



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

Preparedness: State of Citizen and Community Preparedness

October 1, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Communication, Preparedness, and Response Subcommittee hearing entitled “Preparedness: State of Citizen and Community Preparedness”:

“I want to join Chairman Cuellar in welcoming the FEMA Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness, Tim Manning, to his first appearance before the Committee on Homeland Security. Mr. Manning, congratulations on your confirmation. I look forward to working with you to help FEMA fulfill its mission to the American people. I believe you are well-qualified to confront and address the challenges facing FEMA. During your tenure in New Mexico, you were the Director of Emergency Management and then the Director of the Governor’s Office of Homeland Security.

In 2007, you became the State’s first Director of the new Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Your experience in integrating traditional homeland security functions and emergency management functions into one Department with one mission will serve you well at FEMA.

You face no shortage of challenges as head of the Preparedness Directorate.

The first challenge this Committee wants to work on with you is promoting individual and community preparedness.

As Chairman Cuellar mentioned in his statement, FEMA’s 2009 Personal Preparedness in America Survey shows where we stand with individual readiness.

The survey found that too many Americans are unaware about the hazards facing their community and unprepared to respond when an emergency happens.

I want us to focus on where we need to go with FEMA’s community preparedness initiatives and how we are going to get there.

The Preparedness Survey makes a lot of good recommendations for achieving greater levels of preparedness and participation.

One of the recommendations includes further study on how the type of disaster may affect an individual’s willingness to prepare.

This recommendation is based on the finding that 81% of individuals felt that prior planning would help them handle a natural disaster.

But just 60% believed prior planning would help them respond to an act of terrorism.

I am interested in learning how FEMA intends to address this stark difference, and put into practice the other recommendations in the Preparedness Survey.

Mr. Manning, moving past the preparedness survey, FEMA has responsibility for the Citizen Corps program and the Ready Campaign.

GAO has reviewed both Citizen Corps and the Ready Campaign for this Committee. Their

preliminary observations are that both programs lack a comprehensive strategy for fostering citizen preparedness.

Mr. Manning, we want to better understand what plans this administration has for Citizen Corps and the Ready Campaign.

And we want to learn how these two programs fit into FEMA's overall strategy for promoting citizen preparedness.

I am pleased that joining Mr. Manning is Mr. Jenkins of GAO, Ms. Wendy Smith, Assistant City Manager for McAllen, Texas, and Ms. Suzanne DeFrancis from the American Red Cross.

Individual preparedness is a shared responsibility that FEMA can't do alone. I am eager to hear the panel's ideas on how FEMA can better support local preparedness efforts."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://homeland.house.gov>