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Emergency Preparedness, Response,
and Communications, Committee on
Homeland Security, House of
Representatives

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**NATIONAL
PREPAREDNESS**

**FEMA Has Made Progress
in Improving Grant
Management and Assessing
Capabilities, but Challenges
Remain**

Statement of David C. Maurer, Director
Homeland Security and Justice



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Highlights of [GAO-13-456T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal years 2002 through 2012, the Congress appropriated about \$39 billion to a variety of DHS preparedness grant programs to enhance the capabilities of state and local governments to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and other disasters. DHS allocated more than \$21.3 billion through four of the largest preparedness programs—the Port Security Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Transit Security Grant Program, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative.

In February 2012, GAO identified factors that contribute to the risk of FEMA potentially funding unnecessarily duplicative projects across the four grant programs. In March 2011, GAO reported that FEMA has faced challenges in developing and implementing a national preparedness assessment, which inhibits its abilities to effectively prioritize preparedness grant funding. This testimony updates GAO's prior work and describes DHS's and FEMA's progress over the past year in (1) managing preparedness grants and (2) measuring national preparedness by assessing capabilities. This statement is based on prior products GAO issued from March 2011 to February 2012 and selected updates in March 2013. To conduct the updates, GAO analyzed agency documents and interviewed FEMA officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO has made recommendations to DHS and FEMA in prior reports. DHS and FEMA concurred with these recommendations and have actions underway to address them.

View [GAO-13-456T](#). For more information, contact David C. Maurer at (202) 512-8777 or maurerd@gao.gov.

March 19, 2013

NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

FEMA Has Made Progress in Improving Grant Management and Assessing Capabilities, but Challenges Remain

What GAO Found

Officials in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—have identified actions they believe will enhance management of the four preparedness programs GAO analyzed; however, FEMA still faces challenges. In February 2012, GAO found that FEMA lacked a process to coordinate application reviews and made award decisions with differing levels of information. To better identify potential unnecessary duplication, GAO recommended that FEMA collect project-level information and enhance internal coordination and administration of the programs. DHS concurred. The fiscal year 2013 President's Budget, proposed the establishment of the National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP), a consolidation of 16 FEMA grant programs into a single program. However, Members of Congress raised concerns about the NPGP and have not approved the proposal. As a result, FEMA officials reported that the agency was drafting new guidance for the execution of the NPGP based on pending Congressional direction on fiscal year 2013 appropriations. If approved, and depending on its final form and execution, the NPGP could help mitigate the potential for unnecessary duplication and address GAO's recommendation to improve internal coordination. In March 2013, FEMA officials reported that FEMA intends to start collecting and analyzing project-level data from grantees in fiscal year 2014; but has not yet finalized data requirements or fully implemented the data system to collect the information. Collecting appropriate data and implementing project-level enhancements as planned would address GAO's recommendation and better position FEMA to identify potentially unnecessary duplication.

FEMA has made progress addressing GAO's March 2011 recommendation that it develop a national preparedness assessment with clear, objective, and quantifiable capability requirements and performance measures; but continues to face challenges developing a national preparedness system that could assist FEMA in prioritizing preparedness grant funding. For example, in March 2012, FEMA issued the first *National Preparedness Report*, which describes progress made to build, sustain, and deliver capabilities. FEMA also has efforts underway to assess regional, state, and local preparedness capabilities. In April 2012, FEMA issued guidance on developing Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRA) to self-assess regional, state, and local capabilities and required states and local areas receiving homeland security funds to complete a THIRA by December 2012. However, FEMA faces challenges that may reduce the usefulness of these efforts. For example, the *National Preparedness Report* notes that while many programs exist to build and sustain preparedness capabilities, challenges remain in measuring progress over time. According to the report, in many cases, measures do not yet exist to gauge performance, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Further, while FEMA officials stated that the THIRA process is intended to develop a set of national capability performance requirements and measures, such requirements and measures have not yet been developed. Until FEMA develops clear, objective, and quantifiable capability requirements and performance measures, it is unclear what capability gaps currently exist and what level of federal resources will be needed to close such gaps. GAO will continue to monitor FEMA's efforts to develop capability requirements and performance measures.



