

# FEMA Announces New Advocate Leadership Role to Build State and Local Capacity Across the Nation

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WASHINGTON -- FEMA's commitment to serving communities is strengthened by FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell's selection of [Patricia Pudwill](#) as the agency's newest Small State and Rural Advocate.

This role advises the FEMA Administrator and the agency on small state and rural community concerns and perspectives, as well as facilitates coordination with organizations and associations to enhance response capabilities within these sectors. Aligning with FEMA's Year of Resilience, this position enhances individual and community readiness, hazard mitigation and preparedness to build safer, more resilient communities.

"We are at our best when we build programs and processes with input from those we are trying to help. Having this advocate position filled will help advance our mission to improve resilience across America's diverse rural landscapes," said Administrator Criswell. "In rural America, where resources can be scarce and the nearest help might be dozens of miles away, preparedness is more than a strategy."

Rural areas present unique challenges in disaster response. This dedicated position grows FEMA's culture of preparedness, enhances readiness for catastrophic disasters and supports efforts to jumpstart survivor recovery. The impact of these efforts will increase awareness to access FEMA's services and funding, resulting in communities better able to withstand and recover from disasters.

This Small State and Rural Advocate position was created during the George W. Bush Administration with [Public Law 109-295, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act](#). Pudwill will advocate for 14 states, the District of Columbia and several territories -- all of which have populations of less than two



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million. This also includes many small communities across the nation with [3,000 or less individuals](#).

Pudwill will also counsel states on the emergency and major disaster declaration processes to ensure that the needs of rural communities are being addressed. This includes assisting states and local communities in collecting documentation to demonstrate and validate severe localized impacts to request a disaster declaration.

“When disasters strike, county officials and emergency responders play a critical role in the immediate response and long-term efforts to help our communities recover,” said National Association of Counties Executive Director Matthew Chase. “With a background in county government, Ms. Pudwill is familiar with the role counties play in our emergency preparedness and response. We look forward to working with her to ensure that rural counties have the necessary resources to keep our communities healthy, safe and vibrant.”

Pudwill’s federal service includes experience as the FEMA Integration Team Lead in South Dakota, as well as numerous disaster response and recovery roles. Her prior experience includes more than 12 years with state and local governments within South Dakota.

