

# FEMA's Natural Disaster Preparedness and Response Efforts During the Coronavirus Pandemic

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TESTIMONY

OF

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE

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“FEMA's Natural Disaster Preparedness and Response Efforts During the Coronavirus Pandemic”

Submitted

By



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# Federal Emergency Management Agency

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Good morning, Chairman Rouda, Ranking Member Comer, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Pete Gaynor, and I am the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss FEMA's response and the actions currently underway to protect the American people during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the Agency's ongoing engagement with the emergency management community to enhance disaster preparedness within a COVID-19 environment.

On behalf of the men and women of FEMA, I would like to begin by offering my condolences to the loved ones of the 140,000 Americans who have lost their lives to COVID-19. Our hearts go out to all those who have been affected by the pandemic.

For the first time in the United States' history, there are 114 concurrent Major Disaster Declarations—at least one in every single state, 5 territories, the Seminole Tribe of Florida, and the District of Columbia. From islands across two oceans to the cities and farms of America's heartland, the scale of this historic event has required FEMA to adapt its response practices and workforce posture in order to both respond to COVID-19 and simultaneously maintain mission readiness for more common disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, or wildfires.

Regardless of the challenges that FEMA continues to confront, the bedrock of our mission remains constant: helping people before, during, and after disasters. The Nation is counting on us to accomplish our mission, and we will do so in accordance with our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect.

Since March 13th, FEMA has obligated over \$8.4 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund to support State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) partners in their COVID-19 response-related activities, with the first \$1 billion obligated in 11 days.



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\$1.7 billion has been allocated in support of the National Guard and Title 32 troops, as well as the deployment of 5,300 DOD Title 10 medical professionals who have provided critical medical support to numerous hospitals under stress. To further bolster the medical infrastructure of SLTT partners, FEMA has obligated \$2.3 billion to support Temporary Medical Facilities and constructed 38 Alternate Care Facilities through mission assignments to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and deployed 41 Federal medical stations in coordination with other federal partners.

As part of the Whole-of-America response, as of July 17, FEMA, HHS, and the private sector combined have coordinated the delivery of approximately 189.9 million N-95 respirators, 784.8 million surgical masks, 33.1 million face shields, 341.5 million surgical gowns, and over 20 billion gloves.

FEMA's unprecedented support for SLTT partners extends well beyond financial support or the distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE). FEMA's response has served to stabilize lives in the most fundamental ways, as demonstrated by the obligation of \$200 million for Emergency Food and Shelter programs, and \$57 million in support for Crisis Counseling across 53 states and territories providing free, confidential counseling through community-based outreach and educational services.

I would like to thank the Members of this Committee for authorizing many of the resources FEMA and SLTT partners need to meet these complex and historic mission requirements, as well as prepare for future disaster considerations. Today's testimony will offer an overview of FEMA response efforts and strategies for COVID-19, some of the lessons we have learned, and implementable planning considerations as we pivot to prepare for future disasters during a pandemic response.

## Overview of FEMA Response

On March 13th, 2020, President Trump declared a nationwide emergency pursuant to section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act). Upon the President's emergency declaration, all states, territories, and federally recognized tribes became immediately eligible for FEMA Public Assistance (PA) Category B, emergency



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protective measures as authorized by section 403 of the Stafford Act and funded by the Disaster Relief Fund. In keeping with the Stafford Act, FEMA allocates funding to cover 75 percent of costs of Public Assistance, and SLTT governments are responsible for the remaining 25 percent. To help SLTT governments respond to and recover from COVID-19, the Department of Treasury recently announced that Coronavirus Relief Fund dollars, provided under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, may be used to pay for FEMA's cost share requirements under the Stafford Act.

To provide further assistance to SLTT partners, the Administration approved Major Disaster Declarations for all 50 states, five territories, the District of Columbia, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida to assist with additional needs. FEMA is also working directly with 86 tribal governments under either the nationwide emergency declaration or a Major Disaster Declaration.

