

TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Gregory B. Cade and I am an Assistant Administrator at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the United States Fire Administrator in charge of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of Secretary Chertoff.

Each year fires injure and kill more Americans than the combined losses from floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. Death rates from fires in the United States are among the highest in the industrialized world. Part of the USFA's mission is to reduce loss of life and property due to fire and related emergencies. This is not an easy task, but it is one the USFA takes on every day, in coordination with other Federal agencies, and in partnership with fire protection and emergency service communities. We take the mission of preparing the Nation's fire service seriously and will continue to work tirelessly to reduce the loss of life among the civilian population as well as among the Nation's fire service.

As you are aware, USFA recently completed a transition to FEMA as part of the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act. As a part of "New FEMA", the staff will continue to work diligently to reduce deaths, injuries, and the damage to property through leadership, advocacy, coordination and support in USFA's long standing four basic mission areas: training, public education and awareness, applied research and technology, and data collection and analysis.

To accomplish our mission, we work with the fire service, other emergency responders, Federal, State, local and tribal governments, and allied professionals to better prepare them to prevent, protect against, and respond to all incidents, including acts of terrorism. Being prepared for all types of incidents is by far the biggest challenge in this day and age. With the threats today's fire services face, preparing them to respond to all incidents is essential. We will continue to provide educational programs through the National Fire Academy (NFA) and provide educational materials to our partners at the State, local, and tribal level to help achieve higher levels of preparedness.

We are interacting with State, local and tribal governments, the private sector, and DHS's Science and Technology Directorate to provide standardized, practical, interoperable equipment. We are helping first responders and emergency managers practice and refine their response plans with partners at all levels of government.

Today, I will focus my remarks on USFA's programs and services. Through these programs we will improve the preparedness, effectiveness and safety of our first responders. I will also summarize our current activities and future needs.

USFA is a national leader in providing fire safety and prevention programs. We also lead the way in preparing communities to deal with fires and other hazards. USFA is supporting the efforts of local communities to reduce the number of fires and fire deaths, and it champions Federal fire protection issues and coordinates information about fire programs.

In terms of our preparedness programs, we recognize the importance of education as a vital step toward a first responder community prepared to respond to any kind of emergency, ranging from a small fire to a terrorist attack involving a large number of victims or extensive infrastructure damage. We continue to administer educational programs for community leaders and first responders to help them prepare for and respond to emergencies regardless of cause or magnitude. USFA also strongly advocates for local fire departments to be the center of preparedness within their jurisdictions. We believe these local departments should take the lead in preparing their communities through public education and training other departments and agencies on the concepts of the Incident Command System and the National Incident Management System. These fire departments should set the standard for the rest of the community by ensuring their members all have family emergency plans and at least 72 hours worth of supplies. The public looks to the fire department for help once a disaster strikes, and we believe fire departments should set the example of how to prepare before the disaster strikes.

USFA will continue to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and their National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Through this partnership we can share data and analyses to help both agencies better track civilian fire injuries and deaths.

We are working closely with other divisions within FEMA, including the National Preparedness Directorate (NPD). USFA has been collaborating with the NPD's National Integration Center to coordinate training programs and to ensure NFA courses are not in competition with or repetitive of NPD's, the Emergency Management Institute's or Center for Domestic Preparedness courses. USFA has also been working closely with NPD to ensure all NFA courses are in line with the new National Preparedness Guidelines and touch on elements of the Universal Task List and the Target Capabilities List.

Education and Preparedness Programs

NFA offers a wide variety of training and educational programs to promote the professional development of command level fire officers, emergency managers, emergency responders, technical staff, and allied professionals such as architects and engineers.

Students and their supervisors who have attended NFA courses have told us Academy courses have improved their job performance and increased their professional development. An assessment conducted in FY 2006, revealed that 82 percent of supervisors who responded reported an improvement in the student's job performance following training. In addition, 93 percent reported that attending courses at NFA contributed to the student's professional development and almost 87 percent reported that the training improved their department's performance.

State and local support for fire service training must be increased and the Federal role is to foster this participation. USFA will continue to:

- Coordinate the exchange of training materials and information among State and local fire training systems;

- Focus on distance learning and alternate training delivery methods such as National Fire Academy Online (NFAOnline);
- Revise courses to include the most current information, public fire safety education and emergency response;
- Partner with associate and bachelor degree programs to align the national academic fire curricula;
- Include multiple delivery formats in future course development so the nexus of the course may be provided to the field in a variety of adaptable formats;
- Shorten some resident classes to offer more educational opportunities; and
- Provide faster turnaround to get newly learned skills applied in the field.

