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WHAT IF ISABEL MET TRACTOR MAN? A POST-HURRICANE REASSESSMENT OF EMERGENCY READINESS IN THE CAPITAL REGION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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WHAT IF ISABEL MET TRACTOR MAN? A POST-HURRICANE REASSESSMENT OF EMER-GENCY READINESS IN THE CAPITAL REGION

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Tom Davis (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Tom Davis, Norton, and Van Hollen.

Also present: Representative Moran of Virginia.

Staff present: Peter Sirh, staff director; Melissa Wojciak, deputy staff director; John Hunter, counsel; Robert Borden, counsel/parliamentarian; David Marin, director of communications; John Cuaderes, senior professional staff member; Teresa Austin, chief clerk; Brien Beattie, deputy clerk; Shalley Kim, legislative assistant; Rosalind Parker, minority counsel; Earley Green, minority chief clerk; Jean Gosa, minority assistant clerk; and Cecelia Morton, minority office manager.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The committee will come to order. I would like to welcome everybody to today's hearing on emergency readiness in the National Capital Region.

Our region faces unique challenges when it comes to crisis preparation and response planning. There is a multitude of local, State and Federal agencies that need to work in unison. There is the traffic gridlock that plagues us even under the best of circumstances. There is the fact that the Capitol is a massive bull's eye for those who seek to do us harm.

This is a followup to the hearing our committee held on April 10, 2003, examining the state of emergency preparedness in the Nation's Capital. At that time, the infamous "tractor man" standoff and a spate of snowstorms provided the hearing's backdrop. Today, our response to Hurricane Isabel offers another opportunity to reassess our region's readiness for potential disasters of all types.

Experience is the best teacher. Obviously, hindsight is 20/20. We are not here to attack or condemn or embarrass anybody; we are just trying to have a frank, honest discussion about what happened and what we can learn. But it is my hope that together we can use the latest crisis to better prepare for whatever challenges the future may hold.

We need to find out what worked and what didn't and why. How were decisions made? What procedures are in place to assess the situation retrospectively? What implications are there for regional preparedness as a whole in terms of transportation, power, water, and evacuation procedures? How were residents and businesses kept informed before, during and after the hurricane? The bottom line: How can the region better prepare and respond in the future?

Emergency preparedness is, by its very nature, a hypothetical exercise, one in which we take what we know and craft a plan to respond to the unknown. So, while somewhat tongue in cheek, out title today, "What if Isabel met Tractor Man?"—is really meant as a serious hypothetical. Are we ready to respond if a storm coincides with a protest? What about a storm coinciding with an attack on the Capital? We need to realize the world is watching. Just 2 days ago, for example, there was a Chinese television crew at a local public meeting on Pepco's response to the storm.

Federal, local and State governments have taken a number of steps to improve the coordination of emergency preparedness efforts. Today, it is our hope to examine whether that coordination is working.

With Isabel came debatable public transportation decisions, widespread power outages, public health alerts, and neighborhood evacuations. In the wake of September 11th, Federal, State and local governments have been charged with working closely to respond to any disaster, including natural disasters such as Hurricane Isabel. Our question today is: Could we have been better prepared?

Isabel tested many systems in the region, particularly transportation, electric power and water systems. Throughout the Capital Region, intersections contained fallen tree debris and malfunctioning traffic lights. Public transportation was shut down, including Metro, railways, and airports. Viable transportation is the cornerstone of ensuring the region's ability to react and respond effectively to any emergency.

The region had an unprecedented number of power outages. Over a million customers are estimated to have lost power—129,000 in the District, 360,000 in northern Virginia, and 486,000 in Maryland. It took more than a week for utility companies to restore power to all customers. Residents and public officials have complained that it simply took too long.

There were problems with water and sewer plants which resulted in the public health alert in Fairfax County. Residents were told to boil water when the systems used to power the plants lost electricity.

Meteorologists were tracking Isabel days before. This wasn't a surprise attack. We have to ask, in case of a terrorist attack, how well prepared will the region be? I hope that, by the end of this hearing, the committee will have a good picture of the cleanup efforts in the National Capital Area, what was learned from the devastation of Hurricane Isabel and the progress made in developing an effective emergency preparedness program. Also, the committee hopes to find out what actions have been taken by the Federal Government and local jurisdictions to craft after-action reports and, in turn, improve coordination, readiness, and responses for the future.

We will also find out what, if anything, has been learned concerning the region's critical infrastructure and what can be done to keep it on line during a disaster.

Facts don't cease to exist simply because they are ignored. Let's get all of the facts of what went well and what didn't go so well. Then we can move forward together to better protect the Capital Region in the future.

I would now recognize my distinguished colleague from the District of Columbia, Ms. Norton, for any statements she may wish to make.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Tom Davis follows:]

Record

OPENING STATEMENT
CHAIRMAN TOM DAVIS
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
"WHAT IF ISABEL MET TRACTOR MAN? A POST HURRICANE REASSESSMENT OF EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION."

OCTOBER 3, 2003

I would like to welcome everyone to today's hearing on emergency readiness in the National Capital Region.

Our region faces unique challenges when it comes to crisis preparation and response planning. There's a multitude of local, state, and federal agencies that need to work in unison. There's the traffic gridlock that plagues us under the best circumstances. And there's the fact that the Capital is a massive bull's eye for those who seek to do us harm.

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Obviously, hindsight is 20/20. We're not here to attack or condemn or embarrass anybody. But it's my hope that together we can use this latest crisis to better prepare for whatever challenges the future may hold.

We need to find out what worked, what didn't, and why. How were decisions made and what procedures are in place to assess the situation retrospectively? What implications are there for regional preparedness as a whole, in terms of transportation, power, water, and evacuation procedures? How were residents and businesses kept informed before, during and after the hurricane? And the bottom line: How can the region better prepare and respond in the future?

Emergency preparedness is, by its very nature, a hypothetical exercise, one in which we take what we know and craft a plan to respond to the unknown. So, while somewhat tongue in cheek, our hearing title today – "What if Isabel Met Tractor Man" – is really meant as a serious hypothetical. Are we ready to respond if a storm coincides with a protest? What about a storm coinciding with an attack on the Capital?

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There were problems with water and sewer plants, which resulted in a public health alert in Fairfax County, Virginia. Residents were told to boil water when the systems used to power the plants lost electricity.

Meteorologists were tracking Isabel days before. This was not a surprise attack. We have to ask: in case of a terrorist attack, how well prepared will the region be?

I hope that, by the end of this hearing, the Committee will have a good picture of the clean-up efforts in the national capital area, what was learned from the devastation of Hurricane Isabel, and the progress made in developing an effective emergency preparedness program. Also, the Committee hopes to find out what actions have been taken by the federal government and local jurisdictions to craft "after action" reports and, in turn, improve coordination, readiness and response in the future. We will also find out what, if anything has been learned concerning the region's critical infrastructure and what can be done to keep it on-line during a disaster.

Facts don't cease to exist simply because they are ignored. Let's get at the facts of what went well and not so well. Then we can move forward together to better protect the capital region.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to specifically thank the chairman for calling today's hearing and for its more complex and, I believe, more useful framework for viewing recent disturbances in our region. I believe that this hearing has the potential to help us connect dots we perhaps didn't even recognize were there. Within the last 2 years, our region has been caught by surprise and unprepared three times. The most tragic was September 11 and the Pentagon catastrophe. The most absurd was the Tractor Man episode that paralyzed downtown. The most unavoidable was Hurricane Isabel that whistled through loudly and destructively 2 weeks ago.

I believe it would be a mistake to think that these three disasters have nothing in common. To be sure, September 11 was a terrorist disaster, Isabel was a natural disaster and Tractor Man was a man-made disaster. Except for Isabel, prevention remains an arguable issue, but surely it was possible to prepare for all three. No one can be expected to control future events, but we all have an obligation to take the necessary preparations to mitigate the damage and hasten the return to normalcy.

As a matter of preparation, all three of these events have much in common, I believe. There is no such thing as a generic disaster. But these three disasters raise the possibility that there may be generic preparations that can be tailored to specific events. Many of the vital actors will be the same, for example, elected officials, public safety and emergency safety personnel, medical personnel, and transportation authorities. Many of the methods that must be used, particularly coordination and communication, also will be the same or similar.

Since September 11, our region has been putting in place procedures and protections against the unknown. Surely the painstaking preparation for a terrorist attack has carryover that can help us learn how to achieve better coordination and to get quicker riddance of Tractor Man or quicker recovery and cleanup from Isabel and their unknown progeny yet to come.

I hope that today's hearing can promote such thinking and action. If September 11 did nothing else, it may have moved us to a day when we can be prepared for almost anything.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Opening Statement of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton
Government Reform Committee Hearing
"What if Isabel met Tractor Man? A Post Hurricane Reassessment of Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region."
October 3, 2003

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As a matter of preparation, all three of these events have much in common. There is no such thing as a generic disaster, but these three disasters raise the possibility that there may be generic preparations that can be tailored to specific events. Many of the vital actors will be the same, for example elected officials, public safety and emergency safety personnel, medical personnel, and transportation authorities. Many of the methods that must be used, particularly coordination and communication, also will be the same or similar.

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Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. I also see my distinguished colleague and neighbor in northern Virginia, Mr. Moran, is here with us. Jim, welcome.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is nice to be with you and Eleanor. I appreciate being invited to participate in this hearing. I think it is important for the whole region and to a great many of our residents because it is going to shed light on how we can better prepare for future emergencies and situations like these that we have been faced with over the last several months.

