

# The Historical Context of Emergency Management

## What You Will Learn

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- The early roots of emergency management
- How FEMA came to exist and how it evolved during the 1980s, 1990s, and the early 21st century
- The sudden changes to modern emergency management that resulted from the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina
- Changes made by post-Hurricane Katrina legislation, a new administration, and legislation passed in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy
- FEMA post-2016

## Introduction

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Emergency management has its roots in ancient history. Early hieroglyphics depict cave dwellers trying to deal with disasters. The Bible speaks of the many disasters that befell civilizations. In fact, the story of Noah warning his neighbors about an impending flood, and his subsequent building of an ark to preserve the planet's biodiversity, could be interpreted as a very early lesson in risk control. As long as there have been disasters, individuals and communities have tried to find ways to fix them. However, organized attempts at disaster recovery did not occur until much later in modern history.

This chapter discusses the historical, organizational, and legislative history of modern emergency management in the United States. Some of the significant events and people that have 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.

Since the turn of the current century, formative events and selections in leadership, more than anything else, have spurred 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 for emergency management is “a discipline that deals 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 disaster.

Emergency management is an essential role of government. The Constitution gives states the 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 levels 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 about emergency management, particularly the response and recovery functions, has taken place. 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 responsibilities for disaster response. While the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act detailed changes to how federal emergency management functioned, many of the changes included in this legislation were overlooked or were slow to be adopted by the leadership at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). With the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008, both Congress and the emergency management community looked forward to positive changes and support for a struggling discipline. Positive changes were made in the nomination of Craig Fugate, a very qualified state emergency management director from Florida, who came in with a promise to improve FEMA’s response operations. Administrator Fugate refocused the agency on preparedness and response. To some this has come at the cost of reducing the agency’s efforts to promote mitigation and to pass leadership of community recovery efforts to other federal agencies. Administrator Fugate launched Whole Community as his personal program to change the dialog from victims to survivors. Over the course of Fugate’s tenure, the agency was tested with many major disasters, the most significant being the impacts of Hurricane/Superstorm Sandy. This period of emergency management is highlighted by the emergence of social media as a critical tool in disaster communications and response, and FEMA has taken full advantage of the new mediums. It has also been marked by a relatively low key profile for FEMA and emergency management as a part of DHS and as homeland security events and issues continued to dominate the disaster and political landscape. In 2016, with the election of Donald Trump as

president, FEMA continued with a low profile in DHS until a series of hurricanes impacting Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico brought a lackluster federal response to the disasters. This chapter will discuss how the agency, FEMA, and emergency management evolved, the individuals and leadership that shaped it, and the events that precipitated change.

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## Early History: 1800–1950

In 1803, a congressional Act was passed that provided financial assistance to a New Hampshire town that had been devastated by fire. This was the first example of the federal government becoming involved in a local disaster. It was not until Franklin Roosevelt's administration used government as a tool to stimulate the economy that the federal government began to make significant investments in emergency management functions.

During the 1930s, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the Bureau of Public Roads were both given the 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, to reduce flooding in the region.

A significant piece of emergency management legislation was passed during this time. The Flood Control Act of 1936 gave the US Army Corps of Engineers increased authority to design and build flood-control projects. This Act has had a significant and long-lasting impact on emergency management in this country. The Act reflected the 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 both shortsighted and costly.

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

The next notable timeframe for the evolution of emergency management was 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 were usually retired military personnel, and their operations received little political or financial support from their state or local governments. Equally often, their civil defense responsibilities were 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, was proof that states other than California were at risk for severe earthquakes. 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 to such disasters. 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.

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## Changes to Emergency Management: The 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 Betsy in 1965 and Hurricane Camille in 1969 killed and injured hundreds of people and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage along the Gulf Coast.

As with previous disasters, the response was the passage of ad hoc legislation for funds. However, the financial losses resulting from Hurricane Betsy's path across Florida and Louisiana raised the issue of disaster insurance against future floods and a potential method to reduce continued government assistance after such disasters. Congressional interest was prompted by the unavailability of flood protection insurance on the standard homeowner policy. If this type of insurance was available, it was

cost prohibitive. These discussions eventually led to the 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.

### Additional Research

In October 2006, a report entitled *Costs and Consequences of Flooding and the Impact of the National Flood Insurance Program* was issued, which provided an overview of what the NFIP had accomplished. It is available at <http://bit.ly/29s6ulo>.

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 to reduce government disaster expenditures were not being met. Change would not occur until Hurricane Agnes devastated Florida in 1972.

George Bernstein, who was 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 that were 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 chose to administer this flood risk program. Civil defense departments usually had the 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.

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## 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 changes that occur in the absence of initiating disaster events?

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

In the 1970s, the 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 (GSA) (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 the passage of the Disaster Relief Act of 1974, which was 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 were the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency (nuclear attack) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (flood control); however, considering the broad range of risks and potential disasters, more than 100 federal agencies were involved in some aspect of risks and disasters.

This pattern continued down to the state and, to a lesser extent, local levels. Parallel organizations and programs added to the confusion and the turf wars that often occurred 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 Eric Jones of Illinois launched an effort through the National Governors Association (NGA) to consolidate federal emergency management activities into 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 NGA and Congress for a consolidation of federal emergency management functions. When the Carter administration proposed such an action, it was 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 whom to turn to in the event of an emergency.