Distance learning strategies and strategic partnerships with State fire service training organizations have helped us realize a continued increase in the number of students the NFA trains each year. The most recent admissions statistics show in FY 2007 8,278 students attended on-campus residential training courses and 76,918 students attended off-campus/distance learning training courses, which include classroom-based training at the State/local/tribal level as well as online distance learning. This represents a 13 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

USFA's NFA works in partnership with accredited State Fire Training Programs. These State programs have over \$700 million in capital facilities and trained over 750,000 firefighters last year.

For the past 10 years, we have partnered with colleges and universities across the country to ensure important fire safety concepts are delivered to the Nation's fire service. Our training programs continue to focus on courses aligned with USFA's Operational Objectives. The NFA continues to develop and deliver training that cannot be obtained through other institutions. A curriculum review for the NFA curriculum is scheduled for FY 2008 and we expect to see those results by June 2008.

USFA is working with the National Incident Management System division within FEMA and National Wildfire Coordinating Group to prepare regional All Hazard Incident Management Teams (AHIMT). These teams provide support for major incidents prior to, or in lieu of, the arrival of a Federal IMT. We are training these teams on almost a weekly basis throughout the Nation. So far this year we have helped establish 12 teams, coordinated 48 training sessions, and expect another 9 course offerings within the next 6 months.

Our National Fire Programs division has assumed additional preparedness roles since our last reauthorization hearing. The division now has staff dedicated to:

- Work with the Department of Agriculture to provide expertise in structural fire fighting as part of the National Response Framework Emergency Support Function 4;
- Support the Emergency Management and Response - Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC) for non-classified intelligence sharing with America's first responders; and
- Provide a presence at the DHS National Operations Center to keep first responders apprised of emerging threats and events.

Public Education and Awareness

USFA continues to deliver fire safety messages to those most vulnerable to fire -- the very young, the elderly, and others. USFA works closely with National fire service organizations to push the message of fire safety out to all at risk sectors of the population. For example, this year USFA will once again partner with the National Fire Protection Association for the National Fire Prevention Week, which is scheduled for October 7-13, 2007. We will continue to manage the Quick Response program where we blitz local media with proactive fire safety messages following fire fatalities.

USFA works to identify and develop public, private, and fire community partnership opportunities to implement and enhance fire prevention and awareness activities. We do this by providing professional, managerial, and technical assistance to State, local, and tribal fire service organizations and individuals.

We are working with our State and local partners, as well as industry representatives, to support residential fire sprinkler initiatives - a low-cost and reliable life saving solution to one segment of America's fire problem.

We have initiated a thriving program entitled Prevention Advocacy, Resources, and Data Exchange (PARADE) that provides State and metropolitan fire officials a venue for sharing their own successful fire prevention and protection strategies.

Data Collection

USFA continues to collect, analyze, publish, and distribute data to define and describe the national fire problem while assisting State, local, and tribal agencies in developing standardized incident reporting methods for the collection and analysis of local fire incident data.

USFA's National Fire Data Center (NFDC) administers the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), which is used by over 21,000 fire departments to document incidents to which they respond. In addition, the NFDC manages the National Fire Department Census, a voluntary online directory of almost 26,000 fire departments.

NFDC also tracks on-duty firefighter fatalities and has conducted an annual fatalities analysis for more than 20 years. Through the collection of information on the causes of firefighter deaths, USFA is able to focus on specific problems and direct efforts toward finding solutions to reduce the number of firefighter fatalities in the future. This information is also used to measure the effectiveness of current programs directed toward firefighter health and safety.

NFDC disseminates a wide range of technical, educational, and marketing information to the general public and fire services organizations through Internet and print-based mediums.

Research and Technology

To maximize the impact of limited resources, USFA uses its national position to serve as a focal point for developing cooperative relationships among the diverse organizations that have a shared interest in developing new technologies to address fire safety and firefighting. USFA-supported fire research, almost without exception, is accomplished through partnerships.

USFA is working closely with the DHS Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate to identify areas of complementary research, inform S&T on research needs specific to the fire community, and explore ways of combining resources for maximum impact.

USFA has long standing working relationships with a variety of Federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice, Occupational Safety & Health Administration, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. In addition, there are partnerships with national-level fire trade associations such as the National Volunteer Fire Council, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters, International Code Council, and the National Fire Protection Association. USFA also reaches out to academic institutions and non-fire service organizations to address topics of mutual interest. By sharing resources and expertise, the partners are able to achieve much more together than they could achieve individually.

The data and information derived from these partnership research efforts have influenced the decisions of consensus standards-making committees on a number of topics such as thermal imaging cameras, firefighting protective clothing, chemical protective clothing, protective clothing for urban search and rescue, self-contained breathing apparatus, and residential sprinkler systems.