As my colleagues mentioned, last April it was Tractor Man and how we can better react to a situation like that. At that hearing, we learned that we could have done a better job coordinating responses between the Federal Government and localities. We also learned that if a tobacco farmer in a tractor can bring this region to a standstill, which he did, just think of what a hazardous chemical spill or, heaven forbid, a terrorist attack directly on the Nation's Capital could do.

Last winter we had Mother Nature hit us with mounds of snow and sheets of ice, crippling the region and testing our ability to respond to inclement weather. After the snow and ice had melted, we all said we needed to reassess our response to natural emergencies and establish better procedures. Yet, here we are again talking about how this region can better prepare and recover from a situation that again brought the region to a halt. No doubt, Hurricane Isabel was a Category 3 hurricane that packed a punch this region hasn't seen since Hurricane Floyd. For the most part, we were prepared and ready for the storm.

Our firefighters, police officers and other emergency responders were selfless in their service to our residents. And their efforts saved lives, prevented injuries, and protected millions of dollars' worth of real estate and property from being damaged even more by the storm. These emergency responders must have the resources they need to perform their jobs, and I think it is a responsibility of the Federal Government to assist States and localities in securing those investments in our public safety departments around the country.

I do have concerns, however, that we may have overreacted a bit about some issues and underreacted to other problems brought on by the storm's fury. The National Weather Service, for example, offered the best forecast they could; and accordingly, Metro and the Office of Personnel Management were guided in their decision-making by their interpretation of the National Weather Service forecast. But Metro's decision to shut down service at 11 a.m., prompting the Federal Government to shut down on Thursday, September 18th, does not seem to have been a well-thought-out decision. Or was it? Well, that is what we need to look into, the process and considerations that went into making that decision. But when Metro decided to shut down and the Federal Government decided to follow suit, it created a ripple effect that cost taxpayers about $70 million on that day. Meanwhile, area businesses lost millions of dollars in lost productivity because most businesses in the region take OPM's lead in deciding how to react to emergencies. And yet nothing happened until considerably later in the afternoon, and we would have had plenty of time, for example, if the Federal

Government had simply said, "We will let you leave 2 hours early," instead of shutting down the whole day.

After Hurricane Isabel came through, she left a path of devastation in select areas of the region. My district was one of the most affected. Businesses and residences throughout Old Town Alexandria and the Belle View and new Alexandria sections of Fairfax County were completely flooded when the Potomac River spilled over its banks. In the Belle View Shopping Center, some family businesses were wiped out by the storm, either by its flooding or by the amount of money that they lost due to damage and recovery repairs.

One particular business in that shopping center literally lost absolutely everything as a result of the hurricane, Dishes of India. It was a small, successful, Indian cuisine restaurant in the basement of the shopping center. It had been the lifelong dream of its owner. He and his family had saved for more than 7 years to open up the restaurant. When the storm came, the water rushed into the back, into the kitchen, filled up the restaurant up to the ceiling. When I walked through the restaurant with them a week after the storm, workers were still trying to get water out of the basement; the damage will take months to repair. That family cannot recover unless there is some Federal help through the Small Business Administration and FEMA.

Many northern Virginians had smaller scale, but no less traumatic experiences. As we will hear later, Belle View Condominiums; 65 buildings were all flooded, all lost their boilers; there are 17 homes now uninhabitable. They all lost the belongings that they had kept in their basements, but even on the first floor, most anything of value was destroyed. The insurance companies say they will only take care of the building itself, no insurance for the contents even though they had flood insurance. So you have to ask, can Fairfax County have been better prepared for the flooding? Is there something we could have done to prevent, or at least alerted residents sooner that 9½ feet of water was going to spill into their neighborhood? We want to get some answers to that.

One of the biggest complaints we have heard was with regard to electricity being out for days, because residents weren't given accurate information. Compared to Pepco, Dominion Virginia Power did a decent job of getting the lights back on. But there is more that both companies could do in that regard. We live in a country where our daily lives depend on electricity. Our power companies have to ensure that the lights are going to stay on regardless of the weather, and residents need to know, if the power goes out, when service is likely to be restored, and not be given a song and dance leading them to believe it is going to be the next day, when it is 4 days later. Sixty-nine percent of Dominion's northern Virginia customers had their power knocked out, with 1.8 million out of 2.2 million customers without power. Close to half a million homes in northern Virginia were affected. It was good for me, because I had my power out as well, so when people would call your house and go on and on about the fact that they thought preference was being given, it was helpful to be able to say, "No, ma'am, I don't have power either." But the fact is, we all need to figure out a way, because we are just too dependent upon power. And I know that the power

companies are going to pass on the cost of the storm in rate increases to their customers. I am not sure that is an appropriate or wise move, but I think we need to look into it.

I also think that the Department of Homeland Security needs to perhaps broaden its responsibilities a bit to deal somewhat better with this situation. I appreciate what FEMA did, particularly in Alexandria and in the Belle View area. But FEMA announced then that they would go door to door. They had contract people go door to door. And they eventually, a week later, set up a disaster recovery center. But their people, contract people from States well to the south of Virginia, were brought up. They had to stay in a hotel in Manassas, and it was about an hour away, so 2 hours of driving to come up to that neighborhood. You know, they weren't particularly accessible. That is not their problem.

But there are a lot of things that we can do to improve the responsiveness; and while I don't fault any individual, I do think institutionally there are things that we can do. That is why this hearing is so important.

With that, Mr. Chairman, again, I thank you for enabling me to participate.

[The prepared statement of Hon. James P. Moran follows:]

Congressman Jim Moran
Opening Statement Before the Government Reform Committee's Hearing on Regional Response to Hurricane Isabel

Thank you, Chairman Davis for holding this very important hearing. Today's hearing will shed light on how we can better prepare for future emergencies and situations like the ones we have been faced with over the last several months.

In April, this Committee held a hearing about how the region could better react to man made situations like the "Tractor Man" standoff.

At that hearing, we learned that we could have done a better job coordinating responses between the federal government and localities.

We also learned that we need to better prepare for situations like "Tractor Man." If a tobacco farmer in a tractor can bring this region to a standstill, just think of what a hazardous chemical spill, or heaven forbid, a terrorist attack directly on the nation's capital can do.

And last winter we had Mother Nature hit us with mounds of snow and sheets of ice, crippling this region and testing our ability to respond to inclement weather. After the snow and ice had melted, we all said we needed to reassess our response to natural emergencies and establish better procedures.

Yet, here we are again talking about how this region can better prepare and recover from a situation that brought this region to a halt. No doubt, Hurricane Isabel was a Category 3 hurricane that packed a punch this region hasn't seen since Hurricane Floyd. For the most part we were prepared and ready for the storm.

Our firefighters, police officers, and other emergency responders were selfless in their service to our residents. Their efforts saved lives, prevented injuries, and protected millions of dollars worth of real estate and property from being damaged even more by the storm.

These emergency responders must have the resources they need to perform their jobs and I believe it is a responsibility of the federal

government to assist states and localities in securing those investments in our public safety departments around the country.

I have concerns, however, that we may have overreacted a bit to some issues and under-reacted to other problems brought on by the storm's fury. The National Weather Service offered the best forecast they could and accordingly, Metro and the Office of Personnel Management were guided in their decision-making by NWS' forecasts.

But Metro's decision to shut down service at 11 a.m. and thus, prompting the federal government to shut down on Thursday, September 18, does not seem to have been a well-thought out decision. Or was it? I would like to know the process and considerations that went into making this decision.

When Metro decided to shutdown at 11 a.m. on Thursday and the federal government followed suit by deciding to closing shop, it created a ripple effect that cost taxpayers about $70 million on that day. Meanwhile, area businesses lost millions of dollars in lost productivity because most businesses in the region take OPM's lead in deciding how to react to emergencies.

After Hurricane Isabel came through, she left a path of devastation in select areas of the region, with my district being one of the most affected. Businesses throughout Old Town Alexandria and the Belle View and New Alexandria sections of Fairfax County were completely flooded when the Potomac River spilled over its banks.

In the Belle View Shopping Center, family businesses were wiped out by the storm, either by its flooding or the amount of money they lost due to damage and recovery repairs.

One particular business in the shopping center literally lost everything as a result of the hurricane. Dishes of India, a small, successful Indian cuisine restaurant in the basement of the shopping center, had been the lifelong dream of its owner. He and his family had saved more for than 7 years to open up the restaurant. When the storm it, water rushed through the back, into the kitchen and quickly filled up the restaurant to the ceiling.

When I walked through the restaurant with him a week after the storm, workers were still getting the water out of the basement, and the damage will take months to repair. Hopefully, this family will recover, but it will take sacrifice and commitment to get the restaurant back up and running.

Many Northern Virginians have smaller-scale, but no less traumatic, experiences as a result of this storm. As we will hear later, Belle View Condominiums 65 buildings were all flooded, with 17 homes now uninhabitable, and family heirlooms, photos, and other irreplaceable items lost forever.

Could we have better prepared for this flooding? Is there something we could have done to prevent it or at least alerted residents sooner that 9 ½ feet of water would spill into their neighborhood? I hope we can get some answers today.

One of the biggest complaints I have heard from constituents is that their electricity was out for days after the storm and were not given accurate information on when it would be restored.

Compared to Pepco's response, Dominion Virginia Power did a decent job of getting the lights back on. Yet, there is certainly more these companies can do to prepare for storms.