On March 19th, FEMA's role in the pandemic response changed. Under the direction of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, FEMA moved from playing a supporting role in assisting the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which was designated as the initial lead federal agency for the COVID-19 pandemic response, to coordinating the Whole-of-Government response to the COVID-19 pandemic. [In Washington, D.C., the National Response Coordination Center \(NRCC\) transformed into the fulcrum of federal interagency coordination efforts under the Unified Coordination Group \(UCG\), which is co-chaired by me within my capacity as the FEMA Administrator, and Robert Kadlec, M.D., HHS's Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response. Eight Task Forces were quickly assembled to address top priorities for the pandemic response such as supply chain disruptions or community-based testing. In support of this Whole-of-Government effort, there have been personnel from numerous agencies imbedded within the NRCC and Regional Response Coordination Centers to coordinate response and recovery efforts both nationally and at the local level.](#)

At its peak, over 50,094 federal personnel were deployed in this coordinated process to bring the full resources of the Federal government to bear. This includes 3,200 FEMA employees and 4,200 U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officers from HHS deployed in support of the response, as well as the 42,000 National Guard members responsible for conducting testing and PPE distribution, among other COVID-19 response support missions



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nationwide. Additionally, there were the 13,680 Title 10 forces, including 5,300 medical personnel, working to support the response to the public health emergency. To further bolster SLTT medical infrastructure, 17,636 US Army Corps of Engineers personnel assisted with the construction of Alternate Care Facilities.

## **Building Surge Capacity**

One of the first priorities for FEMA, HHS, and the UCG was to increase the surge capacity of SLTT hospitals. In order to accomplish this objective and protect the safety of patients, health care providers, and the American public, FEMA directed the USACE to work closely with SLTT officials to construct Alternate Care Facilities (ACF). An ACF is a building such as a dormitory or civic convention center that is temporarily converted into a medical treatment facility during a public health emergency to provide additional space if traditional health care institutions are filled beyond capacity. These locations were identified and constructed through close partnerships between USACE and SLTT officials, with local COVID-19 considerations and future projections in mind. Upon construction, the ACF is then state or locally managed, and eligible for FEMA Public Assistance Category B funding under the Stafford Act for both their construction and continued operations. In total, we have constructed 38 Alternate Care Facilities. This does not include 41 Field Medical Stations deployed by other federal partners, which is a pre-packaged ACF. However, due to the scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and significant demands for finite supplies within the SNS, FMSs served to augment SLTT medical infrastructure in critical areas of urgent need and could not be deployed to meet every community's requests.

## **Managing Critical Shortages**

During more common disasters, FEMA typically manages abundant resources to support a specific state, territory, or region. In responding to COVID-19, FEMA has met the more difficult task of managing shortages of critical medical supplies and equipment such as PPE, ventilators, swabs, and the chemical reagents required for testing. This effort alone has presented an historic challenge for



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FEMA and its federal partners. COVID-19 has been a global crisis—leaders across over 150 countries have simultaneously been competing for the same medical supplies. We have been further challenged as most of the manufacturing for PPE occurs in Asia, where the virus significantly slowed down private sector production capabilities. Concurrently, American medical professionals on the front lines of the pandemic have required an exponentially increased volume of PPE and other medical supplies. On average, the United States began consuming a year’s worth of PPE in a matter of weeks. FEMA worked closely with HHS to ensure that locations in danger of running out of supplies within 72 hours received life-saving equipment from the Federal government’s reserve within the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), as administered by HHS.

### **Phase 1: Distributions from HHS’ Strategic National Stockpile**

From the beginning, FEMA and HHS understood and acknowledged that the SNS alone could not fulfill all our Nation’s requirements. The SNS was never designed or intended to fully supply every state, territory, tribe and locality in the United States concurrently and cannot be relied upon as the single solution for pandemic preparedness. It was principally designed as a short-term stopgap buffer to supplement state and local supplies during a public health or national security emergency. Given the finite number of medical devices such as ventilators originally in the SNS and the limited capacity of the private sector supply chains to meet the demand, the Federal government adopted a process to manage federal ventilator resources to ship them to the states only in the quantities needed to manage the immediate crisis. As such, ventilators were designated as strategic national assets to be distributed in accordance with immediate need. Decisions on where to allocate these limited medical resources were thoughtfully and deliberately informed by a series of intervening variables and a data-driven approach.

