



Policy Recommendations for President-Elect Trump and Congress

December 2024

The International Association of Emergency Managers ([IAEM](#)), which has more than 6,000 members worldwide, is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to promoting the "[Principles of Emergency Management](#)" and representing those professionals whose goals are saving lives and protecting property and the environment during emergencies and disasters. We are the voice of local emergency managers, including county, municipal, and city Emergency Management Agencies, as well as emergency management operations for hospital systems, colleges and universities, corporations, and other emergency management practitioners.

Local emergency managers are the front line in the battle to minimize the loss of life and the destruction of property when any type of disasters occur. We are responsible, day in and day out, for the development of comprehensive, all-hazards emergency management programs in our communities. This involves the development of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery programs for every community across the country. However, even with all the forethought we put into preparing for crises, the frequency, severity, and costs continue to escalate. We need and rely upon the support of the federal government when our local ability to handle a disaster is overwhelmed by its magnitude.

IAEM respectfully submits the following policy recommendations to President-Elect Trump, his Administration, and to Congress:

1. Nominate and Quickly Confirm the FEMA Administrator

We respectfully urge President Trump to announce his nominee for FEMA Administrator before the end of the year, and Congress should confirm his nominee by the end of January. This person must possess impeccable credentials and experience in comprehensive emergency management at the local and state levels. With the ongoing response and recovery to Helene and Milton, it is even more critical than usual that the next FEMA Administrator is ready on Day One to take control.

2. Reduce Bureaucratic Complexity

The Trump Administration should seek to eliminate parallel response and recovery structures within the federal government, including the White House, that duplicate effort and confuse response and recovery at all levels of government. The President should formally designate FEMA as THE lead agency for all Hazards/Incident Coordination across the federal government enterprise to include Stafford Act and non-Stafford Act events.

3. Simplify the Process for Receiving Disaster Assistance

Within the first 100 days, the President should direct FEMA to conduct a complete inventory of ALL existing disaster recovery authorities to determine what needs to be reformed, what needs to be replaced, and what needs to be eliminated. Upon completion of the inventory of authorities, FEMA should submit a report to Congress with recommendations to streamline the process for receiving disaster assistance. A cleaner and less complex disaster assistance process will result in considerable cost savings for both the applicant and the federal government, improve communications and coordination, speed up the disbursement of funds, and improve oversight and accountability.

4. Maintain the Disaster Relief Fund

The Office of Management and Budget should work closely with Congress to ensure the Disaster Relief Fund is always adequately funded to support local and state governments with their immediate disaster response and long-term recovery efforts. The recent trend of allowing the DRF to get completely spent down and having to revert to Immediate Needs Funding is entirely avoidable and needlessly protracts the recovery process for every community with an open disaster declaration.

5. Support SLTT Emergency Management Capacity

The Administration and Congress should continue to build emergency management capability and infrastructure at the state, local, territorial, and tribal levels by increasing funding for the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) as well as supporting the professionalization of emergency management through programs such as Certified Emergency Manager (CEM®) and Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP). The flexibility of EMPG funding allows all levels of government to utilize assistance in areas where they have identified the greatest needs, vulnerabilities, and growth opportunities. EMPG, CEM®, and EMAP are vital in building and sustaining comprehensive emergency management capabilities across the nation.

6. Empower the FEMA Administrator

Our country's emergency management capabilities and homeland security are threatened by many issues, such as the Coronavirus response and recovery, cyber-attacks, the migrant crisis, the opioid epidemic, and homelessness, while at the same time, the frequency and severity of natural threats and hazards is growing at an alarming rate. With more and more responsibilities being tasked to FEMA, the FEMA Administrator should have direct access to the President with a Cabinet-level seat to ensure coordination across the federal government.

In conclusion, IAEM appreciates the opportunity to share these policy recommendations with President-Elect Trump, the Presidential Transition Team, and Congress. We look forward to working with all emergency management stakeholders to strengthen the Federal-State-Local partnership to better prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from all hazards.