We live in a country where our daily lives depend on electricity. Our power companies must ensure that the lights will stay on regardless of the weather. Residents should know that if the power does go out, they will have their service restored as quickly as possible and not be led to believe their power is coming on sooner than it actually is.

Sixty-nine percent of Dominion's Northern Virginia customers had their power knocked out with 1.8 million out of 2.2 million customers without power. Close to 500,000 customers in Northern Virginia were affected.

In fact, I was one of those customers in Arlington that lost power, so I can sympathize with many of my constituents. I understand that nearly everyone in Virginia now has power restored, but we need to calculate how we can avoid such large-scale outages in the future.

I have been reading that both Dominion Power and Pepco intend to pass the costs of this storm onto customers in the form of rate increases. That is an unwise move. Customers should not have to shoulder the burden for either company's lack of preparedness or failure modernize their facilities and equipment as this Congress has advised them to do on countless occasions. Power companies are public utilities that must put customers first and shareholders last.

The power outages we saw raise the question of whether the federal government should play more of a role in preparing for weather related emergencies. For instance, should the Department of Homeland Security broaden its responsibilities to provide dry ice or the funding needed for extra work crews to get the lights on?

Finally, I am very thankful for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's dedication to helping the Belle View community. At a town hall meeting I attend the Monday after the storm, more than 300 people showed up to hear about when they would get assistance and start getting their lives back to normal.

FEMA announced at that meeting that they would go door to door and find out what sort of assistance residents needed. They kept their word.

But I want to know from the FEMA representative why it took until this past week for the agency to establish a Disaster Recovery Center in Alexandria, even though the Small Business Administration had established a center the Tuesday after the hurricane?

Also, I understand that FEMA continues to use contract employees being housed at a hotel in Manassas instead of bringing in more of FEMA's own personnel? I hope the agency's representative can explain the rational behind this.

Again, thank you, Chairman Davis for holding this very important hearing. I look forward to learning more about how and what this region can do to better prepare – and react to – another storm or similar emergency.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, thank you very much.

The gentleman from Maryland, Mr. Van Hollen. Any opening statement?

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding these hearings on lessons that we can learn in our region in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel and how those lessons might be applied to other situations we may confront in the future, whether they are hurricanes or other types of disasters in the region.

I am going to focus on the hurricane response and the portion of it that most dramatically impacted upon my constituents, which was the long power outages. And I appreciate the fact that the head of Pepco, Bill Sim, is here and is going to be testifying later. I also appreciate the fact that Pepco has decided to hire James Lee Witt to come in and do a thorough investigation of this situation. As the chief executive of Pepco Holdings said recently, "It is clear customers have lost confidence in us. That is not something that we take lightly. We think it is appropriate to bring in Mr. Witt to help us rebuild that confidence." I can tell you that from the hundreds of letters and e-mails that we received in our offices in a period of over a week, from people who would call at home and in the Washington office, in our district office, people have lost much faith in the ability of Pepco to respond. Clearly, this was a huge storm of proportions that we have not seen in this region for a long time. It was the biggest storm to strike while Pepco was providing service. It was a monumental task.

I hope that as we go forward we will focus on four areas: One, what can we do up front to try and prevent such massive power outages in the future? Obviously we are going to have some power outages when we have huge hurricanes like Isabel. But what can we do? Tree trimming? Lines underground? Better ability to strengthen the infrastructure to prevent the power outages from being as extensive as they were in the first place? And as you know, this is not the first occurrence. We had an earlier power outage this summer that lasted for many customers as long as a week. So this was a double whammy for many people.

Second, response preparation. When we know that there is a hurricane coming, or we know that we are going to be facing this kind of situation, what can we do to better prepare? More crews on the ground? From the statements and reports that I have read and looked at, Dominion Power was able to get many more crews on the ground up front. They took better advantage of the warnings that were in place with respect to the size of this hurricane on its way, and they had more people on the ground ready to respond more quickly. What else can we do to better prepare for responses?

Third, managing the expectations of customers. Once the hurricane has hit, once the power is out, how can we better manage expectations? The first round of power outages in this region, Pepco took one extreme. They tried to be very specific, telling customers exactly when their power would go on, and they made an effort to do that. Unfortunately, what happened was, a lot of people's expectations were, "OK, I am going to get my power on tomorrow; that is what I have been told. And when we were unable to provide that power on schedule, people understandably became disenchanted."

With the second round, we had really the opposite extreme. People were really told, even before the hurricane actually hit, that we can't assure that your power is going to be on for more than a week later, the following Friday. Even as additional information became available as to where Pepco was going to be restoring power, and Pepco had good reason to believe they would be able to restore power—not a guarantee of a specific date, but some ball-park range—people were informed and that had an impact on their planning. So I am interested in what we can do to better allow people to know when their power is going to be on.

And finally, courtesy. I know that Pepco has a terrific team of people. They brought in a lot of good people. But there are always people who, when they are on the other end of the phone, for instance there are always some people who forget that the customer on the end of the phone is frustrated. And there were many instances, and we got lots of reports from people who were—where the Pepco person on the other end of the line was—just brushed them off and said, you know, "Sorry, too bad, we just can't do anything about your problem," in a very brusk manner without the kind of understanding of the frustration that people were going through when they had more than a week without power, sometimes more. And, finally, these disconnects where people would be on the phone with their lights off telling people on the other end, "My lights are off," and being told, "No, our system says your lights are on." There is nothing more frustrating than that, or being told that you have a live—reporting that you have a live wire by your house, and being told that, "No, in fact, you don't." I mean, that kind of disconnect obviously is something that is of great concern to consumers.

You know, I have lots of letters, and very thoughtful letters, letters that aren't just screaming and talking about how terrible everything is, but really documenting very clearly personal experiences, phone conversations, outlining them, specifically when they took place and what was said. So I know that so many people are hearing a lot of frustration from a lot of customers and saying, you know, everyone has to understand that this was a major event. And it was a major event. But at the same time, we all have to understand that these are people who were very patient for many days, and at the end of 3 or 4 days began to lose patience, especially when they did not and could not get the kind of information that I think they were entitled to get.

So I hope we will address those areas as we consider these issues. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Our first witness is Eric Tolbert, the Director of the Response Division of FEMA, under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

It is the policy of this committee that we swear you in before you testify, so if you would rise with me and raise your right hand.

[Witness sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Your total statement is in the record. It will be printed in the record. We would like to keep you to 5 minutes, because Members have read it and are ready to ask questions on that. So we have a light in front. It will turn orange or yellow after 4 minutes, and red after 5. If you can try to keep

close to that, that would be helpful. But we appreciate your being here. Thank you very much.

STATEMENT OF ERIC TOLBERT, DIRECTOR OF THE RESPONSE DIVISION, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. TOLBERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. I am Eric Tolbert, Director of the Response Division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security. On behalf of Secretary Tom Ridge and Under Secretary Mike Brown, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on the response to Hurricane Isabel.

Recovery from the disaster is ongoing, and I can assure you that President Bush is committed to assisting all of the affected States and local jurisdictions from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. The Department and FEMA will be there as long as we are needed. The level of cooperation and professionalism exhibited by all of the local, State and Federal personnel, the emergency responders, the volunteers, and the private sector responders has been outstanding. The American people can be proud of the work they are doing to help the region recover.

Early on, we recognized that Isabel would evolve into a significant, multiregional response, so beginning on September 15th, we really started stepping up our coordination and action-planning activities in advance of the predicted landfall. Our intent was to make FEMA prepared and in the best possible position to rapidly and effectively execute our disaster response operations as directed by the President and in support of State and local jurisdictions.

FEMA operations were augmented by the activation of the Emergency Support Team, which is our interagency Federal response plan organization to help coordinate preparation for and response to the disaster. At that time, advance elements of the National Emergency Response Team were also dispatched to the field, and regularly scheduled video teleconferences were held with all of the East Coast States that we anticipated could potentially be impacted by the hurricane, all the way from Florida to New England. The video teleconferences allowed us to, first, provide storm information and predictions, facilitate intergovernmental coordination, develop action plans anticipating what the requirements would be, and coordinate preparations among the States, the Department of Homeland Security and its various elements: the FEMA headquarters, the White House, the Hurricane Liaison Team that we placed at the National Hurricane Center, our regional operations centers in Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Atlanta, our FEMA mobilization centers that were established in advance of the event, and the emergency support functions from all of the Federal agencies and departments. The Hurricane Liaison Team, which operated around the clock, was invaluable in coordinating the real-time meteorological updates and predictions from the National Hurricane Center, the Hydrometeorological Prediction Center, the Southeast River Forecast Center, the Mid-Atlantic Forecast Center, and other NOAA components.

Beginning on September 15 and continuing through the post-disaster period, video teleconferences were conducted at least twice daily to give the affected States and the District of Columbia an open line of communications and the opportunity to raise questions, express concerns, coordinate information and, most importantly, request assistance and resources to respond to the disaster. Advanced elements of our Emergency Response Teams and State liaisons were dispatched before the storm to the anticipated States that would be affected, and the District of Columbia, to coordinate disaster preparedness as well as response activities. I think our proactive stance allowed us to largely complete our preparedness activities for the storm, including prepositioning of initial response assets by Wednesday, September 17th. Action planning was initiated prior to and continued after the landfall of the hurricane. Our priorities focused on developing contingency plans for life support and mass care, including sheltering, feeding, and medical care, especially for isolated communities.

