management community has had an uneasy relationship with the fire community, which they view as a competitor for resources. Whether Paulison has the leadership skills or the political clout to resurrect FEMA remains to be seen.

Critical Thinking

What do you think could have been done in the years preceding Hurricane Katrina to better prepare the states to deal with this kind of event? Do you think that this event was so large that only a federal response could have managed it? Explain your answer.

The Future Environment of Emergency Management

In previous editions of this text, we talked about the consequences of moving FEMA into the Department of Homeland Security, focusing emergency management on terrorism at the cost of natural and other hazards, and the importance of supportive political leadership at the highest levels, including the presidency, as bellwethers for effective emergency management. We, unfortunately, predicted the failure that was evidenced in Hurricane Katrina.

The changes required by Congress in the Post-Katrina legislation do not correct many of the flaws that led to the failures of the Katrina response. This legislation may improve the climate, but it does not correct systemic problems in the federal system nor does it address the critical resource shortfall that has forever plagued the emergency management discipline. It focuses emergency management on preparedness, that is, evacuation and response. The long-term strategy of mitigation of the risks and using long-term recovery as a means toward improved mitigation are largely forgotten.

The legislation also fails to address some of the societal changes this nation has undergone, which warrant that a new examination of our disaster assistance programs and delivery systems be made. For example, the designation of “head of household” as the recipient of disaster assistance is ambiguous and not reflective of current societal trends. It is not likely that DHS/FEMA will take the initiative to look into these issues.

It can be safely said that the future of emergency management, at least at the federal level, remains uncertain. More and more the states are assuming, in regard to disaster response, that they will be on their own. Two bright notes of Hurricane Katrina were the leadership of Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi in leading his state into recovery and the celebrated response carried out in Alabama, a state with an excellent emergency management organization. However, the strong partnership of federal and state emergency management organizations that had existed unfortunately remains broken.

The last chapter of this text looks at several new approaches to emergency management. Perhaps, it is time to reexamine the emergency management cycle of preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation that was established in the National Governors Association study of the early 1960s. Perhaps, we need to look at new organizations to assume the emergency management mantle, nonprofits and private organizations. Perhaps, a new generation of individuals committed to the principles of emergency management can design and implement a new approach. Perhaps, the time is right for a seismic change in our approach to emergency management at all levels of government.

IMPORTANT TERMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency management • Civil defense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Emergency Management Agency • Department of Homeland Security

Self-Check Questions

1. What are some of the first examples of emergency management?
2. According to the Constitution, does the federal government have a primary or secondary role in managing public risks?
3. What is the first example of the federal government becoming involved in a local disaster? What was provided?
4. What is the significance of the Flood Control Act of 1934?
5. How did the Cold War era contribute to the evolution of modern emergency management?
6. What disaster led to the creation of the National Flood Insurance Program?
7. Describe the events of the 1970s that led to the creation of FEMA.
8. Why was FEMA an agency in trouble at the close of the 1980s?
9. How did James Lee Witt improve FEMA?
10. What changes did the creation of the Department of Homeland Security bring about for the federal emergency management capacity?
11. List the steps involved in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.
12. Why was the response to Hurricane Katrina so ineffective?
13. How did the poor response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster change emergency management in the United States?

Out of Class Exercise Investigate how civil defense and emergency management evolved in your state or city. Look at such factors as when it was created, what was its original purpose, and what did it do. Find out how this organization changed following the creation of FEMA. Determine who is your local or state emergency manager, and where this person falls within the organizational diagram of your municipal or state leadership. Is there an online profile or biography for this person? If so, what emergency management experience does he or she have to qualify for the job?