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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

Chairman Brooks, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's hearing to provide an update on the efforts of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)—to manage preparedness grants and measure and assess national capabilities to respond to a major disaster. From fiscal years 2002 through 2012, the federal government appropriated about \$39 billion to a variety of DHS homeland security preparedness grant programs to enhance the capabilities of state, territory, local, and tribal governments to prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and other disasters.¹ DHS allocated more than half of this total—\$21.3 billion—to grant recipients through four of the largest preparedness programs—the Port Security Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Transit Security Grant Program, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative.

Congress enacted the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Post-Katrina Act) in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.² In response to the act, among other things, DHS centralized most of its preparedness programs under FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) to better integrate and coordinate grant management. The act also requires that FEMA develop a national preparedness system and assess preparedness capabilities to determine the nation's preparedness

¹This total is based on Congressional Research Service data and our analysis, and includes firefighter assistance grants and emergency management performance grants. See Congressional Research Service, *Department of Homeland Security Assistance to States and Localities: A Summary of Issues for the 111th Congress*, R40246 (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2010). For the purposes of this testimony, we define capabilities for prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery as preparedness capabilities.

²The Post-Katrina Act was enacted as Title VI of the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2007, Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355 (2006). The provisions of the Post-Katrina Act became effective upon enactment, October 4, 2006, with the exception of certain organizational changes related to FEMA, most of which took effect on March 31, 2007.

capability levels and the resources needed to achieve desired levels of capability.³

In March 2012, we testified before this committee and summarized our work from April 2002 through February 2012 on DHS's and FEMA's efforts to manage preparedness grants; develop and assess national preparedness capabilities at the federal, state, and local levels; identify capability gaps; and prioritize future national preparedness investments to fill the most critical gaps.⁴ As requested, my testimony today provides an update on that work, including the extent to which DHS and FEMA have made progress over the past year in (1) managing preparedness grants and (2) measuring national preparedness by assessing capabilities and addressing related challenges.

My statement is based on our March 2012 testimony, as well as reports on DHS and FEMA grant management and preparedness that we issued from March 2011 through February 2012. More information about the scope and methodology of our prior work can be found in those reports. To update our work, we analyzed documentation such as DHS's National Preparedness Report, issued in March 2012; interviewed relevant FEMA officials to obtain updates on recent progress in managing preparedness grants and measuring national preparedness; and reviewed our prior reports. We conducted our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Over the past decade, the federal government has expanded financial assistance to a wide array of public and private stakeholders for preparedness activities through various grant programs administered by DHS through its component agency, FEMA. Through these grant

³According to the act, the assessment system must assess, among other things, current capability levels as compared with target capability levels (which, for the purposes of this testimony, we refer to as capability requirements), and resource needs to meet capability requirements. 6 U.S.C. §§ 744, 749.

⁴GAO, *Managing Preparedness Grants and Assessing National Capabilities: Continuing Challenges Impede FEMA's Progress*, [GAO-12-526T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 20, 2012).

programs, DHS has sought to enhance the capacity of states, localities, and other entities, such as ports or transit agencies, to prevent, respond to, and recover from a natural or manmade disaster, including terrorist incidents. Four of the largest preparedness grant programs are the Port Security Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Transit Security Grant Program, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative.

- **The Port Security Grant Program** provides federal assistance to strengthen the security of the nation's ports against risks associated with potential terrorist attacks by supporting increased portwide risk management, enhanced domain awareness, training and exercises, and expanded port recovery capabilities.
- **The State Homeland Security Program** provides funding to support states' implementation of homeland security strategies to address the identified planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs at the state and local levels to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other catastrophic events.
- **The Transit Security Grant Program** provides funds to owners and operators of transit systems (which include intracity bus, commuter bus, ferries, and all forms of passenger rail) to protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and to increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.
- **The Urban Areas Security Initiative** provides federal assistance to address the unique needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas, and assists the areas in building an enhanced and sustainable capacity to prevent, protect, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.