The federal agencies involved, however, 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 both losers and winners. There was a question of which federal department/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.

During these discussions, an accident occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, which 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 Congress the Reorganization Plan Number 3 (3 CFR 1978, 5 US 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 (FEMA) and that the FEMA director would report directly to the president.

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

- 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 the following fundamental organizational principles:

1. Federal authorities who were to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to major civil emergencies should be supervised by one official who is responsible to the president and given attention by other officials at the highest levels.
2. An effective civil defense system requires the most efficient use of all available resources.
3. Whenever possible, emergency responsibilities should be extensions of federal agencies.
4. Federal hazard mitigation activities should be closely linked with emergency preparedness and response functions.

Subsequent to congressional review and concurrence, FEMA 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 the 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.

President Carter had problems finding a director for this new organization. No large constituent group was identified with emergency management, and at the time 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, who was then head of the Office of Personnel Management, 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 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. 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 own congressional bosses. It was a period of few major disasters, so virtually nobody noticed this problem of disjointedness.

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## Civil Defense Reappears as Nuclear Attack Planning: The 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 General Louis O. Giuffrida as director of FEMA. Giuffrida, a California friend of Ed Meese, who was one of the president's closest advisors, had a background in training and terrorism preparedness at the state government level. He 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 declining.



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

During Giuffrida'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 Giuffrida managed to bring the agency physically together in a new headquarters building in Washington, DC, severe morale problems persisted.

Dislike of Giuffrida's style and questions about FEMA's operations came to the attention of US 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 Giuffrida 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. Becton, a retired military general and former director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the State Department, 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, only 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, Becton ranked the programs in FEMA by level of importance. Of the more than 20 major programs, the natural hazard's programs ranked near the bottom. This priority seemed 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 up to 200,000 casualties could result from an earthquake 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 standard for all of 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.

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### **An Agency in Trouble: 1989–92**

As Congress debated, and finally passed, major reform of federal disaster policy as part of the Stewart McKinney–Robert Stafford Act, FEMA's potential 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 levels over agency spending and priorities.

With a new administration in place, President George H. W. Bush named Wallace Stickney as director of FEMA. Stickney was from New Hampshire and was a friend of John Sununu, who was 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 as a volunteer firefighter. 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 who were appointed 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 both 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 for the governors to decide what to do. 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 deal with the catastrophe.

A few years later, FEMA was not so lucky. In August 1992, Hurricane Andrew struck Florida and Louisiana, and Hurricane Iniki struck Hawaii only a few weeks later. Again, FEMA wasn't ready, but with Hurricane Andrew, it was FEMA that failed not only the people of Florida, but the process and the system as well. Starting with Hurricane Hugo, public concern over natural disasters was high. People wanted, and expected, their 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. But the incoming Clinton administration realized how important an effective response and quick recovery were to communities and to voters and was determined to fix the emergency management system.

## The Witt Revolution: 1993–2001

When President Clinton nominated James Lee Witt to be director of FEMA, Witt breathed new life 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 who had played a major role in creating FEMA but had been forgotten—the state directors. With Witt, President Clinton had credibility and, more importantly, 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 the 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, both internally and externally, were 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. 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.

### Additional Research

**“The Great USA Flood of 1993”** (<http://bit.ly/29slbEb>)

*Abstract:* The 1993 Midwest flood was one of the most significant and damaging natural disasters ever to hit the United States. Damages totaled \$15 billion, 50 people died, hundreds of levees failed, and thousands of people were evacuated, some for months. The flood was unusual in the magnitude of the crests, the number of record crests, the large area impacted, and the length of the time the flood was an issue.

The paper discusses some details of the flood, the forecasting procedures utilized by the National Weather Service, and the precipitation events that caused the flood.

The Northridge, California, earthquake quickly followed the Midwest floods in 1993. Northridge tested all of 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.

When President Clinton made Witt 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 1993, 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 the agency would oversee terrorism.

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 called 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 stakeholders in the community, including, for the first time, the business sector.

#### Additional Research

"Project Impact Initiative to Create Disaster-Resistant Communities Demonstrates Worth in Kansas Years Later" (<http://bit.ly/29OGUv6>). This article documents how preventive measures, taken by communities in Kansas as part of the Project Impact program, saved lives years later when devastating tornadoes struck across Kansas.

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. Fig. 1.1 shows the effects of mitigation during Hurricane Ike. As the decade came to an end, FEMA was still recognized as the preeminent emergency management system in the world. It was adopted in other countries, and Witt became an ambassador for emergency management overseas.

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## Terrorism: 2001

With the election of President George W. Bush, a new FEMA director, Joe Albaugh, was named to head the agency. As a former chief of staff to Bush when he was governor of Texas and Bush's campaign manager in the 2000 presidential race, Albaugh 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.



**FIGURE 1.1**

Gilchrist, Texas, August 16, 2009. These stilt homes were the only structures still standing in the town of Gilchrist after Hurricane Ike destroyed it. FEMA is still working with local, state, and federal agencies to rebuild the town.

*Photo by Patsy Lynch/FEMA.*

Albaugh 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 gave Project Impact credit for the minimal damage from the quake. When then Vice President Dick Cheney was asked why the program was being eliminated, he responded that there had been doubts about its effectiveness. As FEMA's budget proceeded through the appropriations process, Congress put funding back into Project Impact.