We also focused our second priority on providing ice, water, generators, and electrical power for critical facilities, arranging for mobile feeding sites, establishing disaster field offices and disaster recovery centers, and implementing individual and public assistance activities. In preparation for the disaster, we continually monitored the availability of supplies in order to meet the immediate response requirements. We prepositioned advanced, what we call "AID Packages," which consisted of cots and blankets and emergency meals and portable toilets, plastic sheeting, bottled water, and generators. We mobilized our emergency response support assets to the States to ensure that we would have continuity in communications so that we could ensure the communications, intergovernmental communication, between the States. I can go on for the next 10 to 15 minutes explaining the prepositioned assets and the specialized teams from across the government that were provided in advance in anticipation of a landfall. And I would say that we continue today to provide additional response support in support of the State and local governments across the area.

I would like to highlight one success—and I realize that I am going over—but one real success I think we worked out, that was a significant change, that prohibited us from being delayed in the response, is that in advance of landfall we had negotiated a policy and had a process in place for an expedited Stafford Act declaration by the President. So we communicated in advance to the Governors and to the Mayor of the District of Columbia the criteria under which we would entertain and rapidly respond to an expedited disaster declaration. Only when we receive that declaration can we employ Federal resources to support State and local governments in a disaster. And within hours of receiving those requests, based on our stated criteria, in fact those declarations did occur.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today and would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tolbert follows:]

Statement of Eric Tolbert
Director of the Response Division
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Department of Homeland Security

Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
October 3, 2003

Good morning, Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee. I am Eric Tolbert, Director of the Response Division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). On behalf of Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge and Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response Michael Brown, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on the operations of the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA in response to Hurricane Isabel.

Recovery from the disaster is ongoing and I can assure you that President Bush is committed to providing assistance to help all of the affected States and local jurisdictions from North Carolina to Pennsylvania get back on their feet. DHS and FEMA will be there as long as needed.

Hurricane Isabel will not be forgotten anytime soon because of the widespread hardships so many people had to endure, including the loss of loved ones, homes, possessions, power, and water. In many respects, I believe Isabel was a wakeup call for a lot of people who had forgotten or didn't realize how powerful a hurricane and tropical storm could really be.

Having been involved in emergency response and management for all of my professional life, I am always deeply impressed by the countless heroic and unselfish efforts of our emergency responders from the police, fire, and emergency medical communities. Without hesitation, they placed themselves in harm's way to help protect others. I am grateful to them for their ultimate sacrifice and bravery. I am also proud of our own FEMA disaster response employees for their dedication in helping others in need. Many of them were also disaster victims themselves and had the added burden of worrying about their own families and loved ones and property as they carried out the response to Isabel. The level of cooperation and professionalism exhibited by all of the local, State, and Federal personnel, emergency responders, volunteers, and private sector responders has been outstanding. The American people can be proud of the work they are doing to help the region recover. And I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the hard work and long hours put in by the utility crews to restore power.

Our response to Hurricane Isabel at FEMA and DHS demonstrates our steady improvement in coordinating and leading Federal, State and local response efforts to protect life and property in times of disaster. The seamless collaboration of the response

elements in DHS with those in other Federal departments and agencies made possible a rapid pre-positioning of disaster assets and capabilities throughout the eastern United States. This helped to ensure an effective and rapid response in assisting States and communities protect the lives and property of their citizens.

Federal Response to Disasters

Since becoming part of the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate (EP&R) of DHS, FEMA has continued its traditional role of preparing for, mitigating against, responding to, and recovering from disasters caused by all hazards. Since March 1st, FEMA has provided disaster relief in over 60 Presidentially-declared disasters and emergencies from Alaska to New York to American Samoa. These disasters include such events as the President's Day snowstorm and the devastating tornadoes that struck the Midwest and South in May. Most recently, of course, we have been dealing with Hurricane Isabel.

Our success in responding to disasters has always depended on our ability to organize and lead a community of local, State, and Federal agencies and volunteer organizations in providing relief. Experience has taught us over the years who to bring to the table and what questions to ask, and this experience has allowed us to improve over time in managing a wide range of emergencies. Since its inception in 1992, the Federal Response Plan (FRP) has provided the organizational framework and process that has enabled the Federal government to respond as a cohesive team to a wide range of natural and manmade disasters and catastrophes. This team is made up of 26 Federal departments and agencies, as well as the American Red Cross. It is organized based on the authorities and expertise of the members, and the needs of our counterparts at the State and local level.

The formation of DHS has provided us with the opportunity to further integrate and enhance the capacity of Federal response efforts. On February 28, 2003, the President directed the Secretary to establish a single, comprehensive national incident management system with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and to integrate separate Federal response plans into a single all-discipline, all-hazards National Response Plan (NRP). FEMA has been actively participating in these efforts. We are also a co-facilitator and have regional participation on the State, tribal and local NIMS/NRP workgroup, which is an intergovernmental advisory group assembled to provide State and local input, guidance and expertise to the NRP/NIMS revision efforts.

The evidence of strong State and local preparations and response to Hurricane Isabel can also be attributed to our long-standing efforts in support of building State and local response capabilities. Ongoing FEMA preparedness initiatives include approximately $165 million in FY 2003 in Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) for State and local government all hazards preparedness and emergency management activities. The EMPG has been critical in improving the effectiveness of State and local emergency management and first responder organizations through

planning, training, exercises, and support of operational facilities in sustaining response operations. The EMPG has also been key in supporting mitigation program activities designed to reduce the vulnerability of communities to all hazards.

In addition, training has played a very important role in preparing our firefighters, law enforcement, emergency managers, healthcare workers, public works, and state and local officials. Both the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and the National Fire Academy (NFA) offer a wide variety of training programs to promote the professional development of command level firefighters, emergency managers, emergency responders and technical staff, with the very skills used in preparing for and responding to Hurricane Isabel. In FY 2003, EMI provided critical emergency management training for over 8,000 students and over 185,000 individuals completed independent study courses. The NFA provided either residential or training through outreach, regional or direct deliveries, and distance learning efforts to over 95,000 students. Both EMI and NFA expect to increase course offerings and number of students trained for FY04.

All of our efforts to sustain and enhance Federal, State, and local preparedness and response capabilities paid off in our response to Hurricane Isabel.

Hurricane Isabel Response

Tropical Storm Isabel developed September 6, 2003, some 600 miles west of the Southern Cape Verde Islands. The next day the storm was upgraded to a hurricane and on September 11, 2003, Isabel was upgraded to the first Category 5 Hurricane in the Atlantic basin since Hurricane Mitch in 1998.

Our efforts to place greater emphasis on being more proactive and forward-looking in our preparedness and response operations, with added focus on situational awareness, helped us significantly in preparations for the landfall of Hurricane Isabel. We recognized early on that Isabel would evolve into a significant multi-regional response so we issued an Operations Order on September 15, 2003, four days before landfall, to step up coordination and action planning activities in advance of the predicted landfall. My intent was to make FEMA totally prepared and in the best possible position to rapidly and effectively execute disaster response operations, as directed by the President, in support of State and local jurisdictions.

Operations at our National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) were augmented with activation of the Emergency Support Team (EST) on September 15, 2003, to help coordinate preparation for and response to the disaster. At that time, advance elements of the Emergency Response Team-National (ERT N) were dispatched to FEMA Regions III and IV, and regular schedule of video-teleconferences were initiated with all of the East Coast States from Florida to New England that we anticipated could potentially be impacted by the hurricane. The purpose of the video-teleconferences was to provide storm information and predictions and to facilitate coordination, action planning, and preparations among the States and the District of

Columbia, DHS and FEMA Headquarters elements, the White House, the Hurricane Liaison Team at the National Hurricane Center, our Regional Operations Centers (ROC) in FEMA Regions I, II, III, and IV, the FEMA Mobilization Centers, and the Emergency Support Function (ESF) departments and agencies.

The Hurricane Liaison Team, which operated around the clock, was invaluable in coordinating real time meteorological updates and predictions from the National Hurricane Center, the Hydrometeorological Prediction Center, the Southeast River Forecast Center, the Mid-Atlantic Forecast Center, and other National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration components. Beginning September 15th and continuing through the post disaster period, video-teleconferences were conducted at least twice daily to give the affected States and the District of Columbia an open line of communications and the opportunity to raise questions, express concerns, coordinate information, and most importantly, request assistance and resources to respond to the disaster. Advanced elements of our Emergency Response Teams and State Liaisons were dispatched before the storm to the affected States and the District of Columbia to coordinate disaster response activities. Our proactive stance allowed us to largely complete our preparedness activities for the storm, including pre-positioning assets, by Wednesday, September 17th.

Action planning was initiated prior to and continued after landfall of the hurricane. Our priorities focused on developing contingency plans for life support and mass care including sheltering, feeding, and medical care, especially for isolated communities; providing ice, water, generators, and electrical power for critical facilities; arranging mobile feeding sites; establishing Disaster Field Offices and Disaster Recovery Centers; implementing individual and public assistance activities; and removing potential sunken vessels and assessing coastal erosion.

In preparation for the disaster, FEMA Logistics continuously monitored the availability of supplies to ensure that levels on hand would be adequate to meet immediate response requirements. Before Isabel made landfall, FEMA pre-positioned hundreds of tons of emergency disaster supplies in mobilization centers in the disaster areas. Five "Advanced Initial Response Resources Deployment (AID) Packages" were available and three were pre-positioned. Each AID package consisted of 10 trailers containing cots, blankets, emergency meals, portable toilets, plastic sheeting, bottled water and generators. Our Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) capabilities played a critical role in supporting the disaster response mission: MERS assets from Thomasville, Georgia were deployed to support activities in North Carolina; and the Denver, Colorado and Denton, Texas MERS supported activities in Virginia.