Since its creation in April 2007, FEMA's GPD has been responsible for managing DHS's preparedness grants.⁵ GPD consolidated the grant business operations, systems, training, policy, and oversight of all FEMA grants and the program management of preparedness grants into a single entity.

⁵The Post-Katrina Act transferred most of the Preparedness Directorate to FEMA, effective on March 31, 2007. Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355, 1394 (2006).

FEMA Has Taken or Proposed Actions to Address Potential Duplication Issues Identified by GAO, but Challenges Remain

FEMA Needs Better Coordination and Improved Data Collection to Reduce Risk of Unnecessary Duplication in Four Grant Programs

In February 2012, we identified multiple factors that contributed to the risk of FEMA potentially funding unnecessarily duplicative projects across four of the largest grant programs⁶—the Port Security Grant Program, the State Homeland Security Program, the Transit Security Grant Program, and the Urban Areas Security Initiative. These factors include overlap among grant recipients, goals, and geographic locations, combined with differing levels of information that FEMA had available regarding grant projects and recipients. Specifically, we found that FEMA made award decisions with differing levels of information and lacked a process to coordinate application reviews.⁷ To better identify potential unnecessary duplication, we recommended that FEMA (1) take steps to ensure that it collects project information at the level of detail needed to better position the agency to identify any potential unnecessary duplication within and across the four grant programs, and (2) explore opportunities to enhance FEMA’s internal coordination and administration of the programs. DHS agreed with the recommendations and identified planned actions to improve visibility and coordination across programs and projects. We also suggested that Congress consider requiring DHS to report on the results of its efforts to identify and prevent duplication within and across the four grant programs, and consider these results when making future funding decisions for these programs.

⁶GAO, *Homeland Security: DHS Needs Better Project Information and Coordination among Four Overlapping Grant Programs*, [GAO-12-303](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012).

⁷GAO, *More Efficient and Effective Government: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-12-449T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb 28, 2012).

FEMA Has Taken Actions to Enhance Preparedness Grant Management, But Challenges Remain

Since we issued our February 2012 report, FEMA officials have identified actions they believe will enhance management of the four grant programs we analyzed; however, FEMA still faces challenges to enhancing preparedness grant management. First, the fiscal year 2013 President's Budget outlined a plan to consolidate most of FEMA's preparedness grants programs, and FEMA officials expect this action would reduce or eliminate the potential for unnecessary duplication. The fiscal year 2013 President's Budget proposed the establishment of the National Preparedness Grant Program (NPGP), a consolidation of 16 grant programs (including the 4 grants we analyzed in our February 2012 report) into a comprehensive single program. According to FEMA officials, the NPGP would eliminate redundancies and requirements placed on both the federal government and grantees resulting from the existing system of multiple individual, and often disconnected, grant programs. For example, FEMA officials said that the number of applications a state would need to submit and the federal government's resources required to administer the applications would both decrease under the consolidated program. However, Members of Congress have expressed concern about the consolidation of the 16 grant programs and Congress has not yet approved the proposal. In October 2012, FEMA officials told us that Members of Congress had asked FEMA to refine the NPGP proposal to address concerns raised by stakeholders, such as how local officials will be involved in a state-administered grant program. As of March 2013, FEMA officials reported that the agency was drafting guidance for the execution of the NPGP based on stakeholder feedback and direction from Congress pending the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bill. If the NPGP is not authorized in fiscal year 2013, FEMA officials stated that the agency plans to resubmit the request for the fiscal year 2014 budgetary cycle. If approved, and depending on its final form and execution, the consolidated NPGP could help reduce redundancies and mitigate the potential for unnecessary duplication, and may address the recommendation in our February 2012 report to enhance FEMA's internal coordination and administration of the programs.