### **Phase 2: The Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force and Project Airbridge**

To address the imbalance between supply and demand for PPE and other medical supplies, the Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force, under the direction of [Rear Admiral John Polowczyk](#), was swiftly assembled on March 20th to address widespread shortfalls amidst the global competition for life-saving equipment. The Task Force consisted of a multi-faceted team across the US government, and liaisons from the private sector. The Task Force, in conjunction with other



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agencies and Task Forces, sourced PPE, swabs, ventilators and other critical resources for points of care nationwide, with a special consideration given to supporting healthcare workers on the front line and then other priority groups including first responders and critical infrastructure workers in lifeline industries who are unable to practice social distancing due to the nature of their work. To maintain the country's existing medical supply chain infrastructure efficiently, the Task Force, along with FEMA and HHS, has sought to supplement – not supplant – the overall supply chain through a variety of strategies.

The Task Force worked with the major commercial distributors to facilitate the rapid distribution of critical resources in short supply to locations where they were needed most. This partnership enables a Whole-of-America approach to combat the pandemic. A key example of this public-private partnership in action is Project Air Bridge. Established in less than 10 days, Project Air Bridge expedited the movement of critical supplies from the global market to medical distributors in various locations across the U.S. Remarkably, this airbridge cut the duration of transporting international shipments down from *37 days* on a ship to just *one day* by air. Project Airbridge was integral to the federal strategy to manage critical shortages of PPE and other medical supplies by accelerating international deliveries until domestic and foreign manufacturers could increase production to well above pre-COVID-19 levels and standard supply chains could begin to stabilize. As of July 1st, Project Airbridge has ceased all activities, but retains the ability to be reactivated in accordance with shifting conditions.

### **Phase 3: Transition to Expedited Shipping and Increased Manufacturing**

Although Project Air Bridge was able to fill critical shortages of PPE and other medical supplies, it was never intended to be a permanent component of a stabilized supply chain. As global production levels continue to increase, we have transitioned towards traditional and expedited sea lane shipping with cargo ships able to carry considerable volume. On May 10th, FEMA's first shipment of N-95 respirators arrived by sealift in the Port of Long Beach, California, with a subsequent delivery of N-95s arriving on May 21st. Subsequently, we have scheduled additional sealift delivery through the month of July. This will provide an additional 62.7 million N-95 respirators, 1.3 million gloves, and 6.2 million gowns into the U.S. This is approximately 390 cargo containers of material. As part of the Whole-of-America response, as of July 17, FEMA, HHS, and the private sector combined have coordinated the delivery of approximately 189.9



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million N-95 respirators, 784.8 million surgical masks, 33.1 million face shields, 341.5 million surgical gowns, and over 20 billion gloves.

Expansion of the industry has also been simultaneously taking place. Manufacturers are enhancing domestic production capacity with additional machinery, and in some cases re-tooling assembly lines to produce new products. As an example of this work, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is providing assistance to manufacturers who have produced other products, such as automobiles, on adding production lines or alternative sites for making more ventilators during the COVID-19 public health emergency. In addition, the Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force is working through over 350 leads to match American businesses who have excess raw materials, workforce, or factory production capacities combined with an overwhelming desire to provide their support to the national response effort. Task Force members are actively working to facilitate the creation of private sector partnerships to pair companies that have offered their excess factory production capacity, the talents of their workforce and access to their raw material supply chains with critical supply manufacturers who have expertise in producing PPE, ventilators, and other needed equipment.

As part of the federal efforts to scour the globe for PPE and consider all opportunities, FEMA and its federal partners explored thousands of leads both overseas and across our country. Whether a lead came from the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Members of Congress representing businesses in their State, or through an enterprise's unaffiliated inquiry, we processed all leads through robust vetting procedures and the federal procurement process. To further support this effort, a firewall was established between those responsible for identifying leads and those responsible for the procurement of contracts. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA has awarded a total of 676 contract actions for a total value of \$1.60 billion to date on behalf of HHS and other federal partners in support of SLTT partners.

On April 28th, FEMA's role within the federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic began to evolve. The White House Task Force, DOD, HHS, and the Supply Chain Task Force (SCTF) agreed that the DOD would assume responsibility for procuring emergent PPE items in response to COVID-19 on behalf of FEMA and HHS. The official transition concluded May 29, 2020. Moving forward, new procurements for COVID-19 will largely reside with the DOD's Defense Logistics Agency, which has a robust procurement and distribution capacity and capability.



