

**Statement of Timothy O. Horne**  
**Acting Administrator**  
**U.S. General Services Administration**  
**Before the Committee On Appropriations**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**November 29, 2017**

**Introduction**

Good afternoon Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for your invitation to testify on the President's emergency supplemental request for hurricane recovery that was transmitted to Congress on November 17, 2017. My name is Timothy Horne, and I am the Acting Administrator of the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). GSA's mission is to deliver the best value in real estate, acquisition, and technology services to government and the American people. This mission is never more important than when it is in response to emergencies and natural disasters that have a significant impact on human life.

Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and Irma affected the lives of millions of Americans and pose a unique and difficult challenge in recovery and restoration efforts. GSA is providing expeditious and comprehensive support to the agencies engaged in the frontline relief effort, the Federal employees who work in GSA owned and leased facilities, and the millions of Americans who interact with Federal government on a regular basis.

The damage to both owned and leased Federal facilities caused by these three hurricanes is extensive. The hurricanes impacted hundreds of Federal facilities, representing millions of rentable square feet of space, housing thousands of Federal employees who provide essential services to citizens. For example, in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, GSA has 108 facilities representing approximately 1.8 million rentable square feet that were in the path of the storm. Many of the agencies that we support, such as the Social Security Administration, the Department of State Passport Office, and the Veterans Affairs Administration have important citizen-facing functions. In addition, GSA is also supporting agencies engaged in the immediate relief efforts, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Small Business Administration (SBA).

**Ongoing GSA Operations**

As the primary agency in the National Response Framework's Emergency Support Function 7, GSA is providing comprehensive logistics planning and support for timely and efficient delivery of emergency relief supplies, facilities, equipment, contracting support, and transportation in the

impacted areas. This responsibility leverages our expertise in acquisitions and logistics to support the front-line relief efforts and ensure an integrated whole-community response.

Immediately after the hurricanes, GSA employees began the process of identifying which affected facilities needed critical repairs so that other Federal agencies could utilize the space for their emergency relief activities. We deployed a contingent of technical experts including engineers, architects, and procurement officers to augment our Caribbean-based employees in conducting damage assessments of the leased and owned facilities and to assist in the procurement and delivery of critical supplies. To date, of the GSA managed facilities that were affected in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, about 85 percent of the owned facilities and 82 percent of the leased facilities are reopened and available for tenant use. We are actively working to address the remaining facilities.

In Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, GSA worked to perform emergency repairs to the roof so the site could be reopened quickly to support response operations. To ensure continuous relief operations in impacted areas, GSA worked with the DHS Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to establish Federal fuel sites, negotiate fuel contracts for government-owned vehicles, and to resupply building generators. To date, we have awarded 15 FEMA leases for the recovery phase and have another 12 in progress. Additionally, to assist with transportation of emergency responders and supplies, GSA obtained more than 200 vehicles through the short-term rental program for FEMA.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the men and women of GSA who have gone to great lengths to support this effort. A number of GSA employees based in Puerto Rico volunteered to ride out Hurricane Maria to provide instantaneous damage assessments. The majority of GSA employees in the affected areas were reporting in to work within a few hours or days of the storm, despite the challenges many of them were facing at their own homes. In addition, after the storms GSA sent more than a dozen additional employees to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to assist with GSA's response at our facilities and to coordinate with other agencies, with many more employees assisting from outside the impacted areas. GSA deployed 43 of our employees to support FEMA and SBA in their surge capacity forces for relief efforts. These actions have helped with the immediate response, but more must be done to restore operations in these areas to their pre-hurricane state. GSA's commitment to these efforts will not waiver and may grow as we gain a more accurate picture of repair needs of the facilities that have been damaged by the hurricanes.

### **GSA Supplemental Request**

As the Federal government's landlord, GSA has a responsibility to ensure that our Federal tenants have space that meets their agency's needs and more importantly allows for the delivery of Federal services to all Americans.

As part of the President's request for emergency supplemental appropriations, GSA is requesting \$122 million for repairs and alterations in facilities affected by these three hurricanes. Included in this request is \$88 million for major repairs and alterations funding for projects at five facilities with the Degetau Federal Building, the Ruiz-Nazario Courthouse and the GSA Center in Puerto Rico, the Ron De Lugo Federal Building in St. Thomas Virgin Islands, the Almeric Christian Federal Building in St. Croix Virgin Islands, and the Federal Building and Courthouse in Fort Myers Florida. The request also includes \$34 million for basic repairs and alterations projects at more than 32 facilities in the Caribbean and Gulf Coast.

The supplemental funding request will be used to restore offices buildings, courthouses, laboratories and other mission critical spaces controlled by GSA and damaged by the hurricanes. On the building envelope, roofs that were torn and destroyed by high winds, damaged building facades, and broken and leaking windows will be repaired and replaced. Within the building envelope, critical systems such as air handling units, elevators systems, fire pumps, and building lighting that were damaged will be repaired or replaced along with restoration of tenant improvements (i.e., drywall, paint, and carpeting).

### **Ensuring Effective and Efficient Use of Public Funds**

While it is imperative that GSA move as expeditiously as possible in support of emergency relief and recovery efforts, it is also important that any funds provided by Congress are spent in a transparent, comprehensive and deliberative manner. GSA has a responsibility to ensure that that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely and fairly.

We are always cognizant that the funds we request are public funds and that we as an agency have a responsibility not just to spend the money efficiently, but not ask more than what is needed. The funding request before the committee is the culmination extensive consultations between GSA, our client agencies, building experts, procurement specialists, and the people impacted by these hurricanes. It represents our best professional estimate at the cost to repair damaged facilities..

### **Closing**

I am proud of the work of the men and women at GSA in response to the disasters. More work is ahead of us, but we are prepared for the long term. The repairs and alterations funding for GSA included in the President's third supplemental is essential for GSA to support the recovery efforts and will allow our client agencies to focus on carrying out their mission. I look forward to working in partnership with this Committee to help support the Federal response to the people affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria rebuild their communities. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.