Second, in March 2013, FEMA officials reported that the agency intends to start collecting and analyzing project-level data from grantees in fiscal year 2014; however, FEMA has not yet finalized specific data requirements and has not fully established the vehicle to collect these data—a new data system called the Non-Disaster Grants Management System (ND Grants). As of March 2013, FEMA officials expect to develop system enhancements for ND Grants to collect and use project-level data by the end of fiscal year 2013. FEMA officials stated that FEMA has formed a working group to develop the functional requirements for

collecting and using project-level data and plans to obtain input from stakeholders and consider the cost effectiveness of potential data requirements. In alignment with data requirement recommendations from a May 2011 FEMA report, the agency anticipates utilizing the new project-level data in the grant application process starting in fiscal year 2014.⁸ Collecting appropriate data and implementing ND Grants with project-level enhancements as planned, and as recommended in our February 2012 report, would better position FEMA to identify potentially unnecessary duplication within and across grant programs.

Third, in December 2012, FEMA officials stated that there are additional efforts underway to improve internal administration of different grant programs. For example, officials stated that a FEMA task force has been evaluating grants management processes and developing a series of recommendations to improve efficiencies, address gaps, and increase collaboration across regional and headquarters counterparts and financial and programmatic counterparts. These activities represent positive steps to improve overall grants management, but they do not include any mechanisms to identify potentially duplicative projects across grant programs administered by different FEMA entities.

⁸FEMA, *Redundancy Elimination and Enhanced Performance for Preparedness Grants Act: Fiscal Year 2011 Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: May 23, 2011).

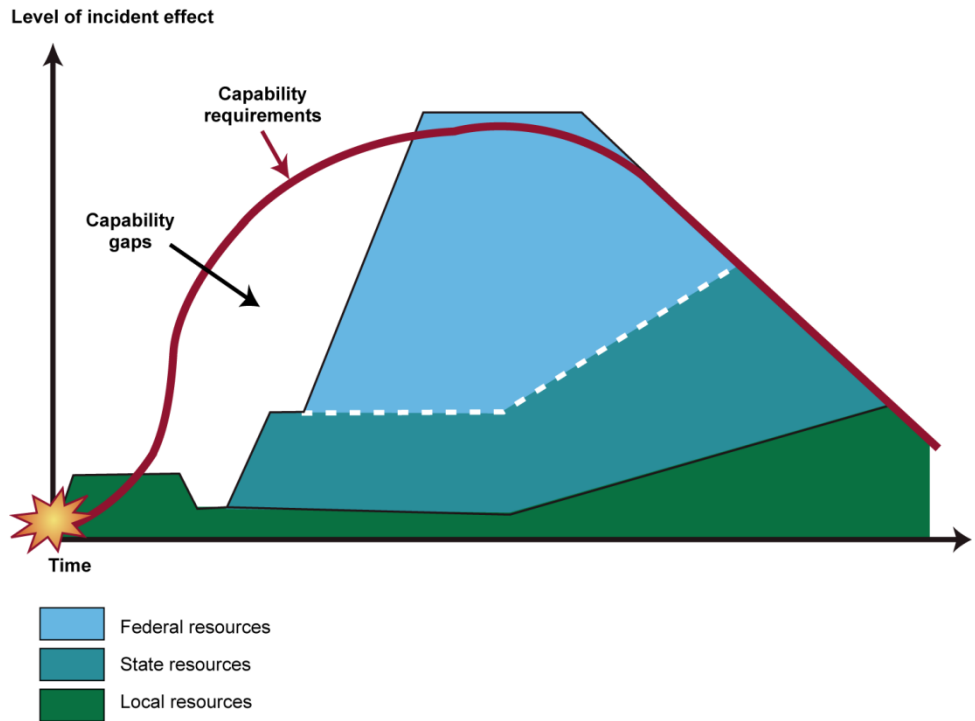
FEMA Has Made Progress in Establishing National Preparedness Capabilities, but Challenges Remain in Establishing Performance Measures That Could Assist in Prioritizing Grant Funding

FEMA Has Faced Challenges Developing a National Assessment of Preparedness

According to DHS and FEMA strategic documents, national preparedness is the shared responsibility of the “whole community,” which requires the contribution of a broad range of stakeholders, including federal, state, and local governments, to develop preparedness capabilities to effectively prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from a major disaster.⁹ Figure 1 provides an illustration of how federal, state, and local resources provide preparedness capabilities for different levels of government and at various levels of incident effect (i.e., the extent of damage caused by a natural or manmade disaster). The greater the level of incident effect, the more likely state and local resources are to be overwhelmed.