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

As the events of September 11, 2001 unfolded, FEMA activated the Federal Response Plan, and response operations proceeded as expected in New York and Virginia. The strength of the US Emergency Management System was proven, however, as hundreds of response personnel initiated their operations within just minutes of the onset of events.

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## The Department of Homeland Security: 2001–05

Almost immediately after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the president created by executive order the Office of Homeland Security within the White

House. The same day that announcement was made, Tom Ridge, the Governor of Pennsylvania, was sworn in to lead the office with the title Assistant to the President.

In March 2002, President Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive-3 (HSPD-3). What resulted was the widely recognizable five-color Homeland Security Advisory System code. On November 25, 2002, President Bush signed into law the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HS Act) (Public Law 107-296) and announced that Tom Ridge would be appointed secretary of a new 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 more than 179,000 federal employees from 22 existing federal agencies under a single, cabinet-level organization. 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. The White House and Congress both had recognized that a Homeland Security czar would require both a staff and a large budget to succeed, and thus 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 to establish legislation that was passable yet effective. Efforts to incorporate many of the intelligence-gathering and investigative law enforcement agencies—the National Security Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Central Intelligence Agency—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 legislative leverage 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. 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.

Although a handful of these agencies remained intact after the consolidation, most were fully incorporated into one of four new directorates—Border and Transportation Security, Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, Emergency Preparedness and Response (EP&R), and Science and Technology. A fifth directorate, Management, incorporated parts of the existing administrative and support offices within the merged agencies. Secretary Ridge was given exactly 1 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 DHS, the HS Act made several changes to other federal agencies and their programs and created several new programs. On March 1, 2003, Joe Albaugh, in a memo to 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.

With DHS establishment moving forward, in 2004 FEMA was faced with four major hurricanes that assaulted Florida. Because of that election year's overall political nature and with Florida being regarded as key in deciding the outcome of the presidential election (as well as the fact that the president's brother Jeb was the Governor of Florida), a great deal of effort was expended to ensure that the federal response to the hurricanes was efficient and effective.

### Additional Research

*DHS Office of the Inspector General, 2005. Audit of FEMA's Individuals and Households Program in Miami-Dade County, Florida, for Hurricane Frances.*

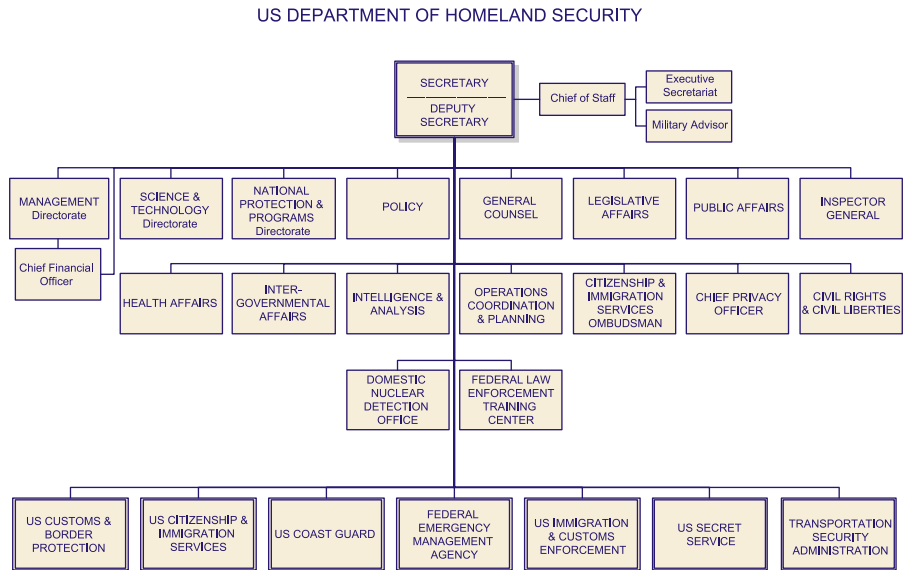
One of the many issues that arose in the aftermath of the hurricanes was the allegation of widespread fraud in the handling of people receiving aid from FEMA even when they had suffered no damage to or loss of their homes. The DHS inspector general, an independent oversight group that investigates government waste, fraud, and abuse of federal programs, investigated the allegations, and this report summarizes their findings.

<http://bit.ly/29qTW12>.

On November 30, 2004, Ridge announced his resignation. On February 16, 2005, Michael Chertoff was unanimously confirmed by the Senate to lead DHS. On July 13, 2005, Michael Chertoff released a six-point agenda that would be used to guide a reorganization of the department aimed at streamlining its efforts:

- increase overall preparedness, particularly for catastrophic events;
- create better transportation security systems to move people and cargo more securely and efficiently;
- strengthen border security and interior enforcement and reform immigration processes;
- enhance information sharing (with partners);
- improve financial management, human resource development, procurement, and information technology within the department;
- realign the department's organization to maximize mission performance.

As part of the proposed reorganization, virtually all the remaining preparedness capabilities in FEMA, including the US Fire Administration, were moved to the new Office of Preparedness. The exception was the Emergency Management Institute (EMI). Although the EMI training function was always considered part



**FIGURE 1.2**

Department of Homeland Security organizational chart.

of preparedness, the senior-level FEMA officials argued that its courses supported response and recovery. A new FEMA office was to focus exclusively on response and recovery.

