

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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**MEMORANDUM**

**July 21, 2020**

**To: Members of the Subcommittee on Environment**

**Fr: Committee Staff**

**Re: Hearing on “FEMA’s Natural Disaster Preparedness and Response Efforts During the Coronavirus Pandemic”**

On **Friday, July 24, 2020, at 9:00 a.m.**, the Subcommittee on Environment will hold a hybrid hearing to examine preparations of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for responding to and helping the nation recover from natural disasters, which this year are expected to overlap with our nation’s ongoing efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

**I. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE HEARING**

On March 13, 2020, the White House declared the coronavirus pandemic a national emergency pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.<sup>1</sup> Since then, every state, the District of Columbia, and four territories have also been approved for disaster declarations.<sup>2</sup>

FEMA is the lead federal agency responsible for coordinating preparation, prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts for all domestic disasters, including the pandemic. As the United States continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and a recent surge in cases, FEMA is in uncharted territory. Responding to the coronavirus pandemic, on top of natural disasters, such as hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires throughout the United States, will likely put unprecedented strain on essential supplies, personnel, and funding.

The purpose of the hearing will be to examine FEMA’s preparations for these multiple challenges, including the status of procurement of essential supplies like food and water; efforts to preposition supplies; staffing and training in a virtual environment; FEMA’s efforts to keep

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<sup>1</sup> The White House, *Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak* (Mar. 13, 2020) (online at [www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/#:~:text=1601%20et%20seq.\),%2C%20beginning%20March%201%2C%202020](http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/#:~:text=1601%20et%20seq.),%2C%20beginning%20March%201%2C%202020)).

<sup>2</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency, *COVID-19 Disaster Declarations* (June 8, 2020) (online at [www.fema.gov/coronavirus/disaster-declarations/#:~:text=On%20March%2013%2C%202020%2C%20President,to%20request%20individual%20emergency%20declarations](http://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/disaster-declarations/#:~:text=On%20March%2013%2C%202020%2C%20President,to%20request%20individual%20emergency%20declarations)).

employees safe who are deployed to natural disaster areas; and guidance for state and local officials regarding how to prepare for wildfire season during the coronavirus pandemic.

**II. WITNESSES**

**Peter T. Gaynor**

Administrator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

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