We established mobilization centers at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina, and Edison, New Jersey, and staging areas at Ft. A. P. Hill, Virginia, and Columbus, Ohio. Ft. A.P. Hill was subsequently converted to a mobilization center and when operations were discontinued there a mobilization center was established at Ft. Eustis, Virginia to continue operations. Many of the other assets which we pre-positioned came from throughout the eastern United States and were also critical to launching an effective

response including: Rapid Needs Assessment Teams; the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) Disaster Medical Assistance Teams; Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces; Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Hazardous Materials Teams; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Forest Service, General Services Administration (GSA), Department of Energy, and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Teams; and other assets.

In addition to all of the pre-positioned assets mentioned above, we provided a FEMA liaison, an EPA Hazardous Materials Team, five HHS Teams, a Regional Emergency Transportation Coordinator Team, five U.S. Forest Service Teams, a Department of Energy Team, and multiple GSA assets to support Washington, D.C. Two EPA Hazardous Materials Teams were pre-positioned at the Maryland State EOC in Reisterstown, Maryland, along with FEMA liaisons and elements of FEMA's Emergency Response Team and a Rapid Needs Assessment Team. Three EPA Hazardous Materials Teams, two HHS Teams, a U.S. Forest Service Team, a Department of Energy Team, and seven U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Teams were dispatched to Richmond, Virginia, to support the Commonwealth of Virginia.

DHS, through FEMA, the Coast Guard, and other emergency response elements, coordinated a massive Federal response to millions of citizens throughout the mid-Atlantic region impacted by Hurricane Isabel. The greatest need in this disaster was for power, ice, and water. The response demonstrates our successful integration of numerous assets, once used for a specific, more narrowly defined mission, for an all-hazards purpose. The Hurricane Isabel response illustrates that the asset integration and coordination has improved the Department's ability to protect the American people in time of crisis. For example:

- The U.S. Coast Guard supported FEMA and State and local agencies with aircraft, boats, and personnel flying missions in support of recovery efforts. Vessels and aircraft assessed aids to navigation and damage to ports and waterways, and were used to detect and respond to pollution incidents.

- The DHS Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) provided imaging support through its surveillance planes that enabled us to survey the extent of damage, and better plan for and target the restoration in heavily damaged areas. For example, the NC Highway 12 breach was identified. The BICE Office of Air and Marine Interdiction provided airplanes for aerial remote sensing and infrared imaging damage assessment missions in the Outer Banks area immediately following the hurricane. This allowed a quick assessment of isolated populations and facilitated our life saving and safety missions and our assessment of damages/breaches to the barrier islands, property, and infrastructure. Having access to the BICE and Coast Guard capabilities gave us for the first time ever management planning and support for air operations.

- Four Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Forces were deployed as "Type III" Light Task Forces with 28 personnel each, designed for rapid deployment to a

hurricane-impacted area. Task Forces from Ohio and Indiana were pre-positioned in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Task Forces from Tennessee and Missouri were pre-positioned at Ft. A. P. Hill in Virginia. One of three USAR Incident Support Teams deployed to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania and USAR Rapid Needs Assessment liaisons were dispatched to the North Carolina State Emergency Operations Center in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Virginia State Emergency Operations Center in Richmond, Virginia.

- As part of the NEOC operations, DHS officials continuously monitored 15 sector-specific Information Sharing and Analysis Centers, including the most vulnerable critical infrastructures such as electricity, telecommunications, water, and transportation and supported private sector efforts to resume critical power and water services in all the impacted areas.

- The U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service supplied food to disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

- In coordination with FEMA, the HHS emergency response teams deployed to damaged areas to assist State and local officials evaluate the status and accessibility of hospitals, check water and sanitation quality, and monitor public health needs. FEMA's National Disaster Medical System teams provided critical medical assistance to isolated populations on the Outer Banks.

When Hurricane Isabel made landfall on North Carolina's Outer Banks on the morning of September 18, 2003, it was a very powerful Category 2 hurricane. The storm packed winds close to 100 mph accompanied by heavy rain and storm surges of up to 11 feet above normal tidal levels. The winds, rain, and storm surge from Isabel created a huge area of destruction that includes extensive coastal flooding and lowland flooding, more than a million customers without power, damaged homes and businesses and tens of thousands of displaced residents. Forty deaths have been attributed to the Hurricane.

As a result of Hurricane Isabel, President Bush has issued seven major disaster declarations for areas along the mid-Atlantic Coast, from North Carolina to Pennsylvania. In the National Capital Region, the President signed disaster declarations for Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia in a matter of hours after they had been requested by the Governors and the Mayor.

These declarations not only ensured that Federal resources at the disposal of the Federal government could be utilized to support State and local efforts to respond to Hurricane Isabel, but also authorized a wide array of recovery programs to help States, communities, and individuals recover. While FEMA's Recovery programs cannot make a disaster victim whole, nor duplicate insurance proceeds, it can assist individuals and families with funds to safely house them and cover necessary expenses and serious needs such as medical, dental, or funeral costs. Combined assistance under the program cannot exceed $25,000. In addition to being able to provide businesses with low-interest loans, the Small Business Administration can also provide low-interest home loans to

homeowners to help return a damaged dwelling to its pre-disaster condition. In order to make the application process for Federal assistance for disaster victims as simple as possible, the FEMA toll free number [1-800-621-FEMA (3362)] can be used to initially access SBA loans as well as provide a host of referral information for other kinds of needs in addition to our own programs.

In the first ten days after Hurricane Isabel hit the Atlantic Coast, we received a total of 49,702 applications in the National Capital Region: 40,068 in Virginia; 8,965 in Maryland; and 669 in the District of Columbia. Within two weeks from the date of the first disaster declaration for Hurricane Isabel, a total of over $17.4 million in disaster assistance was already out on the street: $8.6 million in Virginia; $8.6 million in Maryland; and $200,000 in the District of Columbia. The average turnaround time from application to delivery of assistance is 7-10 days, although $2.5 million dollars was on the street in less than a week from the first disaster declaration. We were able to accomplish through the use of over 1,400 agents to take and process applications and over 500 inspectors in the field to inspect damaged dwellings. Also multiple fixed and mobile Disaster Recovery Centers have been established with the States and the District of Columbia for disaster victims to visit in person, ask questions, and check on the status of their application. While a lot has been accomplished in a short period of time, there is still much to be done.

The Crisis Counseling and Training Program is available to provide supplemental short-term crisis counseling services to those States that may be overwhelmed from helping those affected by the disaster. With technical assistance provided by the Center for Mental Health Services, within HHS, applications for crisis counseling are evaluated and, if approved, can provide for services to alleviate mental health problems caused or aggravated by the disaster.

One of the questions that disaster victims will be asked when applying for assistance through our toll free number is whether or not they are out of work due to the disaster. Depending on the information collected, the State will determine whether or not they would like to request activation of the Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) Program. The DUA Program provides unemployment benefits and re-employment services to individuals, including self-employed individuals, who were living or working in the affected areas at the time of the disaster, who are unemployed as a result of the disaster, and who are not covered by the State's existing Unemployment Insurance Program. Maryland has received an initial funding amount of $115,000 and the District of Columbia has received an initial payment of $30,360. The State of Virginia has expressed an interest in activating the DUA Program.

FEMA's Public Assistance program can provide cost-shared reimbursement for the repair or replacement of public damaged facilities, such as roads, bridges, waste-water treatment plants, public utilities, or, for example a county courthouse. It also provides for reimbursement for eligible debris removal and emergency protective measure costs that can be sizable in such events as Hurricane Isabel. In fact, in less than two weeks we obligated over $4 million in Virginia alone to remove debris and to help

defray the increased costs for protecting public safety during the first hours of the storm. FEMA continues to work with the States and the District of Columbia to assess damages and determine eligibility for repair or replacement projects.

During the rebuilding process, FEMA can consider some mitigation measures to be incorporated that would lessen the impact of future disasters, thereby protecting life and property from future disasters. It is important to note that by law, FEMA cannot duplicate insurance coverage that is available to the property owner. But the overall help FEMA can provide under Stafford Act authorities can play a significant role in the long-term recovery of a State and its communities.

FEMA is also coordinating a long term recovery working group of Federal agencies that can assist States and communities to recover from disasters. The working group will support State efforts to: 1) assess potential long term impacts from the hurricane; 2) consider opportunities to reduce future disaster damages and meet other community planning goals as they plan for restoration of damaged infrastructure, services, housing, and commercial areas; and 3) coordinate among agencies and programs to maximize resources to support recovery.

FEMA has already met with representatives from the Virginia Departments of Emergency Management and Housing and Community Development to discuss an approach and objectives for long term recovery planning in Virginia. The Governor of Virginia plans to establish a State task force on long term recovery. FEMA is contacting other States affected by Isabel to assess need and interest in Federal support for coordinating long term recovery. In addition, FEMA is utilizing this effort as an opportunity to develop a more systematic long term recovery planning and coordination process for future disaster events, which is a concept we plan to incorporate into the NRP.

