

FEMA Administrator June 1, 2020, Letter to the Nation's Emergency Managers

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Fellow Emergency Managers:

As we approach the three-month mark of our Nation's response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, I want to start by thanking you all for the heroic efforts. This has been an incredible partnership and journey in our unified response to mitigate the disease. Unfortunately, the nature of emergency management is such that we must also be ready for the next disaster – whether it's hurricanes, typhoons, wildfires, or flooding – all while continuing to manage the COVID-19 response.

When I briefed the President last Thursday about the Nation's readiness for hurricane season, I shared that despite what emergency managers have already been through this year, their level of commitment and dedication to tackle the unknown has never been greater. In our Whole-of-America response to COVID-19, we learn new things that will apply to the "traditional" hazards anticipate.

For those emergency managers affected by Atlantic and Central Pacific hurricanes, the official season begins today. For those impacted by Eastern Pacific hurricanes/typhoons your season started two weeks ago on May 15, 2020. Moreover, for many of us, we are always at risk for wildfires, flooding, and earthquakes. According to the National Interagency Fire Center, due to the overall warm and dry weather, prolonged drought patterns, and the buildup of hazardous dry vegetation, western states should be monitored for increased fire potential as we move through the summer months.

On May 21, 2020 the NOAA Climate Prediction Center released the forecast for an above-normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season. The outlook predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal season, with 13-19 named storms, 6-10 hurricanes, and 3-6 major hurricanes. With this forecast and the ongoing response to the



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COVID-19 pandemic, it's critical that we all take prudent and timely actions to be as ready and prepared as possible.

In order to ensure extraordinary readiness, on May 20, 2020, we released the [COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season](#) to help emergency managers and public health officials best prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. This guidance is actionable as it helps public officials to prepare for response and recovery operations during ongoing pandemic response.

While the document focuses on the 2020 hurricane season, most planning considerations can be applied to any disaster operation during the COVID-19 environment, including no-notice incidents such as flooding, wildfires, and more.

Today, we also released an *All-Hazards Preparedness in a Pandemic Exercise Starter Kit* to help our partners prepare for hurricane season as well as other hazards in this COVID-19 pandemic environment. This Exercise Starter Kit along with the recently released [Exercise Starter Kit for Reconstituting Operations](#) helps facilitate discussions, validate planning, and identify and address gaps.

I ask all of you to review your planning, to include emergency operations, mass care, evacuation, continuity, resource management, mutual aid, logistics, public information, and recovery considerations against our ongoing COVID-19 response. Are planning assumptions still valid when applying current and future COVID-19 demands? Are the agreements you have with other partners and organizations, both internal and external, still binding? Have other partners you heavily rely on, either modified and/or lowered their exposure to risk without informing you? Are mutual aid agreements, contractual service agreements, memoranda of understanding, other mutual arrangements still binding considering the complexity of COVID-19? Have you created public information that includes traditional hazards like hurricane evacuations and COVID-19 guidance? The list can be exhaustive. I ask each local, county, territorial tribal, and state emergency manager as well as private businesses use the actionable guidance and resources offered in the *COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season* document to ensure you're ready all-hazards you may face.

As a reminder, **Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG) funds may be used** to ensure adequate funding and



planning for preparedness and response efforts in a COVID-19 environment, including some of the suggestions provided in the *COVID-19 Pandemic Operational Guidance for the 2020 Hurricane Season*. In addition, **EMPG COVID-19 Supplemental funds** should be used to:

- Review, modify, and/or execute logistics and enable contracts to increase capability to stockpile and provide necessary resources needed to stabilize lifelines;
- Modify plans to account for limited travel options and increased time needed for the evacuation of healthcare facilities in a COVID-19 environment;
- Identify mass care and shelter options that meet CDC guidance and mitigate risks to your communities and most vulnerable citizens; and,
- Emphasize collection, analysis, and sharing of data in accordance with applicable legal protections and processes to strengthen decision-support capabilities.

Continue to do what we do best: coordinate, problem-solve, and act. I ask all of you to lead, innovate, and be resourceful especially in the face of a potentially demanding summer and early fall. This will continue to be a Whole-of-America response; I need every emergency manager to continue to be an active participant. We are emergency managers and America needs us at our best.

Respectfully,

Pete Gaynor

Administrator