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This transition will help FEMA to better prepare and support the upcoming hurricane season and other potential disasters Americans may face. As FEMA and its partners begin returning to Steady State operations, the eight Task Forces within the NRCC have begun transitioning into Working Groups. All personnel previously assigned to the eight Task Forces have either been demobilized or realigned under six corresponding working groups. Regardless of FEMA's role in the management and distribution of critical resources, this COVID-19 response effort will continue to be federally supported, state managed, locally executed, and in this instance, private sector enabled.

Like all task forces assembled to confront specific challenges in crisis, the Supply Chain Stabilization Task Force's lines of effort require longer-term institutional solutions to ensure that America is ready for a sustained response to COVID-19 and other pandemics. The expansion of our domestic industry to increase the production of PPE and other supplies is key to our ability to conduct a sustained response. One of the most prominent examples of efforts to expand the domestic industry is demonstrated by interagency efforts to leverage the Defense Production Act.

## **The Defense Production Act**

The Defense Production Act (DPA) of 1950, as amended (50 U.S.C. §§ 4501 et seq.) is an authority the President may use to expand the production of supplies and services from the private sector needed to promote the "national defense," a term that includes emergency preparedness and response activities conducted pursuant to Title VI of the Stafford Act and protection and restoration of critical infrastructure operations. The authority to use the DPA for health and medical resources for COVID-19 was delegated to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and HHS in Executive Order 13911, "Delegating Additional Authority under the Defense Production Act with Respect to Health and Medical Resources to Respond to the Spread of COVID-19." The Secretary of Homeland Security delegated its authority to me, as the FEMA Administrator. FEMA specifically has relied on the DPA, as delegated and in coordination with our federal partners, to focus on increasing the production and distribution of ventilators, N-95 masks, and medical countermeasures. For example, on April 3, 2020 FEMA issued a DPA order to 3M for 166.5 million N-95 masks from its factories in China, South Korea and Singapore, to be delivered from April to July 2020



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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DPA authorities can be used to address disruptions in medical and healthcare lifelines necessary for the continuous operation of critical government and business functions which are essential to human health and economic security. The DPA enables the Federal Government to leverage domestic industry's ability to supply materials and services in support of the national defense. In addition to using the DPA to protect essential health resources and combat materials shortages, the Federal Government is also using the DPA to increase domestic manufacturing capabilities, which will help to ensure the United States' future preparedness for pandemics is not overly reliant upon the foreign production of medical supplies which, as we have seen, may be vulnerable to supply chain disruptions. The DPA has already begun to play a critical role in preparing the United States for future contingencies by increasing the amount of supplies needed to replenish and reorganize the Strategic National Stockpile.

## **Next-Generation SNS**

Moving forward, we must have a ready and responsive SNS, which is why FEMA, HHS, and DoD are continuing to work together for a Next-Generation SNS. A transformation is required for a holistic supply chain ecosystem responsive to the unique needs of each region of the U.S. This includes developing supply chain intelligence, strengthening local, state, and Federal partnerships, and expanding domestic manufacturing for a successful future. This strategic commitment to modernize the SNS is necessary for a stronger nation prepared to meet any local, regional, or national event. Thanks to U.S. production, we now have 59,934 ventilators within the Strategic National Stockpile as of July 21, which is more than we did before the pandemic. Similarly, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the SNS had less than 18 million N95 masks, and we are now growing the reserve through the DPA to include 300 million. Furthermore, whereas the SNS previously did not contain ventilator pharmaceuticals, it will now have a three months' supply in stock.

## **Lessons Learned**

FEMA has responded to this pandemic while continuing to adapt its operations and procedures to support preparation for complex future crises. Among the first lessons learned was the need to preserve PPE and prioritize its distribution



## Prioritization and Preservation

Within the context of a disrupted supply chain, it quickly became apparent that healthcare workers, first responders, patients, and critical infrastructure workers needed prioritization for distributed PPE. While increased production capacity was coming online, FEMA, CDC, and other partners ensured that scarce PPE was allocated to those on the frontlines of the pandemic, and also maximized the utility and useful life of available PPE by releasing guidance to reduce, reuse, and repurpose this PPE. Due to global PPE shortages, the implementation of contingency and crisis capacity plans were sometimes necessary to ensure the continued availability of protective gear.

