

January 27, 2025

President Donald J. Trump  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500 USA



Dear Mr. President,

The USA Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA) understands your frustrations with FEMA's role and function in disaster management. However, we strongly oppose any decision to eliminate FEMA and shift the full responsibility for disaster and emergency management to the states. Such an action would not solve the issue at hand; instead, it would compound the hardships faced by Americans impacted by disasters.

FEMA has faltered in many ways but has succeeded in others. Eliminating FEMA would be a mistake, but a comprehensive review and reform of all national disaster management authorities – including FEMA's role – is needed. Furthermore, the Robert T. Stafford Act (Stafford Act), the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF), and related policies require reform, and doing so would necessitate a shift in FEMA's federal response and recovery role.

Shifting complete responsibility for response and recovery to the states means that Americans in less wealthy states will experience a longer recovery process and, frankly, greater harm. An example of this can be seen in North and South Carolina, where it's clear that less wealthy states suffer more severely in the long run from disasters like Hurricanes Helene and Milton. While some may argue that FEMA has not effectively responded to these hurricanes, this is also due to states lacking the capacity to address disaster and emergency management issues on their own. Therefore, we also recommend that the administration consider incentivizing the adoption of risk management and mitigation strategies so that states and local jurisdictions can proactively tackle the threats and hazards they face.

Disasters start at the local level, impacting the residents of counties, boroughs, parishes, cities, and towns. But disasters know no boundaries, and it takes an enterprise-wide approach to emergency management to serve our communities effectively. Regardless of FEMA's performance, federal assistance remains urgently needed in all disaster-stricken locations, and our states must continue to help establish applicable systems, standards, and the exchange of resources. Local, state, and federal expertise, staff, guidance, and funding are essential to ensure that residents can respond and recover. In particular, this aid is needed in the states that lack the population, resources, or tax base to cover the costs.

In addition to a comprehensive review of FEMA's responsibilities and reform of the Stafford Act and DRF, it is imperative to recognize that FEMA has erroneously been buried under the Department of Homeland Security. In this context, FEMA has been tasked with responding to issues such as COVID-19, homelessness, and aspects of social reform. Instead, FEMA must be empowered and mandated to concentrate on prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation of

disasters. Furthermore, it must be able to exercise its authority in a non-political, non-partisan manner, supported by the President.

Mr. President, we strongly urge you to actively engage with IAEM-USA as you review FEMA's role and consider critical reforms to the Stafford Act and DRF. IAEM-USA represents the full spectrum of emergency management professionals and proudly stands as the world's largest non-profit organization advocating for the priorities of local emergency managers. Our deep expertise, proven leadership, and commitment to strengthening the U.S. emergency management system uniquely position us to provide invaluable insight into this review process. Therefore, we formally request a seat on the Federal Emergency Management Review Council to ensure that the voices of those on the front lines of disaster response and recovery are heard and integrated into the future of emergency management policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carrie Speranza', written in a cursive style.

Carrie Speranza, CEM  
President, U.S. Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers

CC:

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
House Homeland Security Committee