Under the initial DHS organization (Fig. 1.2), the EP&R directorate contained most of the pre-DHS FEMA functions and staff. Under the Chertoff reorganization, EP&R was eliminated and the director of FEMA, who was formerly the undersecretary for EP&R, would become an office director.

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

The situation at the time was very similar to the one that existed prior to the creation of FEMA in 1979. Federal emergency management and disaster assistance capabilities were in numerous federal departments and agencies scattered across the federal government and in the White House. This time, however, instead of being scattered across the federal government, they were scattered within the fledgling DHS. 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.



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## The Hurricane Katrina Debacle: 2005

As Secretary Chertoff proceeded with his reorganization, scientists like Max Mayfield (the director of the National Hurricane Center) predicted another active hurricane season. As always, the greatest fear was that a major storm would hit the Gulf Coast, particularly low-lying New Orleans.

Under James Lee Witt, 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 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.

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 previous exercise. Unfortunately, the funding to support these corrective actions, which had been 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 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. Phone calls were immediately made to Louisiana emergency management officials, and in their 5 p.m. EDT Katrina forecast and accompanying briefings, the meteorologists alerted both Louisiana and Mississippi that the track of the storm was 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, National Weather Service officials confirmed that New Orleans was squarely at risk.

Over the weekend, the drumbeat of warnings continued. FEMA held video teleconferences on both days, discussing the potential dangers of Katrina and especially the risks to New Orleans. Max Mayfield of the Hurricane Center called the governors of the affected states, something he had only done 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.

Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Buras, Louisiana, on Monday, August 29, 2005. At the time, it was reported as a Category 4 storm when it made landfall. The National Hurricane Center would later downgrade it to a Category 3 storm. In any event, it was considered an extremely dangerous storm by weather forecasters and the National Hurricane Center. It impacted a broad geographic area stretching from Alabama to coastal Mississippi and southeast Louisiana, an estimated 90,000 square miles. In May, 2006, the death toll from the storm was 1856, with another 705 individuals listed as missing (Fig. 1.3).



**FIGURE 1.3**

New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 18, 2005. This shows the damage to homes and property in the lower Ninth Ward due to Hurricane Katrina. The markings on these houses were made by the search and rescue teams who looked for survivors after the storm. Searchers wrote the date the house was searched, the time, which search party was involved, any survivors found, and any animals that were still in the house.

*From Andrea Booher/FEMA.*

The storm impacted over 1.5 million people and displaced more than 800,000 citizens. The US Coast Guard rescued over 24,273 people, and FEMA search and rescue teams rescued nearly 6600 persons. Federal government disaster relief expenses were expected to exceed \$100 billion, and the insurance losses were expected to exceed \$35 billion. The National Flood Insurance Program paid more than \$16.1 million to more than 205,000 people who filed claims related to Katrina. Forty-four states and the District of Columbia received emergency declarations to cover their expenses for sheltering millions of evacuees who had to be transported out of the Gulf.

By any account, Hurricane Katrina was a massive storm, deadly and destructive. It served to expose severe cracks in the nation's emergency management system and its ability to respond to a catastrophic event. Government after-action reports, which are done after most disasters and media accounts, have judged the response a failure, and the recovery phase is considered to show the same level of incompetence. Changes that had been made to Louisiana's coastal landscape, particularly the loss of wetlands and increased channelization, made New Orleans and the Louisiana

coast more vulnerable to hurricanes. Design and construction decisions on the levee system and inadequate maintenance of that system contributed to the impacts of Katrina.

The storm challenged the capacities and capabilities of emergency management operations at all levels of government. The lack of planning for the Superdome as the designated shelter of last resort for New Orleans and the subsequent problems that occurred in that facility provided the most visible demonstration of the failed capacities. Many of the problems of the immediate response exposed the impacts of priority focus on terrorism and homeland security in recent years and may have contributed to the decrease in these capacities and capabilities.

Elected officials at all levels of government stumbled badly as they tried to provide leadership in the face of this disaster. The business community, voluntary agencies, and nongovernmental organizations stepped up to provide extraordinary services to storm victims. The general public, corporations, unions, and foundations donated billions of dollars for disaster relief.

### Additional Research

In the aftermath of Katrina, both houses of Congress held extensive hearings on what went wrong. The Senate report “The Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, 2006. Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared” provides insight into the results of the hearings and deliberations.

<http://bit.ly/29B4wCd>.

More than 1800 people died from Hurricane Katrina, and tens of thousands were displaced and suffered for days in places like the Superdome, on freeway ramps, and on the tops of roofs while waiting to be rescued. Thousands lost their homes and were separated from loved ones. The dislocation, chaos, and desperation that lingered for months after the storm were direct results 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 *before* Katrina even made landfall, the federal government, through DHS/FEMA, assumed 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.

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## The Steps Leading to the Katrina Debacle

In many respects, FEMA’s failures after Katrina were a predictable outgrowth of steps that were taken 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 DHS. The director of FEMA was no longer on the same level as the cabinet secretaries whom 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.

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. 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 officer as the new coordinator 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. Another factor in the post-Katrina fiasco was the dramatic post-9/11 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% of available resources for emergency management activities were applied to terrorism. Preparing, mitigating, or responding to natural disasters was subordinated to a narrow, if understandable, focus on terrorism. That reprioritization depleted the capabilities to respond to disasters at all levels of government.

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## Post-Katrina Changes

In the rush to examine and investigate what went wrong and to take corrective actions, both the House of Representatives and the Senate engaged in extensive hearings and investigations.