⁹ FEMA, *FEMA Strategic Plan: Fiscal Years 2011-2014* (Washington, D.C.: February 2011), and DHS, *National Preparedness Goal* (Washington, D.C.: September 2011).

Figure 1: Conceptual Illustration for Assessing Capability Requirements and Identifying Capability Gaps for National Preparedness.



Source: GAO.

We have previously reported on and made recommendations related to DHS's and FEMA's efforts to develop a national assessment of preparedness, which would assist DHS and FEMA in effectively prioritizing investments to develop preparedness capabilities at all levels of government, including through its preparedness grant programs.¹⁰ Such an assessment would

- identify the critical elements at all levels of government necessary to effectively prevent, protect against, mitigate the effects of, respond to, and recover from a major disaster (i.e., preparedness capabilities),

¹⁰ GAO, *Homeland Security: DHS's Efforts to Enhance First Responders' All-Hazards Capabilities Continue to Evolve*, [GAO-05-652](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 11, 2005); and *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning Exercise and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009).

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- such as the ability to provide lifesaving medical treatment via emergency medical services following a major disaster;
- develop a way to measure those elements (i.e., capability performance measures); and
 - assess the difference between the amount of preparedness needed at all levels of government (i.e., capability requirements) and the current level of preparedness (i.e. capability level) to identify gaps (i.e., capability gaps).

The identification of capability gaps is necessary to effectively prioritize preparedness grant funding.

However, we have previously found that DHS and FEMA have faced challenges in developing and implementing such an assessment. Most recently, in March 2011, we reported that FEMA's efforts to develop and implement a comprehensive, measurable, national preparedness assessment were not yet complete. Accordingly, we recommended that FEMA complete a national preparedness assessment and that such an assessment should assess capability gaps at each level of government based on capability requirements to enable prioritization of grant funding.¹¹ We also suggested that Congress consider limiting preparedness grant funding until FEMA completes a national preparedness assessment. In April 2011, Congress passed the fiscal year 2011 appropriations act for DHS, which reduced funding for FEMA preparedness grants by \$875 million from the amount requested in the President's fiscal year 2011 budget.¹² The consolidated appropriations act for fiscal year 2012 appropriated \$1.7 billion for FEMA Preparedness grants, \$1.28 billion less than requested.¹³ The House committee report accompanying the DHS appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012 stated that FEMA could not demonstrate how the use of the grants had enhanced disaster preparedness.¹⁴

¹¹GAO, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs Save Tax Dollars and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2011).

¹²Pub. L. No. 112-10 § 1632, 125 Stat. 38, 143 (2011).

¹³Pub. L. No. 112-74, 125 Stat. 786, 960 (2011). This total includes all grant programs in the state and local programs account and the Emergency Management Performance Grant program but does not include funding appropriated for firefighter assistance grant programs.

¹⁴H.R. Rep. No. 112-91, at 106-08 (2011).

FEMA Has Made Progress in Establishing Preparedness Capabilities

In March 2011, the White House issued Presidential Policy Directive 8 on National Preparedness (PPD-8), which called for the development of a national preparedness system that includes a comprehensive approach to assess national preparedness. According to PPD-8, the approach should use a consistent methodology to assess national preparedness capabilities—with clear, objective, and quantifiable performance measures.¹⁵ PPD-8 also called for the development of a national preparedness goal, as well as annual preparedness reports (both of which were previously required under the Post-Katrina Act).¹⁶ To address PPD-8 provisions, FEMA issued the *National Preparedness Goal* in September 2011, which established a list of preparedness capabilities for each of five mission areas (prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery) that are to serve as the basis for preparedness activities within FEMA, throughout the federal government, and at the state and local levels.¹⁷ In November 2011, FEMA issued the *National Preparedness System*, which described an approach and cycle to build, sustain, and deliver the preparedness capabilities described in the *National Preparedness Goal*. The system contains six components to support decision making, resource allocation, and progress measurement, including identifying and assessing risk and estimating capability requirements.¹⁸ According to the system, measuring progress toward achieving the *National Preparedness Goal* is intended to provide the means to decide how and where to allocate scarce resources and prioritize preparedness. Finally, in March 2012, FEMA issued the first *National Preparedness Report*, designed to identify progress made