As in all disasters, we will learn valuable lessons from the Hurricane Isabel response. The key to our continued improvement will be to take these lessons and incorporate them into our preparedness, planning, doctrine, and procedures so that we do even better next time. We will be working with the Congress, other Federal partners, State and local leaders, and other affected stakeholders to continue to enhance our ability to respond effectively to all types of disasters.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today, and would be glad to answer any questions that you have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. We have three panels, so I am going to move fairly quickly.

The next panel, the State and local panel, is important, but let me ask you this. Would you do anything differently? Did you learn anything here that, in retrospect, you might have done differently?

Mr. TOLBERT. A key planning factor that we are revisiting—let me say that we began our critique process, our "hot washes," days ago. One of the key areas that we are going to concentrate on is more deliberate planning and collaboration with the States.

The Emergency Management System is a vertical organization. It begins at the grass-roots level, with the municipalities and counties providing the baseline, initial response, and then the States provide supplemental response to that, and then we provide supplemental support to the States. There are inconsistencies in the division of roles and responsibilities. That is a planning area that we plan to focus on in our future emergency response planning so that we have clearly understood the division of responsibilities between the levels of government. I think that is an area that is significant for improvement, a vertical improvement—not just FEMA, but at the State and the local levels as well.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I am going to ask unanimous consent. We have the written testimony of Michael Byrne, who is the Director of the Office of National Capital Region Coordination for Department of Homeland Security.

Let me ask you this. Did you work with Michael Byrne? Did he play any role in this with you?

Mr. TOLBERT. Yes, sir. Mr. Byrne conducted conference calls with the National Capital Region jurisdictions. He kept us apprised, and he participated with us on the video teleconferences with the States on a regular basis. He provided us real-time information and supported any requests that we would receive for assistance from the NCR.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you.

Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I just have a couple of questions, Mr. Tolbert. You have an important basis for comparison. As far as we are concerned, it happened to us and therefore it is very hard for us to know anything about the quality of our response, because the only way to judge that is against others.

I would like you to rate the response to—because of your broad jurisdiction, because you have seen these same kinds of disasters in other places, I would like you to rate the response of the following in relation to other jurisdictions: transportation decisions and operations; power company response; and water and sewer response. So let's begin with transportation decisions and operations. You have seen hurricanes all over the United States. How would you rate the response of our transportation officials and operations?

Mr. TOLBERT. I haven't given that a lot of consideration. But based on some of your opening remarks, I did give some quick thought to it. I believe that the decisions made by the mass transit systems within the Metro area were appropriate and effective.

Ms. NORTON. Were you consulted on those decisions?

Mr. TOLBERT. We were consulted through the Washington area warning system network. We are a party to that.

Ms. NORTON. Did you agree with the decision that the Metro should be shut down at the time it was?

Mr. TOLBERT. Even in retrospect, I would personally concur with that decision. It reduced the population. It reduced the Federal workers within the National Capital Region. Even at what we call "D minus 1," the day before landfall, the forecast was for in excess of 70-mile-per-hour winds in the National Capital Region, in the Washington—District of Columbia.

Based on those, on those forecasts, I think it was appropriate; and in fact, I think it significantly reduced the demands on the local emergency response system.

Ms. NORTON. Do you think that they would have done that all over the United States? They would have just pulled the buses and the subways down? You are telling me that is standard operating procedure in other parts of the country?

Mr. TOLBERT. There are variations from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. But especially in areas where they cross bridges, it is normal for transportation systems to be closed at the point that they reach 40 to 45 miles per hour.

Ms. NORTON. All right. Power company responses, compared with other areas of the country where you have seen similar hurricanes and disasters.

Mr. TOLBERT. I was not at all surprised by the widespread power outages. It was reminiscent of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, where we had inland winds at hurricane force in Charlotte, NC, from a landfall in Charleston, SC. At that time, even with that storm, we had 14 days before power restoration in Charlotte, NC. So, as compared to other responses that I have observed across the country in my 20 years in this business, I would say that the power response was on average or on a par with what I normally observe.

Ms. NORTON. What about the water and sewer responses?

Mr. TOLBERT. Water and sewer response, I think, is an area that, from a critical infrastructure standpoint, I think is an area for significant improvement. The electric power grid impact that we had about a month ago in the Northeast again emphasized the importance of those critical facilities for humanitarian support. I think it is an area that we do need to concentrate on. I am not in a position to give a graded score, but I think it certainly illustrates a vulnerability in our critical infrastructure that we have known about that needs to be addressed.

Ms. NORTON. I thank you. One more question, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

I am a member also of the Homeland Security Committee and have seen the consolidation of your department into that department. I would like to know whether it mattered that you were in the Department of Homeland Security. If so, how did it matter specifically that you were not FEMA, as you always have been? It looks like you were using your usual FEMA expertise. What did it matter that you were in this new consolidated department?

Mr. TOLBERT. I can speak specifically about several enhancements that occurred really as a result of our being within this larger department. We had a much more significant response on the

part of the BICE organization, the Bureau for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They provided surveillance aircraft for us, as well as additional rotary-wing aircraft that were on standby and were actually applied to support State and local operations.

Ms. NORTON. And that would not have been the case before?

Mr. TOLBERT. It had not been the case before. They even collocated with us in FEMA's Emergency Operating Center to ensure that we had those resources prestaged and available. That was to address a specific known shortfall, which was some of the National Guard assets that had been deployed from the Governors, that were not available. So we expected a rotary-wing aircraft shortfall, and reached out to our other partners.

The same applies to the U.S. Coast Guard, who stood up and provided lots of aviation assets in support of State and local governments, as well as our own Federal operations—highly effective, I think. And the critical infrastructure organization from the new department also collocated with us to provide additional intelligence, what they were getting on critical infrastructure failures.

Ms. NORTON. That is all new? That is all new input into FEMA?

Mr. TOLBERT. It is absolutely all new input.

Ms. NORTON. That is good news.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask some questions with regard to my personal experience with the FEMA folks who were sent down to the southern part of Fairfax County, where we had 2,200 homes inundated with flooding.

The people who went door to door were not FEMA employees; they were all contract people. Most of them seemed to come from Georgia, the Carolinas and so on, not particularly familiar with the neighborhood or the region. They were nice enough people, but there didn't seem to be many FEMA people around. Is that normally the way that things are done?

Mr. TOLBERT. Mr. Moran, a lot of the services that are provided by FEMA are, in fact, provided by contract support. The personnel you are referring to are housing inspectors. As victims call the FEMA hotline for tele-registration and we identify that there are housing impacts, we dispatch contract inspectors to actually use a handheld computer to document and record the damages and the type of assistance that is required. Those personnel are provided through contract support.

FEMA is an organization of about—roughly 2,500 full-time personnel. And most of the disaster personnel, most of the FEMA personnel that you see in a disaster wearing the blue coats with gold FEMA letters are actually our reservist cadre. We have about 3,500 intermittent employees that we routinely utilize to support large-scale disaster response and recovery operations. So they do come from all across the country to support our operations.

Mr. MORAN. I am curious as to why, when the damage that they were working on was in Alexandria and the part of Fairfax County that is called Alexandria, why they were housed in a hotel out in Manassas, so they had to drive for an hour to get to the site, and then drive back again for an hour. They did complain about that, although I am sure they don't want me to share their complaints

with you but they wondered themselves. You couldn't find a hotel on Route 1 in Alexandria?

Mr. TOLBERT. I can't adequately respond to that specific question. I can tell you that it is normal for our workers to be displaced outside. In fact, our priority is that disaster victims have first option on available housing within an impacted area. And I suspect at that time that if there were large numbers of people without power they resorted to hotel facilities. That is very common in disasters. I can't speak specifically to the Fairfax County situation.

Mr. MORAN. Well, it seems petty. But the problem was, when they had early morning meetings—for example, I went to one early Saturday morning—there were no FEMA people there. But, on the other hand, it was at 8 a.m. They would have had to leave at 7 a.m. to get there. It just seemed like it might have been a little bit more efficient. It doesn't sound like a big deal, except it made them less accessible than they otherwise would have been.

I think it would have been good, if I might suggest, to have someone that was sort of assigned to that particular disaster situation that could have worked with the community, the one person in charge, and they could go to the community meetings and so on. That might have been helpful. All of the FEMA people were nice people. But I am not sure that there was a person in charge; at least the residents didn't seem to get the sense that there was one person that they could go to and get the answers and who had the authority to direct anyone's actions.

Mr. TOLBERT. That is one of the areas that we are looking at, is placing liaisons down to the local level, either pre- or post-impact, depending on what the situation is. That is something that we have to coordinate very closely with the States, to ensure that we are not duplicating effort or causing any additional confusion that may exist in intergovernmental coordination. But that is an area under review.

Mr. MORAN. I don't think the localities would have resented somebody from FEMA working there side by side with them. When they found that all of the boilers, for example, were gone in these 65 multi-family buildings, I was told in the past that FEMA might be able to do things like set up a place where you could have showers, because the toxics in the water are a serious problem. So people, when they handle them, they really need to be able to shower; and yet they couldn't shower, they didn't have water, gas or electricity. Has FEMA ever done that? Actually, I have been told that they have done that in prior times.

Mr. TOLBERT. We do not have those as organic assets of FEMA. But we do have the ability to contract for portable shower units, and we did actually provide some. I am aware of requests in North Carolina for that type of service, and they are being provided. Also by nonprofit organizations. The Southern Baptist organization was providing that very service in Virginia on a number of visits that I observed. So it is a collaborative effort. We do have some contract capacity, but not organic capability.