### Additional Research

The Bush administration's report “The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned” (<http://bit.ly/29HqiFL>) was released in February 2006. It was a weighty document and included 125 recommendations and 11 critical actions that needed to be completed by June 1, the start of the 2006 hurricane season. Most of its recommendations have still not been implemented, but it remains a unique assessment of the federal government's role in disaster relief as far as the Bush administration was concerned.

These organizational and leadership issues were not easily swept under the rug. Senators Clinton and Mikulski introduced legislation to restore FEMA to its independent status and make the director's position a cabinet post. 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. Lieberman was joined by Republican Committee Chair Susan Collins, who would not even consider moving FEMA out.

The 109th Congress passed legislation that revised federal emergency management policies that vested more power in the president, reorganized FEMA, and enhanced and clarified the mission, functions, and authorities of both the agency and its parent organization, DHS.

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 Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (commonly known as PKEMRA), 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 just listed, Congress enacted supplemental appropriations, one-time waivers of requirements, and temporary extensions solely associated with Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma.

### Additional Research

The Congressional Research Service's publication "Federal Emergency Management Policy Changes after Hurricane Katrina—A Summary of Statutory Provisions" is an excellent report that identifies the requirements and changes for FEMA, DHS, and federal emergency management policies and programs under PKEMRA.

<http://bit.ly/29qUBzN>.

In summary, PKEMRA requires that DHS reconsolidate all the emergency management functions (including preparedness) into FEMA, elevate the status of FEMA within the department, protect the FEMA assets from reassignment within DHS, and give 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.

After Mike Brown resigned (or was terminated), David Paulison became FEMA administrator. Paulison had served as US Fire Administrator and 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 had long felt that they had not received their due within FEMA and the emergency management community.

The new leadership came with the firm mandate to prevent another Katrina. To do so, FEMA leadership took a very different approach to the emergency management partnership with both state and locals. FEMA instituted the “new FEMA”—a top-down approach in which federal requirements for response planning and operations were imposed on state and local emergency management operations as a condition of receiving federal resources.

The Integrated Planning System that was created included different planning parameters to those used by state and local emergency planners in their certifications. State and local compliance with the National Information Management System was made a condition for continued funding. The old system in which the federal government supplemented state and local efforts and worked in partnership was replaced by a system where in a major disaster the federal government took charge and supplanted state and local authorities. To support this change, FEMA was able to substantially increase its staff in both its headquarters and the regions, and many of the new senior managers who were hired came from organizations such as the Coast Guard and the military, where federal supremacy and authority were the normal operational parameters.

At the direction of DHS leadership, FEMA concentrated on remaking the National Response Plan into a National Response Framework (NRF) that blurred the lines of responsibility among the federal partners in responding to disasters. Under the new NRF, DHS/FEMA assumed many more responsibilities such as acting as the lead federal agency for Mass Care, an Emergency Support Function previously led by the American Red Cross. On the other hand, DHS/FEMA used the PKEMRA requirements to deflect problem areas such as postdisaster housings.

PKEMRA called for a new strategy for disaster housing, and FEMA engaged other federal agencies, specifically HUD, in development of this strategy and taking on a major role in providing postdisaster housing. This change in responsibility was piloted during the Texas disasters of 2008 to mixed results. A more complete discussion can be found in later chapters of the text.

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## 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.



**FIGURE 1.4**

Washington, DC, September 29, 2009—FEMA Administrator W. Craig Fugate addresses the audience at the American Red Cross Headquarters prior to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano's speech on the nation's responsibility for preparedness and the resilience of the American people.

Source: *Barry Bahler/DHS.*

## The Obama Administration's Approach to Emergency Management

Emergency management issues did not play a prominent role in the presidential election of 2008. The issue of the failed response to Katrina and the slow recovery were certainly a part of the campaign dialog, and both presidential nominees visited New Orleans and vowed to speed up the recovery. Barack Obama's election represented a change from the past, including a change for emergency management. Although Obama's administration discussed removing FEMA from DHS and returning it to its former position as an independent agency, this was not to be. Janet Napolitano, Secretary of DHS, chose W. Craig Fugate, former state director of Emergency Management from Florida (Fig. 1.4). Fugate brought excellent credentials and extensive operational experience to the position. Florida was one of the premier state emergency management organizations in the United States, and although Fugate had been a strong proponent of moving FEMA out of DHS, he accepted the position and was easily confirmed by the Senate.

Fugate wanted to make a culture of preparedness—especially personal preparedness—a hallmark of his FEMA tenure. As a result, he changed the vocabulary of disasters, referring to individuals impacted by disasters as “survivors” instead of “victims.”