¹⁵The Post-Katrina Act required FEMA, in developing guidelines to define preparedness capabilities, to ensure that the guidelines are specific, flexible, and measurable. 6 U.S.C. § 746.

¹⁶6 U.S.C. §§ 743, 752. The Post-Katrina Act required FEMA to prepare a federal preparedness report and a state preparedness report.

¹⁷The *National Preparedness Goal* refers to these capabilities as “core capabilities,” which replace what had been previously called target capabilities. The target capabilities were initially developed by DHS in 2005. For example, one of the preparedness capabilities for the response mission area relates to mass search and rescue operations, specifically to deliver traditional and atypical search and rescue capabilities, including personnel, services, animals, and assets to survivors in need, with the goal of saving the greatest number of endangered lives in the shortest time possible.

¹⁸The six components are (1) identifying and assessing risk, (2) estimating capability requirements, (3) building and sustaining capabilities, (4) planning to deliver capabilities, (5) validating capabilities, and (6) reviewing and updating.

toward building, sustaining, and delivering the preparedness capabilities described in the *National Preparedness Goal*. According to FEMA officials, the *National Preparedness Report* also identifies what they consider to be national-level capability gaps.

Challenges Remain in Establishing Capability Requirements and Performance Measures That Could Assist in Prioritizing Preparedness Grant Funding

While FEMA issued the first *National Preparedness Report*, the agency has not yet established clear, objective, and quantifiable capability requirements and performance measures that are needed to identify capability gaps in a national preparedness assessment, as recommended in our March 2011 report. As previously noted, such requirements and measures would help FEMA identify capability gaps at all levels of government, which would assist FEMA in targeting preparedness grant program funding to address the highest-priority capability gaps. According to the *National Preparedness Report*, FEMA collaborated with federal interagency partners to identify existing quantitative and qualitative performance and assessment data for each of the preparedness capabilities. In addition, FEMA integrated data from the 2011 *State Preparedness Reports*, which are statewide survey-based self-assessments of capability levels and requirements submitted by all 56 U.S. states and territories. Finally, FEMA conducted research to identify independent evaluations, surveys, and other supporting data related to preparedness capabilities.

However, limitations associated with some of the data used in the *National Preparedness Report* may reduce the report's usefulness in assessing national preparedness. First, in October 2010, we reported that data in the *State Preparedness Reports*—one of the key data sources for the *National Preparedness Report*—could be limited because FEMA relies on states to self-report such data, which makes it difficult to ensure data are consistent and accurate.¹⁹ Second, at the time the *National Preparedness Report* was issued, in March 2012, states were still in the process of updating their efforts to collect, analyze, and report preparedness progress according to the new preparedness capabilities issued along with the *National Preparedness Goal* in September 2011. As a result, the report states that assessment processes, methodologies, and data will need to evolve for future iterations of the report. Third, the

¹⁹GAO, *FEMA Has Made Limited Progress in Efforts to Develop and Implement a System to Assess National Preparedness Capabilities*, [GAO-11-51R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 29, 2010).

report's final finding notes that while many programs exist to build and sustain preparedness capabilities across all mission areas, challenges remain in measuring progress over time. According to the report, in many cases, measures do not yet exist to gauge performance, either quantitatively or qualitatively. Therefore, while programs may exist that are designed to address a given capability gap, the nation has little way of knowing whether and to what extent those programs have been successful.

