

William L. Carwile III

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Bill Carwile served as Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) and in other senior management positions on large federal disaster response operations between 1996 and 2005. As FCO he served as the representative of the President and DHS - FEMA during major disaster and emergency declarations, orchestrating federal resources and programs in support of state governors.



Prior to becoming a full-time FCO, he served as the Director, Pacific Area Office, FEMA Region IX.

Mr. Carwile's emergency management leadership experience includes such large-scale disasters as Super Typhoon Paka in Guam; Hurricane Georges in Puerto Rico; Tropical Storm Allison in Louisiana; the New York City World Trade Center response; Super Typhoon Chataan in Guam; California Wildfires and responses and recovery efforts for the four hurricanes that struck Florida in 2004. During Hurricane Katrina, he served as the FCO for the Mississippi response. In these and all other disasters, he demonstrated his full understanding of the supporting role of the federal government with state and local officials, and focused on building and maintaining strong intergovernmental and interagency partnerships.

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Planning for a “Whole Community” Response to a Worst Case Catastrophic Event

In today’s global environment, we all face hostile nation states, terrorist groups, pandemic influenza outbreaks, and the entire gamut of manmade and natural disasters. At FEMA, we stand ready to respond immediately to all types of emergency situations and disasters to deliver needed assistance to protect the health and safety of the survivors.

An incident of catastrophic proportions has the potential to imperil millions of people, devastate multiple communities simultaneously, and create far-reaching economic and social effects. In such events, the scope of needs will be large, immediate, novel and profound, and the entire national emergency management, public health, security, law enforcement, critical infrastructure, medical and all other components in the Federal, state, local, tribal, private and public sectors that make up the “whole community” must be prepared to respond in ways that lie outside the normal paradigms in which we have traditionally operated.

National efforts to ensure resilience in the U.S. are focusing on improving existing catastrophic event preparedness capabilities, but with a renewed conviction to plan for the most extreme disasters. We are building on the strengths of local communities and citizens and integrating the public as a critical resource and definite part of the solution. The faith based communities, fraternal and trade associations, and the broader marketplace are all viewed as important to collaboration and are included in the planning efforts. While the impact of catastrophes will certainly be felt at the Federal and state level, the impacts have the potential to be most devastating at the community level. Therefore, our catastrophic response strategy is being designed to quickly stabilize communities, and calibrated to support their timely recovery and return to municipal self-sufficiency. We recognize that only through close cooperation with all partners can we begin to close gaps and agree on the most critical objectives. Engaging the “whole community” is essential.

FEMA is coordinating and facilitating development of detailed horizontally and vertically integrated catastrophic response plans for earthquakes, hurricanes, biological attacks and other threats. Our planning assumptions for catastrophic disasters are based on the “maximum of maximums” or

worst case scenarios and are designed to challenge preparedness at all levels of government, and force innovative, non-traditional solutions as part of the response strategy to such events. A planning effort currently underway in the U.S. is focused on a catastrophic earthquake impacting eight states in the New Madrid Seismic Zone. This initiative integrates plans at all levels of government with an overarching national-level earthquake plan and is providing the basis for a fundamental re-tooling of all-hazards catastrophic incident guidance.

In conclusion, effectively and rapidly responding to and recovering from the impact of a catastrophic disaster is one of the greatest challenges faced by all levels of government. In the U.S., we are taking planning and preparedness to a higher level and will not accept the easy way out. We recognize our success depends on the collective and collaborative efforts of the “whole community” and we can accept nothing less if we are to provide stronger and more agile disaster response capabilities.