USFA also leverages research partnerships and technology developments to improve fire prevention and promote public safety. Currently, USFA is working with others in the fire sprinkler community to promote installation of residential fire sprinklers. Residential sprinklers can substantially reduce the impact of residential fire incidents, injuries, and fatalities. The National Fire Protection Association reports that when sprinklers are present the chances of dying in a fire are reduced by about two-thirds, regardless of whether smoke alarms were present or not. If sprinklers are introduced before smoke alarms, the death rate would fall about 69%; if smoke alarms are introduced first, the death rate would be expected to fall by one-half; sprinklers would reduce the remaining fatality rate by 63%. Together with smoke alarms, sprinklers cut the risk of dying in a home fire by 82 percent, relative to having neither, and there is a potential for a dramatic decrease in the over 2,500 residential fire deaths which occur each year in America. Average property loss per residential fire is about one-half less when compared to fires where sprinklers are not present. In addition, as more than 25 percent of firefighter on-duty deaths are associated with residential fires, a long-term benefit of residential sprinklers is firefighter injuries and deaths will also be reduced. Simply put—we will have fewer firefighters killed on-duty if we

have fewer firefighters responding to major fires that could have been extinguished or contained by a residential sprinkler system.

Since FY2005, 15 Firefighter Research and Development grants have been awarded through the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) program. These grants have totaled nearly \$17 million and were granted to 19 different organizations. While USFA does not operate the AFG program, it does work closely with the AFG program office within FEMA to ensure the fire service is represented.

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This collaboration also includes working with the AFG program office on the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant. The FP&S grants support projects that enhance the safety of the public and firefighters from fire and related hazards. The primary goal of the FP&S is to target high-risk populations and mitigate high incidences of death and injury. USFA's work with the SAFER Grants ensures funding goes directly to fire departments in order to help increase the number of trained, firefighters available across the country.

PrepNet:

The Preparedness Network (PREPnet) is a satellite-based distance learning system used by USFA to bring interactive training programs into virtually any community nationwide. With a wide variety of programs for the public safety community, there's something for everyone. All programming is open and in the public domain, so any community with access to a C-band or Ku-band analog satellite dish or a community cablevision provider can receive broadcasts and participate in the training programs.

On Wednesday, September 19th, USFA's PREPnet supported the rollout of the National Response Framework (NRF) from the PREPnet studios in Emmitsburg, MD. This broadcast, which was simultaneously a TV broadcast via the Dish Network, a Video Teleconference over FEMA's internal VTC system, and a web cast available on the internet to any interested parties, featured NPD Deputy Administrator Dennis Schrader and Al Fluman, Acting Director of FEMA's Incident Management Systems Division (IMSD), who presented an overview of the NRF and answered a series of questions received from actual viewers during the broadcast.

PREPnet also recently hosted a Virtual Town Hall on School Preparedness as a part of National Preparedness Month. A panel of experts from the Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools and FEMA's NPD discussed grant opportunities and planning, training, and other preparedness tools available to school districts nationwide.

Challenges

Reducing the loss of life and property caused by fire remains a significant challenge. Each year, fire kills more than 3,000 people and injures more than 16,000. Annual property losses due to fire are estimated at more than \$11 billion. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us fire and burn injuries represent 1 percent of the incidence of reported injuries and 2 percent of the total costs of injuries, or \$7.5 billion each year. Unfortunately, our nation's firefighters continue to also pay a large price in keeping fire deaths and property losses down. As of September 21, 2007, 93 firefighters have been killed while on duty this calendar year.

Although the numbers are still too high as most of these deaths can be prevented, great progress is being made to reduce the toll from fires. Since 1974, when Congress passed the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act (Pub. L. No. 93-498), and established the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy, USFA has helped to reduce fire deaths significantly. Over the last 10 years, fires have declined by 13 percent. During this same period, a 12 percent decline in civilian deaths and a 31 percent drop in civilian injuries were also reported.

New programs need to be developed which will prepare responders to deal with the Wildland/Urban Interface. This involves the issue of urban sprawl and how to reduce fire risk for the population. Population decentralization in the U.S. has resulted in rapid development in the outlying fringe of metropolitan areas and in rural areas as people want to move out of the city centers.

We need to enhance our emphasis on preparing the Nation's first responders for all hazards, including natural, technological and terrorist incidents. We will accomplish this through education and information sharing with our partner organizations and agencies.

The USFA will continue to work with the United States Department of Justice's (DOJ), Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB) program as it relates to death benefits for first responders who are killed in the line of duty. Unfortunately, there are an overwhelming number of families of firefighters who have been killed in the line of duty who have yet to receive any death benefits. We look forward to working with DOJ on relieving this deadlock and getting benefits to those families who qualify.

Conclusion

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me this opportunity to appear before you today. Your continued support is greatly appreciated. I will be glad to answer any questions you and other Members of the Committee may have.