Thus, as of March 2013, FEMA has not yet completed a national preparedness assessment, as we recommended in our March 2011 report, which could assist FEMA in prioritizing grant funding. However, FEMA officials stated that they have efforts under way to assess regional, state, and local capabilities to provide a framework for completing a national preparedness assessment.²⁰ For example, in April 2012, FEMA issued guidance on developing Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRA), which were initially required to be completed by state and local governments receiving homeland security funding by December 31, 2012.²¹ Guidance issued for development of the THIRAs describes a process for assessing the various threats and hazards facing a community, the vulnerability of the community, as well as the consequences associated with those threats and hazards. For example, using the THIRA process, a jurisdiction may identify tornadoes as a hazard and assess its vulnerabilities to and the consequences of a tornado striking the jurisdiction, as well as the capabilities necessary for an effective response. Using the THIRA results, a jurisdiction may then develop a strategy to allocate resources effectively to achieve self-determined capability requirements by closing capability gaps.

According to FEMA officials in March 2013, the THIRAs are to be used by state, regional, and federal entities for future planning efforts. At the state level, FEMA guidance notes that state officials are to use the capability requirements they identified in their respective 2012 THIRAs in their future *State Preparedness Reports*. FEMA officials stated that they

²⁰[GAO-11-318SP](#).

²¹According to FEMA officials, as of March 2013, some state and local urban areas had not yet completed their THIRAs. FEMA granted 6 month extensions to the December 31, 2012 deadline for five states and three local urban areas affected by Hurricane Sandy in late October 2012.

planned to use both the THIRAs and the *State Preparedness Reports* to identify states' (self-reported) capability gaps based on capability requirements established by the state. At the regional level, each of the 10 FEMA regions is to analyze the local and state THIRAs to develop regional THIRAs.²² At the national level, the local, state, and regional THIRAs are collectively intended to provide FEMA with data that it can analyze to assist in the identification of national funding priorities for closing capability gaps. The outcome of the THIRA process is intended to be a set of national capability performance requirements and measures, which FEMA officials stated they intend to incorporate into future *National Preparedness Reports*. As of March 2013, FEMA officials are working to coordinate their review and analysis of the various THIRAs through a THIRA Analysis and Review Team. The team plans to conduct ongoing meetings to discuss common themes and findings from the THIRAs and intends to develop an initial proposed list of national preparedness grant funding priorities by summer 2013.

Depending on how the THIRA process is implemented and incorporated into future *National Preparedness Reports*, such an approach could be a positive step toward addressing our March 2011 recommendation to FEMA to develop a national preparedness assessment of existing capabilities levels against capability requirements. Such a national preparedness assessment may help FEMA to (1) identify the potential costs for developing and maintaining required capabilities at each level of government, and (2) determine what capabilities federal agencies should be prepared to provide. While the recently completed THIRAs and 2012 *National Preparedness Report* are positive steps in the initial efforts to assess preparedness capabilities across the nation, capability requirements and performance measures for each level of government that are clear, objective, and quantifiable have not yet been developed. As a result, it is unclear what capability gaps currently exist, including at the federal level, and what level of resources will be needed to close such gaps through prioritized preparedness grant funding. We will continue to

²²FEMA officials stated that they required the FEMA regions to complete their inaugural THIRAs by September 30, 2012, 3 months before the local and state THIRAs were due. As a result, the first regional THIRAs did not incorporate information from the local and state THIRAs. The officials explained that FEMA directed the regional THIRAs to be completed in 2012 before the local and state THIRAs in order to aid development of preparedness grant guidance for fiscal year 2013, but that future iterations of the regional THIRAs are intended to incorporate information from completed local and state THIRAs.

monitor FEMA's efforts to develop capability requirements and performance measures.

Chairman Brooks, Ranking Member Payne, and Members of the subcommittee, this completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have at this time.

Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

For further information about this statement, please contact David C. Maurer, Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues, at (202) 512-9627 or maurerd@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this statement. In addition to the contact named above, the following individuals also made major contributions to this testimony: Chris Keisling, Assistant Director; Tracey King; Dan Klabunde; Katherine Lee; David Lutter; David Lysy; Lara Miklozek; and Erin O'Brien.

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