Mr. MORAN. I hope it is not because we have enough Southern Baptists in the community to do that.

Just one last thing. The—15 percent of the money that goes to a locality is to be spent on mitigation. You probably can't answer

the question now, but I would be very interested in how you are going to spend that money on mitigation to reduce the likelihood of a flood in the future. And I understand that is FEMA's role.

Mr. TOLBERT. The current—I assume you are referring to the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which previously was funded at 15 percent of the Federal investment in disaster relief. Current authorization is for 7.5 percent of the Federal investment. So that Hazard Mitigation Grant Program value, under current appropriation, will be at 7.5 percent, a 50 percent reduction from the prior amount.

Those priorities, however, are established by the State. The State has the responsibility for doing hazard mitigation planning in accordance with the Stafford Act and its amendments of the year 2000. So we entertain those proposals to demonstrate cost beneficial measures and will certainly look at any measure that the State submits to us.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you, sir. And thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The gentleman from Maryland. Any questions?

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few.

First, there was a question from Ms. Norton with respect to the power companies' response to this event in this area, and in comparison to others. You mentioned Hurricane Hugo and the 2-week response. I just want to make sure I understand. But that was a response—Hugo hit—where was the greatest impact of Hugo, what region?

Mr. TOLBERT. Charleston, SC.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. So that is right where it was at the greatest force. By the time the hurricane hit this area, while it was a significant hurricane, it was not at the force of Hurricane Hugo hitting South Carolina.

Mr. TOLBERT. But in Charlotte, NC, is where I was referring to, 14 days after the impact it—Hurricane Hugo also made an inland path. And 14 days later Charlotte had final power restoration. So this is normal. It is a normal time line for disaster recovery operations for power utilities.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Well, let me ask you, you mentioned you are in the process of doing an assessment and evaluation. Is part of that assessment to look at the response of power companies in this region, or is that beyond the scope of your review?

Mr. TOLBERT. That is beyond the scope of our review.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. OK. Now, one of the priorities, obviously, for power companies, when a hurricane hits and power goes out is to restore power to hospitals, nursing homes. And from all reports I heard, Pepco had a good response, and the other utilities may have done that as well in a good and timely manner.

There is another whole group of people, though, such as people at home on respirators, people who need insulin and need to have it refrigerated, people who, in order to stay alive and keep their health, need electricity and power in their homes. And those people, I heard a lot from people in very desperate situations. And I wonder if FEMA has any role at all in providing emergency services for people who are in those kinds of situations?

Mr. TOLBERT. We do not normally provide that type of support. Our support is generally to government and nonprofit, critical facilities, to restore services there. We are, however, very concerned about the special needs population. In fact, during this response, we started looking at modifying some of our shelter supplies because we anticipated requirements for people with special needs.

So we are very concerned about it. And that is an area that we are looking at, how we might better provide support. I think it is more important, though, that local governments and the States have mechanisms in place to identify people with special needs. That is one of the more difficult challenges, to first identify who the people are that require that support so that they can provide quicker contact and better support for them.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Right. No, I agree. I think that is a very important function of local government. During Isabel there was an effort to do that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. We appreciate your being here and we will move on to our next panel.

On our next panel, we have the Honorable John Marshall, the Secretary of Public Safety for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Dennis Schrader, the Director for the Governor's Office of Homeland Security, State of Maryland, and Peter LaPorte, the Director of the district of Columbia's Emergency Management Agency. If you will stay standing, I will swear you in.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Marshall, since we have a Virginia bias on the panel, we will start with you and we will move on down the way. Thanks for being with us. Congratulations on your new job.

STATEMENTS OF JOHN MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF PUBLIC SAFETY, COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA; DENNIS R. SCHRADER, DIRECTOR FOR THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY, STATE OF MARYLAND; AND PETER G. LaPORTE, DIRECTOR, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mr. MARSHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today. I am John Marshall, and I serve in the cabinet of Governor Mark Warner as Virginia's secretary of public safety. I work in close collaboration with our Office of Commonwealth Preparedness, and maintain oversight of 11 public safety agencies, including the State police, National Guard, and our Virginia Department of Emergency Management, which continues to coordinate our recovery efforts related to Hurricane Isabel between Federal, State and local authorities as well as our citizens.

The impact of the hurricane continues to be felt today across the Commonwealth. Two weeks after the storm, efforts continue to ensure the full restoration of power and telephone service, and to promote a safe and sanitary environment. At the height of the disaster, nearly 2 million customers were without power, mainly in eastern, central and northern Virginia. Individuals and communities are confronted with the monumental task of cleaning up debris and repairing and rebuilding homes, businesses and public facilities.

More than 6.3 million pounds of ice, and 1.4 million gallons of water have been distributed by State and Federal agencies, and this is on top of what has been provided by the localities.

Hurricane Isabel entered Virginia on September 18th. The Commonwealth experienced sustained winds near 100 miles per hour, and tropical storm force winds for 29 hours. The hurricane produced storm surge of 5 to 8 feet along the coast and in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Rainfall totals ranged between 2 and 11 inches along its track, including in the National Capital Region. Damage due to wind, rain, and storm surge resulted in flooding, electrical outages, debris, damaged homes and businesses and interruption of transportation and other routine daily activities.

At the height of the incident, over 18,000 residents were housed in 158 shelters. Local officials report that more than 32,000 Virginians were evacuated from their homes; 99 of the Commonwealth's 134 cities declared local emergencies. Tragically, 28 people died in the Commonwealth as a result of Hurricane Isabel, with the majority of deaths occurring in the days after the storm had cleared the State. Further damages occurred when a series of thunderstorms and tornados came through the already-impacted areas of the State on September 23rd.

Governor Warner took a proactive approach to the impending hurricane by declaring a state of emergency in the Commonwealth on September 15th, 3 days prior to the arrival of the storm. In addition, on September 17th, over 24 hours in advance of the storm, the Governor authorized mandatory evacuation of designated coastal jurisdictions and low-lying areas. These actions may have saved hundreds of lives.

Governor Warner requested an expedited major Presidential declaration that was granted to Virginia on September 18th. Local officials report that more than 8,000 homes and nearly 300 businesses suffered major damage or were destroyed, coupled with an estimated $31 million in agricultural damage. Assessment efforts continue.

Hurricane Isabel's assault on Virginia has left an indelible mark on the landscape and in the minds of our citizens. While the task of assessing both our readiness and performance at the local, State and Federal levels as well within the private sector is so important, at the present time Governor Warner and his administration remain focused and committed to ensuring that all that can be done is being done to address the needs of our citizens in the aftermath of this event.

This committee has asked that we address four primary areas in the aftermath of the hurricane: the assessment of our decision-making process, implications for our regional preparedness, information flow, and how we can better respond in the future. While detailed responses to these questions can be found in my written testimony, in the interests of time constraints let me briefly address the issues.

Governor Warner has already indicated that he will conduct a complete review of how the Commonwealth performed in response to the largest disaster in a generation. Here in the National Capital Region, like other areas of Virginia, many citizens heeded the early calls to make storm preparations by stocking up on water,

nonperishable food and other necessities. However, as Virginia has avoided direct landfall or major inland impacts in all but a few instances in the last several decades, we must honestly acknowledge that many citizens did not adequately prepare.

The most notable success that we had was a series of conference calls conducted in advance of the storm to coordinate actions about the closing of government, offices, businesses, schools, and the Federal work force, as well as overall storm preparations. While some may question the timing of the actions, the most important message is that key decisionmakers across the National Capital Region acted in unison, to make definitive decisions with the best information available. In addition, Governor Warner personally conducted conference calls with the local elected official so that our preparedness messages were consistent.

In light of the widespread power disruptions that had a corresponding effect on drinking water systems and perishable food supplies, clearly the continued assessment of our critical infrastructures—water, power, telecommunications, and transportation—and their interdependency on other systems is critical to understanding our vulnerabilities. In this case, it was Mother Nature who provided the impetus. We recognize in the post-September 11th environment that it very easily could have been terrorists. With regard to the information flow, the media did an outstanding job of reporting the approach of the storm and helping those of us in State and local government to get important information and guidance to our citizens, and we are indebted to them for this valuable service.

Given the scope and complexity of this disaster, overall we think information dissemination was good. That is not to say, though, that information flow was flawless. After the storm, the accuracy of information and information flow between private utility companies and the public was an ongoing source of concern. On the issue of how the region can better respond in the future, the Department of Homeland Security has established the Office of National Capital Region Coordination to provide assistance. Governor Warner, along with his counterparts, Governor Ehrlich and Mayor Williams, meet regularly, and among the issues they discuss are emergency preparedness.

In closing, our collective responses to the problems caused by Hurricane Isabel have provided a real-world test of our preparedness thus far in the NCR. We must assess how well we did or did not perform at all levels of government within the private sector and among our citizens. We must capture and build on our successes as well as identify and address any shortcomings. The identification of problems should not be construed to suggest that the National Capital Region is not making significant improvements in readiness. This was a large and complex weather event that resulted in unprecedented problems across two-thirds of Virginia and the entire NCR. Sustaining focus, commitment and funding is the key to better preparedness for future events. We need not react and reorganize; rather, we must rededicate our commitment to con-

tinuing enhancements to preparedness in the National Capital Region.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Marshall follows:]

Testimony of
The Honorable John Marshall
Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety
Before The
Committee on Government Reform

October 3, 2003

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear today. I am John Marshall and I serve in the Cabinet of Governor Mark Warner as Virginia's Secretary of Public Safety. I work in close collaboration with our Office of Commonwealth Preparedness and maintain oversight of 11 public safety agencies, including the State Police, National Guard and Emergency Management. Our Virginia Department of Emergency Management continues to coordinate overall statewide response and recovery activities related to Hurricane Isabel between federal, state and local authorities as well as citizens.