His team (Fig. 1.5) included several veterans of the 1990s Witt years, and he strongly supported rebuilding the partnership with state and local emergency management organizations. His ability to rebuild FEMA into a strong, well-managed,

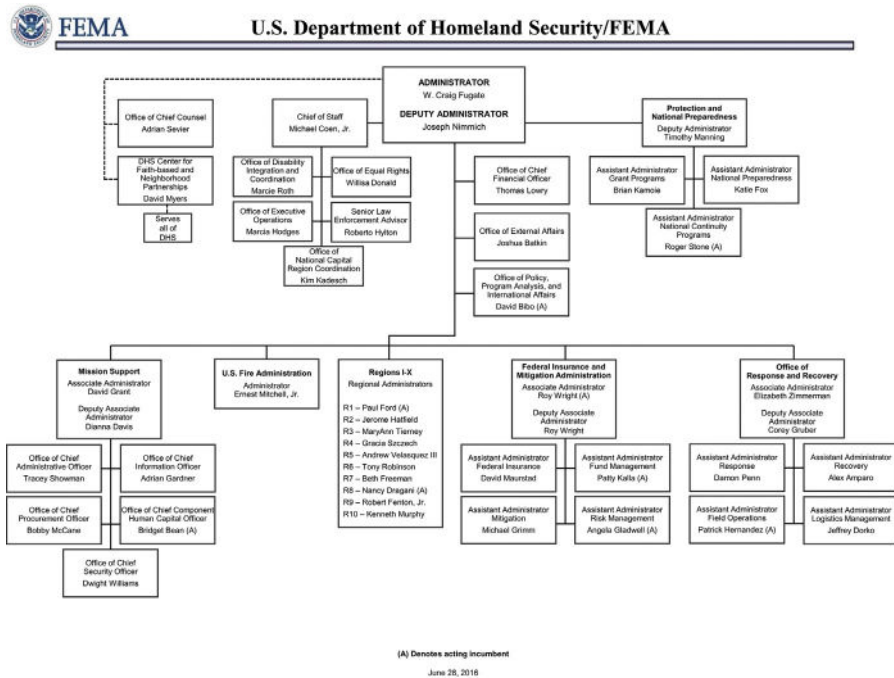


FIGURE 1.5

Federal Emergency Management Agency organizational chart June 28, 2016.

Source: FEMA (2016). FEMA Organizational Chart (<http://bit.ly/2f7xn00>).

and responsive organization, however, was not immediately tested. The 2009 hurricane season was one of the calmest in decades. The agency reorganization included a consolidation of the response-and-recovery functions under a single directorate led by Bill Carwile, an ex-federal coordinating officer with substantial response experience.

Promoting individual and community preparedness became more evident. Although a strong supporter of mitigation while in Florida, Fugate expressed concerns about the feasibility of the NFIP.

As Administrator Fugate and his team sought to reenergize the Agency, their priorities were:

- improving the response operations;
- incorporating all elements of social media—Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.—to communicate with the public before, during, and after disasters;
- promoting their signature program concept of a Whole Community approach to emergency management;
- limiting FEMA’s leadership role in long-term recovery and mitigation.



Fugate's Whole Community approach revealed a fundamental change in previous approaches to emergency management, which transfers considerable responsibility for community safety decisions.

In the FEMA document entitled "A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action (FDOC 104-008-1/ December 2011)" (<http://bit.ly/29Cj6IV>), FEMA released its concept for applying a Whole Community approach to emergency management. In this document, the Whole Community approach is defined as:

*As a concept, Whole Community is a means by which residents, emergency management practitioners, organizational and community leaders, and government officials can collectively understand and assess the needs of their respective communities and determine the best ways to organize and strengthen their assets, capacities, and interests. By doing so, a more effective path to societal security and resilience is built. In a sense, Whole Community is a philosophical approach on how to think about conducting emergency management.*

After a slow start in terms of major disasters, the agency has certainly been tested in recent years. The Joplin tornadoes, wildfires, and finally Hurricane Sandy have put FEMA back under the spotlight.

By all accounts, FEMA fared well in Joplin. FEMA had been conducting disaster response and recovery in Missouri in the months prior to the Joplin tornado. Severe winter storms in January and February 2011 led President Barack Obama to issue a major disaster declaration (FEMA-DR-1961) for 59 counties throughout the state on March 23, 2011. President Obama issued a major disaster declaration (FEMA-DR-1980) for five counties.

The Joplin tornado, as the single most deadly tornado in the United States in over half a century, overwhelmed the capabilities of the city of Joplin and Jasper County. However, as the preliminary findings demonstrate, the Whole Community responded to Joplin and Jasper County in their hour of need. This only transpired because of the preparedness partnerships that had been developed among federal, state, local, private sector, voluntary, and nonprofit entities.

### Additional Research

Joplin: One Year Later, the White House.

<http://bit.ly/29GC14I>.

In October of 2012, a major hurricane took aim on the East Coast. Hurricane Sandy was a different type of storm dealing with different circumstances, impacting a larger geographic area from the Carolinas up through the entire East Coast with major population centers affected and very different cultures from the Midwest. In general, FEMA received high praise for its response, which is not surprising as that is what the agency had focused on since 2008. Except for areas in Staten Island, NY, and some areas of Brooklyn, NY, FEMA did an excellent job with the initial



**FIGURE 1.6**

Breezy Point, N.Y., November 1, 2012—a large American flag flies in the midst of more than 100 residences burned in the Breezy Point community of the Rockaways adjacent to New York City. A gas leak that occurred during the height of Hurricane Sandy erupted into a firestorm that was difficult for fire fighters to control.

Source: *Walt Jennings/FEMA.*

response, supported by very strong state and local emergency response personnel in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. When Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican Presidential candidate, made the mistake of criticizing the Obama administration for the Sandy response, he was given a redressing by Republican Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey, who praised the Obama administration's efforts. But as the recovery process went on, many problems arose. Insurance claims were slow in coming and major infrastructure issues needed to be addressed (Fig. 1.6).

