

Open Letter from FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor

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Earlier today, I was sworn in by Acting Secretary Wolf as the 11th Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I am grateful for this honor to lead the men and women of FEMA as we help people before, during, and after disasters.

During my time at FEMA, my primary focus will be our people and I begin this role by sharing my Leadership Philosophy with you. It is my foundation and roadmap for moving forward. It is my compass for both blue sky days and times of chaos. Let me share a quote from the book, *Built to Last* by Jim Collins, which reflects what I believe in and what I aspire to achieve.

“People still have a fundamental human need to belong to something they feel proud of. They have a fundamental need for guiding values and sense of purpose that give their life and work meaning. They have a fundamental need for connection with other people, sharing with them the common bond of beliefs and aspirations. Employees will also demand that the organization they’re connected to stand for something.”

FEMA Publication 1, We Are FEMA, reflects this truth. The following tenets outline the principles that guide my vision for FEMA:

Our job is about PEOPLE. It is about the disaster survivors and the individuals who serve them. I firmly believe that if we take care of and empower FEMA employees, then these dedicated public servants will deliver meaningful and much needed assistance to our citizens when they need it the most. As leaders, I expect you to champion a tolerant, inclusive, diverse, highly-skilled, ethical, and enthusiastic workforce. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Listen completely. Be sure you have a well-balanced life. Take care of yourself, take care of your family and take care of each other. Never quit on yourself or our mission.

Accomplish our MISSION and defend our CORE VALUES. We have the greatest mission in federal government: Helping People Before, During, and After



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Disasters. It is imperative that the American people have the highest level of trust and confidence in FEMA's capabilities. The Nation is counting on us to accomplish our mission and we will do so with Compassion, Fairness, Integrity, and Respect. The American public demands no less and deserves nothing less. We are the owners of this mission and each employee must embody our Core Values. Our mission is why we exist. Our Core Values and the people who live by them are who we are.

LEADERSHIP is a privilege. Leadership has nothing to do with the title you hold; it's based on your behavior and the example you set. You can be a leader of one (yourself) or you can be a leader of many. It is about inspiring others to lead at every level, not creating followers. True leaders make a difference every day. True leaders make a positive difference at critical moments which change the course of events to achieve that seemingly unattainable outcome. True leaders can change that event to make the outcome better. As leaders, at every level, your primary task is to solve problems, not to create them. Leadership is about integrity and the moral courage to act when faced with difficult decisions. Leaders must set the example.

YOUR ROLE. Define who you are and what you stand for every day. Become all that you have the possibility of becoming. Time moves quickly – don't wait for the perfect moment; make every day count. Standing up and speaking up requires moral courage – as leaders, you must have plenty of it and be ready to use it. It requires you to look the other person in the eyes and make those hard decisions – there is no hiding when it comes to using your moral courage. You are the only person responsible for your success, however, do not sacrifice your character for results.

Be bold.

Be decisive.

Be accountable.

Think long-term.

Seize every opportunity.

Commit to organizational excellence every day.



Do not pass the buck – act judiciously and display confidence.

You must earn your personal and professional reputation every day – strive to excel in all areas. Do everything possible to make FEMA stronger tomorrow than it is today. Use our Core Values as your daily guide.

We are FEMA and we can do this.



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