The BATTELLE Critical Care Decontamination System (CCDS) became another component of the plan to preserve PPE. These units can decontaminate compatible N95 respirators

using a mobile CONEX box-based Vapor Phase Hydrogen Peroxide (VPHP) generator. It is the subject of an emergency use authorization issued by FDA, with capacity to decontaminate 10,000 respirators per chamber load. The Federal Government purchased sixty systems and distributed 45 for use nationwide, and FEMA continues to support their distribution.

## Rapid Testing for Vulnerable Populations

Given the wide selection of platforms to administer COVID-19 diagnostic testing and the supply chain limitations for the materials needed to support them, FEMA supported HHS efforts to prioritize rapid testing for vulnerable populations such as those found in nursing homes. Prioritizing the limited number of rapid tests for populations with underlying health considerations was key to facilitating a rapid response and the strategic distribution of scarce supplies. COVID-19 diagnostic platforms with longer turnaround times were found to be more appropriate in situations with lower risk of rapid spread and escalation. In further support of vulnerable populations within nursing homes, FEMA has coordinated 26,222 deliveries totaling a 14-day supply of personal protective equipment to all 15,400 Medicaid and Medicare-certified nursing homes.

Rapid testing was also proven to be an effective tool in places such as the Navajo Nation, in which limited medical infrastructure and high rates of chronic illnesses



combined to create an at-risk demographic. Rapid testing, as supported by HHS, Indian Health Services, and FEMA, has allowed for increased diagnostic screenings above the national average.

As part of our Agency's efforts to support HHS led community-based testing strategies, FEMA continues to support the White House Coronavirus Task Force and the Administration's Testing Blueprint. Beginning in early May, large quantities of testing swabs and transport media began shipping to help increase testing capacity in support of individualized state, territorial, and tribal plans. As of July 22, FEMA has procured and delivered over 41 million swabs and 32.1 million tubes of transport media. Each state, territory, and tribe will develop its own distribution strategy to align with its testing plan and unique needs. Nationally, partnerships with major retail companies and local independent pharmacies to increase testing access will provide Americans with faster, less invasive, and more convenient testing for under-tested and socially vulnerable communities.

### **Decreasing the Complexity of FEMA: Grant Modernizations Efforts**

To better support SLTT partners and first responders within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, FEMA has adapted its Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant programs. For example, FEMA's grant modernization efforts have evolved to allow for virtual consultations with the fire services on program development and virtual peer reviews. These new capabilities have reduced risk for participating parties and accelerated the reviewal process, with the competitive FY 2020 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program – COVID-19 Supplemental Program (AFG-Streamlined) applications able to be completed in under 1 month instead of the typical average of 6 months for the traditional AFG Program.

Furthermore, Acting Secretary Wolf of DHS exercised his discretionary authority to relax certain requirements within the SAFER Grant Program. By waiving salary caps, cost shares, and prohibitions on supplanting previously budgeted funds, we have reduced financial burdens on applicants and expanded the number of fire departments able to apply. With many municipalities facing a reduction in tax revenue, the waivers for the FY 2020 SAFER Grant Program will allow fire departments to retain or rehire firefighters facing layoffs. DHS and FEMA will provide these fire departments with 100 percent of the funding needed to hire firefighters over the next three years. FEMA anticipates opening the FY20



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application later this calendar year.

## **Disaster Preparedness in a COVID-19 Environment**

COVID-19 is not the first nor the last pandemic the American people will face. It is, therefore, imperative that we continue to prepare at all levels of government, within our communities, and across the private sector by learning from our experience with this novel coronavirus. Furthermore, building a culture of preparedness through a Whole-of-America response could become an important component of our ability to most effectively respond to other disasters such as hurricanes or wildfires during a sustained pandemic response.