Of major significance, President Obama assigned Secretary Shaun Donovan, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), to oversee Sandy recovery—not Administrator Fugate, nor Secretary Napolitano. This was a clear indication that FEMA may be out of the recovery business except to foot the bill through its Disaster Relief Fund programs. In fact, the first monies released to the communities to rebuild were funding through HUD's Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). CDBG funding is one of the few federal monies that can be used to meet federal matching requirements. At the same time, arguments in Congress over a Disaster Relief Fund supplemental that would cover the billions of dollars anticipated for Sandy repair were being bogged down in discussions on the federal deficit, whether the supplemental had to be to offset by other federal budget dollars. In the end, the strength and loudness of the New York and New Jersey delegations persevered and a nonoffset supplemental was approved.

Sandy was the first large-scale disaster to completely apply the new National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) and resulted in a host of issues. The

NDRF, unlike previous plans where agencies signed on the dotted line to commit their resources (later to be reimbursed by FEMA through the Disaster Recovery Framework), has no such commitment in the framework. Sandy proved to be a test of the NDRF. Without an advocate for long-term mitigation strategies to be incorporated into the rebuilding—a position FEMA once held—pressures arose to use structural solutions along the New Jersey shore to rebuild beaches that will erode even more quickly in the future and impact communities for years to come. FEMA’s abdication on promoting mitigation issues that would reduce future impacts has left a void that the Army Corps of Engineers may be only too happy to fill.

Post-Sandy legislation has been copious. [Table 1.1](#) provides an analysis done by the Congressional Research Service that focuses on changes to the Stafford Act that would expedite delivery of aid to states and communities through the Disaster Recovery Framework as well as simplify procedures for historical preservation and environmental reviews. A complete copy of the report can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/29qVAzE>.

By all appearances, leadership at FEMA and DHS are slowly achieving their goal of being a preparedness and response organization, leaving the difficult decisions of recovery and building back better to some other federal entity.

It is important to recognize the critical role social media has played in FEMA’s response and other program operations. Under the leadership of Administrator Fugate, FEMA has been on the leading edge of utilizing media outlets from Twitter to Facebook to YouTube. Under Fugate’s leadership, FEMA showed that the federal government recognized the importance of communication with its citizens during a disaster and in the aftermath.

### Aftermath of Sandy and an Insurance Scandal

While FEMA received positive reviews for its response to Sandy, as noted earlier, the recovery proved more difficult. Three years after the storm hit, an investigation by Public Television’s *Frontline* program alleged that thousands of homeowners who had flood insurance through the NFIP had been shortchanged on their claims. Congressional hearings soon followed, and in 2015 FEMA launched its own review and found that three out of five of the 17,000 policyholders filing claims were entitled to more money. Over 2000 lawsuits were filed against FEMA and the NFIP. Although FEMA administers the NFIP, private sector insurance companies handle policy sales and servicing of claims. It appeared that at least two of the engineering firms used to perform damage assessments on homes were rewriting the estimates when reports were received from field assessors. Based on the FEMA review, these firms offered each policyholder an opportunity to submit their claims for review. To date, FEMA has expended \$8.1 million to approximately 140,000 policyholders covered by the NFIP.

Source: <http://bit.ly/29qWlbX>.

## 2016–Present

The 2016 election of Donald Trump as president presented a scenario of a president who had no previous experience in dealing with natural disasters and minimal

**Table 1.1** Congressional Research Service Analysis of Stafford Act Amendment

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This report analyzes the provisions of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013. In general, these provisions amend the Stafford Act with a stated goal of improving the efficiency and quality of disaster assistance provided by FEMA. Briefly, the amendments to the Stafford Act include:

establishing a new set of alternative procedures for administering the Public Assistance Program, which provides assistance for debris removal and the repair and restoration of eligible facilities (Section 1102 of the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013);

authorizing FEMA to enter into agreements with private owners of multifamily rental properties to expand postdisaster housing resources (Section 1103);

revising the administration of the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to include a possible advancement of 25% of grant funds (Section 1104);

directing the establishment of alternative dispute resolution procedures (including binding arbitration), building on FEMA's current appeals process, to resolve federal and state disagreements on costs and eligibility questions (Section 1105);

directing the creation of a joint process for environmental and historical review for disaster recovery projects with the goal of increasing the speed of the process (Section 1106);

directing FEMA to study, and report to Congress, whether it is appropriate to increase the dollar size of "small projects" eligible for simplified procedures (Section 1107);

including childcare as an eligible expense under the "other needs assistance" provided in certain disasters (Section 1108(a));

specifically authorizing the reimbursement of the base wages of government employees providing emergency work under certain circumstances (Section 1108(b));

directing FEMA to update the factors considered when assessing the need for Individual Assistance in the declaration process (Section 1109);

authorizing the chief executive of a tribal government to directly request disaster or emergency declarations from the president, much as a governor can for a state (Section 1110); and

directing FEMA to create a comprehensive national strategy for reducing the cost of future disasters (Section 1111).

