

FEMA Administrator Emphasizes Adaptability and Partnership During National Emergency Management Association Annual Forum Keynote

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WASHINGTON -- FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell addressed the 2022 National Emergency Management Association Annual Forum in Stowe, Vermont, and stressed the importance of strong partnerships with fellow emergency managers nationwide. She also acknowledged both new challenges and ongoing successes across the nation and urged the need for an adaptive emergency management posture as disaster frequency increases.

“As the role of emergency management and emergency managers continues to expand and evolve, we need to evolve with it and that means making sure each of us, our teams, our organizations, our plans and our policies are adaptable too. We need to adapt to meet the moment ... whatever that moment is,” said Criswell.

Increases in extreme weather combined with vulnerable national critical infrastructure, Criswell noted, can cause critical services like power and water, to fail. “These threats and hazards outpace even the highest levels of resilience and mitigation funding in our nation’s history.”

A Year Measured in Disaster Response

In fiscal year 2022, the nation’s emergency managers faced historic disasters and communities faced threats in all forms. Together, with state, local and tribal governments, FEMA responded to record-setting rainfall and flooding events in Montana, the largest and most destructive fire in New Mexico, extreme heat throughout the Pacific Northwest, Texas and New England, ongoing drought in western states and devastating impacts of hurricanes and typhoons. Collectively, Criswell noted, “these events account for 15 billion dollar disasters.”



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A Year Measured in Strategic Achievement

The Administrator highlighted a year of success for the agency in its efforts to achieve the “[2022-2026 FEMA Strategic Plan](#),” which includes goals to instill equity as a foundation of emergency management, lead the whole of community in climate resilience and promote and sustain a ready FEMA and prepared nation.

Criswell explained the agency looks for means to fine-tune program delivery and better serve communities who need FEMA help the most. FEMA makes access to hazard mitigation programs more equitable for highly disadvantaged communities by addressing one of the common barriers -- successful completion of a project benefit-cost analysis for Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) programs. Specifically, she announced how FEMA recently decreased the discount rate for the Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) requirement used to mitigate effects of future disasters. A lower discount rate demonstrates the value of investing for the future.

“This month, we announced the discount rate for our Flood Mitigation Assistance and Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities programs would go from 7% to 3%, allowing underserved communities the ability to unlock a level of assistance that -- for too long -- was out of reach,” Criswell stated.

Planning for Uncertainty

Criswell continued to focus on resiliency during uncertainty but with a focus on future planning leading up to National Level Exercise in 2024 (NLE 24). FEMA will host seminars, which bring together emergency managers, along with climate adaptation leaders and experts to focus on risk-informed decision making in the face of climate change.

“NLE 24 will test the nation’s preparedness to address the risks to national security that a climate change poses,” Criswell said. “The exercise will focus on the increased frequency and severity of storms in the Pacific Ocean impacting the Hawaiian Islands, combined with opportunistic attacks.”



Celebrating Future CREW Act-Related Opportunities

Finally, the Administrator celebrated a long-fought milestone: the Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce (CREW) Act that President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. recently signed into law.

“By amending the Stafford Act and Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), CREW protects the job rights of FEMA Reservists while they are deployed to disasters, emergencies and critical trainings,” said Criswell.

She continued, “The CREW Act will enable us to recruit future reservists from a broader talent pool of people seeking public service opportunities, including some of the most in-demand FEMA mission areas, such as IT, logistics and supply chain management. This critical expertise will enable us to deliver FEMA programs more quickly and proficiently, for communities and survivors alike.”

In her concluding remarks, Criswell reaffirmed FEMA's partnerships with the emergency management family and challenged it to hold FEMA accountable as it evolves to meet the challenges of the future.

“As we are navigating more frequent and more intense storms, we know our missions are only getting longer, harder and more complicated,” she said. “My ask to you is this -- keep pushing us. Keep advocating and keep holding us accountable. We need your expertise, awareness, drive and voice to so we can continue to evolve as an agency and as a profession.”

The full transcript of Administrator Criswell’s remarks is available on [FEMA.gov](https://www.fema.gov).