Operating in overlapping disaster environments will create new intricacies within already complex mission requirements. For example, there will be a new need to evacuate strategic national assets such as ventilators or key pharmaceuticals. Evacuating people within the current COVID-19 environment will present an even larger challenge, and it will likely require the widespread availability of non-congregate sheltering and health screenings. Furthermore, COVID-19 may slow down state, territorial, and tribal abilities to conduct damage assessments for disasters such as flooding, severe storms, and hurricanes. Response to other disasters, in turn, can slow down the ability of officials to collect crucial information about COVID-19 cases and stymie their ability to share the critical data needed to combat it. Consequently, there is a potential for a compounded effect that could result in a larger emergency than each disaster would be on its own. These are just some of the considerations FEMA has accounted for as we pivot to prepare for what could become active hurricane and wildfire seasons.

## **2020 Hurricane Season Operational Guidance**

With a watchful eye on hazards of any type, on May 20th, FEMA released COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season to help emergency managers and public health officials best prepare for disasters, while continuing to respond to and recover from COVID-19. The guide describes, in both English and Spanish, the anticipated challenges to disaster operations posed by COVID-19, as well as actions emergency managers and public officials can take to prepare for those challenges. By creating a shared understanding of



expectations among FEMA and our SLTT partners, the nation will be better positioned to achieve successful operational outcomes in disaster response and recovery efforts. While this document focuses on hurricane season preparedness, most planning considerations can also be applied to any disaster operation in the COVID-19 environment, including no-notice incidents, flooding and wildfires, and typhoon response. The Operational Guidance is scalable, adaptable, and flexible to all hazards.

FEMA expects to maintain COVID-19 activation into the 2020 hurricane season in order to best support SLTT operations. To ensure that operational decisions are made at the lowest level possible, consistent with the National Response Framework, FEMA is organizing to prioritize resources and adjudicate accordingly, if needed.

FEMA personnel who are currently deployed will be prepared to pivot to support emergent needs. FEMA regions continue to provide technical assistance and coordination for a range of program areas with their respective SLTT partners. FEMA is also well-positioned with thousands of personnel in the field supporting existing operations, thousands more available ready to support emergent disaster operations, and more personnel joining the Agency through virtual onboarding every two weeks. In order to better adapt plans in this environment and support our partners, FEMA programs will continue to provide assistance to survivors, but many programs may require online or phone registration processes (in lieu of in-person), remote assessments or inspections, and adapted program delivery within impacted areas experiencing localized outbreaks or periods of peak COVID-19 activity. However, if and when SLTT partners are overwhelmed, FEMA is prepared and postured to provide program support, regardless of delivery method.

At such a pivotal time for this country, the FEMA workforce has risen to these unprecedented circumstances and met our mission each and every day. We are adaptable, resilient, and support each other. To help protect our workforce, FEMA released to a roadmap for the Agency in June concerning the opening FEMA facilities in the future. All FEMA facilities will be required to have safety protocols established prior to welcoming any employees back into a physical facility. This phased approach will ultimately result in a much smaller permanent footprint in our facilities than we had prior to the pandemic, without sacrificing services. As an example of our Agency's continuing services in a protective workforce posture,



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FEMA's Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Division has completed over 650 engagements with congressional and SLTT officials since shifting to widespread telework practices.

## Conclusion

In closing, I would like to emphasize my pride and gratitude to the men and women of FEMA, as well as my gratitude to our partner departments and agencies for their adaptability, hard work, and endurance during this unprecedented response. Many have risked their health during the COVID-19 response, and their safety and wellbeing remain at the very top of our Agency's priorities.

Furthermore, this Agency would like to thank all Americans. Through coordinated social distancing campaigns across the country, the sacrifices made by millions of Americans bought valuable time as part of this Whole-of-America response. These contributions by the public allowed FEMA and its partners to strategically allocate, and then continuously shift, globally scarce resources such as ventilators to hotspots where they could immediately save lives within a 72-hour window. This Whole-of-America response was personified by leaders in places such as Washington State who voluntarily donated their ventilators to new hotspots in locations like New York.

Finally, I again express my appreciation to Congress and the President for providing FEMA with the necessary resources to meet very complex mission requirements and conditions. This unprecedented response will continue to require a Whole-of-America effort, and FEMA looks forward to closely coordinating with Congress as we work, together, to protect the health and safety of the American people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.



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