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*Prospectively, the changes in law apply to disasters declared on or after the date of enactment, January 29, 2013.*

knowledge of emergency management operations and partnerships. However, a good signal was sent to the community when President Trump nominated Brock Long to be administrator of FEMA. Long was State Director of Alabama's Emergency Management Agency from 2008 to 2011. Prior to that he had served with FEMA Region IV (Atlanta) as head of the Hurricane Liaison Team. Long was widely respected within the emergency management community and had long-established partnerships with other state directors and local officials. Long, however, was going into the vast bureaucracy of DHS where the president's priorities were on immigration, border control, and building a wall. While DHS certainly had the president's interest, his 2018 budget proposed cutting \$667 million in FEMA grants to the states

for preparedness. Administrator Long, echoing his predecessor Craig Fugate, was vocal about his support for state and local governments needing to contribute more to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. He was a supporter of a Fugate idea that states should be required to have a “disaster deductible” that states could use to pay a percentage of upfront costs before receiving federal government funding.

At the same time that Long was being celebrated on Capitol Hill, Trump nominated Daniel Craig to be the number 2 as deputy administrator at FEMA. Craig was a veteran of the Bush administration at FEMA. Unfortunately, Craig was being investigated for having falsified government travel reimbursements and time sheets and allegations that he had conflicts of interest in contracts that were awarded after Hurricane Katrina. There was insufficient evidence on the conflicts of interest charges but Craig withdrew his nomination to be deputy administrator.

Administrator Long initiated several innovations to FEMA. One was the FIT (FEMA Integration Teams) program designed to enhance intergovernmental coordination by collocating FIT with state and local partners. FIT personnel, managed from FEMA regions, were dispatched to work alongside their state and local partners. The goals of this program were to provide access to and direct communication with FEMA personnel, increase the speed and quality of technical assistance with an aim to build capacity with FEMA partners, and provide more effective response and recovery operations.

Another hallmark of Long’s tenure was to look to reinsurance to support the NFIP. In 2018, as part of FEMA’s risk management strategy, FEMA secured \$1.46 billion in reinsurance coverage for the NFIP payouts from storms like Harvey and to reduce to need for FEMA to borrow from the federal treasury, thus reducing the NFIP debt load.

Administrator Long and FEMA were quickly tested during the 2017 hurricane season. Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria had devastating impacts on the nation at the same time FEMA was working on recovery from 692 previously declared disasters. Aside from the hurricanes, FEMA would be responding to unprecedented wildfires in California.

Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria caused over \$265 billion in damages. These hurricanes and wildfires affected more than 47 million people.

Most criticism of FEMA’s response focused on Puerto Rico, which was highlighted when President Trump toured the Puerto Rico damage and at a community shelter tossed rolls of paper towels at the residents to help them with their cleanup.

Despite his experience and knowledge, Administrator Long’s tenure at FEMA was short lived. Several sources were investigating Long for misuse of government vehicles. Long had been using a FEMA car to drive back and forth to his home in North Carolina where his family still resided. All indications showed that Long was not aware of the restrictions on use of government vehicles but made the decision to resign. He resigned in February 2019. Long and FEMA were celebrated for their handling of the Houston recovery but criticized for FEMA performance in Puerto Rico. This criticism may have been exacerbated by the Trump administration not understanding the position Puerto Rico holds within national responsibilities.

With Long's resignation, Peter Gaynor, a deputy administrator, assumed the responsibilities of acting FEMA administrator. Gaynor also comes from a solid emergency management background, having served as director of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency since 2015.

In February 2019, President Trump nominated Jeff Byard as administrator of FEMA. Mr. Byard has been serving as assistant administrator for response and recovery at FEMA and was with the Alabama Emergency Services Agency before coming to FEMA. As of August 1, 2019, he has not been confirmed. One of the areas he has focused on was to establish greater cohesion between the private sector and the federal government in disasters.

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## Conclusion

The history of disasters and efforts to manage their risks influence all aspects of emergency management, as are discussed in all 10 chapters of this textbook. Once again, we see history repeating itself with political figures making ethical mistakes. The disaster environment is fraught with such opportunities. We are in a very perilous time with the impacts of climate change being felt daily and the lack of political will to address these hazards. In later chapters, we will again explore the historical context in greater detail to better explain how recent actions and policies stand to influence the future of emergency management. The final chapter will also discuss in more definitive terms several of the different trends that are pointing to a more viable, proactive emergency management discipline (as opposed to one that is reactive and which changes only in response to major events or disasters). Finally, as in previous editions of this textbook, the authors will speculate on what the future may hold for the discipline based on a combined experience of over 100 years in the emergency management profession.

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## Important Terms

- Civil defense
- Climate change
- Cybersecurity
- Department of Homeland Security
- Emergency management
- Federal Emergency Management Agency

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## 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 significance of the Flood Control Act of 1936?
4. How did the Cold War era contribute to the evolution of modern emergency management?
5. What disaster led to the creation of the National Flood Insurance Program?
6. Describe the events of the 1970s that led to the creation of FEMA.
7. Why was FEMA an agency in trouble at the close of the 1980s?
8. How did James Lee Witt improve FEMA?
9. What changes did the creation of the Department of Homeland Security bring about for federal emergency management capacity?
10. What were the impacts of Hurricane Katrina on FEMA?
11. What impact has Hurricane Sandy had on FEMA's responsibilities and changes to the Disaster Recovery Framework?
12. How relevant is social media in disaster response and recovery?
13. What do you think about making FEMA an independent agency and removing it from DHS?

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### Out-of-Class Exercises

Based on your knowledge of how emergency management has evolved at the community and state levels, recommend the most appropriate organizations at each level to have responsibility for mitigation. Pick a community and consider how you would apply the Whole Community concept to that community. Do you think we still need a FEMA or can these responsibilities be devolved to the state?