The impact of Hurricane Isabel continues to be felt across the Commonwealth. Today, two weeks after the storm, efforts continue to ensure the full restoration of power and telephone service and to promote a secure, safe and sanitary environment. At the height of the disaster nearly 2 million customers were without power, mainly in Eastern, Central and Northern Virginia. Individuals and communities are confronted with the monumental task of cleaning up debris and repairing and rebuilding homes, businesses and public facilities. More than 6.3 million pounds of ice and 1.4 million gallons of water have been distributed by state and federal agencies and that is on top of resources secured directly by localities. There remains a long process to restore a sense of normalcy to affected individuals and communities.

Hurricane Isabel entered Virginia September 18 after making landfall along the North Carolina Outer Banks. The Commonwealth experienced sustained winds near 100 mph and tropical storm force winds for 29 hours. The hurricane produced storm surge of 5 to 8 feet along the coast and in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Rainfall totals ranged between 2 and 11 inches along its track, including in the National Capital Region. Damages due to wind, rain, and storm surge resulted in flooding, electrical outages, debris, damaged homes and businesses, and interruption of transportation and other routine daily activities.

At the height of the incident approximately 18,618 residents were housed in 158 shelters. Local officials report that more than 32,000 Virginians were evacuated from their homes, and curfews were imposed in many jurisdictions. Ninety-nine of the Commonwealth's 134 cities and counties declared local emergencies. Tragically, 28 people died in the Commonwealth as a result of Hurricane Isabel, with the majority of deaths occurring in the days after the storm had cleared the state.

Further damages occurred when a series of thunderstorms and tornados came through parts of the already impacted areas on September 23.

Governor Warner took a proactive approach to the impending hurricane by declaring a State of Emergency in the Commonwealth on September 15, 2003, three days prior to the expected arrival of the storm. In addition, on September 17, over 24 hours in advance of the storm, the Governor authorized mandatory evacuation of designated coastal jurisdictions in low-lying areas. These actions may have saved hundreds of lives.

Governor Warner requested an Expedited Major Presidential Disaster Declaration (FEMA-1491-DR-VA) that was granted to Virginia on September 18, 2003. (See Attachment 1 for disaster assistance designations). Local officials report that more than 8,000 homes and nearly 300 businesses suffered major damage or were destroyed, coupled with an estimated $31 million in agricultural damage. Assessment efforts continue.

Hurricane Isabel's assault on Virginia has left an indelible mark on the landscape and in the minds of our citizens. While the task of assessing both our readiness and performance at the local, state and federal levels as well as within the private sector is so important, at the present time Governor Warner and his administration remain focused and committed to ensuring that all that can be done is being done to address the needs of our citizens in the aftermath of this event.

The Committee has asked that we address four primary questions.

1. **What procedures are in-place to retrospectively assess the situation and how decisions were made?**

Governor Warner has already indicated that he will conduct a complete review of how the Commonwealth performed in response to the largest disaster in a generation. Given the scope and magnitude of the event and the necessity for close collaboration with impacted local communities and voluntary relief organizations, this will be a complex undertaking. We must gather and analyze large volumes of data in a coordinated fashion to uncover lessons learned. More importantly, where necessary, those lessons learned need to be translated into measurable actions to improve our collective preparedness for the next event. We are committed to this review.

Having said this, there have been a number of lessons that have already been gleaned. Clearly, as I have mentioned, the Governor's proactive approach was the right one. The early action by local and state officials to warn the public about the impending impact of Hurricane Isabel allowed Virginians the time to prepare. Here in the National Capital Region, like other areas of Virginia, many citizens heeded the early calls to make storm preparations by stocking up on water, non-perishable food and other necessities. However, as Virginia has avoided direct landfall or major inland impacts in all but a few instances in the last several decades, we must honestly acknowledge that many citizens did not adequately prepare. With the largest power outage in Virginia history, and its

resulting impact on clean and safe drinking water supplies, it is safe to say that not every citizen was as prepared as he or she could be. That being said,--local officials were diligent in their efforts to warn residents in low-lying areas about the potential for flooding, and they readied their emergency response assets in a coordinated fashion.

The most notable success was that a series of conference calls was conducted in advance of the storm to coordinate actions about the closing of government offices, businesses, schools and the federal workforce as well as overall storm preparations. While some may question the timing of actions, I believe the more important message is that key decision makers across the National Capital Region acted in unison to make definitive decisions with the best information available. An added element for this event is that the Governor conducted these calls also with local elected officials, who were appearing in the news media, so that our preparedness messages were consistent.

We must keep in mind, though, that the challenge with any weather event is the unpredictability of what will actually occur in relation to a forecast and what problems will actually be generated as a result of a storm.

2. What implications are there for regional preparedness as a whole?

Clearly, an assessment of our critical infrastructures – water, power, telecommunications, and transportation is essential to understanding our vulnerabilities. In this case it was Mother Nature who provided the impetus. We recognize in the post September 11th environment that it could have been terrorists. We are in the process, across the National Capital Region, of assessing our critical infrastructures and their interdependency on other systems. This need was evident with the widespread power disruption that had a corresponding effect on drinking water systems, and perishable food supplies.

As we all know, resources are not limitless. At the state level, we have already identified the need to refine the resource request and allocation processes during the emergency event to reduce the level of "additional data" requirements placed on local managers and shorten the timeline for delivery of resources

3. How were residents and businesses kept informed before, during and after the hurricane?

It is clear that citizens and businesses appropriately expect safety and security information during a crisis. Overall, the media did an outstanding job of reporting on the approach of the storm and helping those of us in state and local government to get important information and guidance out to our citizens, and we are indebted to them for this valuable service. This is not to say, though, that information flow was flawless. After the storm, the accuracy of information and information flow between private utility companies and the public was an ongoing source of concern. As part of our assessment we will evaluate how we performed, and work with our partners in the National Capital Region to capture and institutionalize successes and improve where needed on information flow. Consideration of additional methods for reaching out to citizens must

take place to enhance our alerting capabilities. Given the scope and complexity of this disaster, overall, we think information dissemination was good.

4. How can the region better prepare to respond in the future?

As is always the case in an event of this magnitude, the level of success achieved in overall preparation, response, recovery and mitigation is directly linked to effective communication and coordination. Since the events of September 11th, we have witnessed improved coordination and cooperation in the National Capital Region. The Washington D.C. Council of Governments has staffed and supported planning efforts among local, state, federal and private organizations. The Department of Homeland Security has established the Office of National Capital Region Coordination to assist with coordination. Governor Warner along with his counterparts, Governor Erhlich and Mayor Williams, meet regularly and among the issues they discuss are emergency preparedness. State and District staff, through the Senior Policy Group, talk weekly via a conference call, and meet on a monthly basis.

Continuous improvement with National Capital Region preparedness will be driven by two major factors. First, we must assess how well we did or did not perform at all levels of government, within the private sector and among our citizens. We must capture and build on our successes as well as identify and address any shortcomings.

Second, we need to sustain our momentum and tempo. We must recognize that the work undertaken prior to the events of September 11th and subsequently is resulting in progress. Our collective responses to the problems caused by Hurricane Isabel have provided a real world test of these efforts. This storm confirmed that many of the vulnerabilities we had identified post 9/11 do in fact deserve ongoing attention. It is reasonable to assume that we will identify shortcomings with our response and recovery actions. We need to view any shortcomings identified in the appropriate context. They may reflect the need to provide additional training to individuals or agencies, enhance plans and procedures or improve technology.

The identification of problems should not be construed to suggest that the National Capital Region is not making significant improvements in its preparedness. This was a large and complex weather event that resulted in unprecedented problems across 2/3 of Virginia and the entire National Capital Region. Sustaining focus, commitment and funding is the key to better preparedness for future events. We need not react and reorganize. Rather we must rededicate our commitment to continuing enhancements to preparedness in the National Capital Region

Thank you for the opportunity to appear today and I am happy to answer questions.

Attachment 1 – Designated Counties Table

Declaration Date: 09/18/2003			Incident Period: 09/18/2003 & Continuing						
NUMBER OF COUNTIES, INDEPENDENT CITIES & TRIBAL AREAS DESIGNATED									
Indiv. Assist	99	Pub Assist	99		Tribal Nations		0		
DECLARATION INFORMATION									
Jurisdiction	AFFECTED Not FEMA Designated	Declaration Dates							
		IA	Public Assistance						
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Accomack		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Albemarle		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Amelia		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Amherst		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Appomattox		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Arlington		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Augusta		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Bedford		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Brunswick		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Buckingham		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Campbell		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Caroline		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Charlotte		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Chesterfield		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Charles City		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Clarke		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Culpeper		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Cumberland		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Dinwiddie		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Essex		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Fairfax		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Fauquier		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Fluvanna		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Frederick		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Gloucester		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Goochland		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Greene		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Greensville		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Halifax		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hanover		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Henrico		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Isle of Wight		09/18	09/18	09/18					
James City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
King and Queen		09/22	09/22	09/22					
King George		09/22	09/22	09/22					
King William		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Lancaster		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Louisa		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Loudoun		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Lunenburg		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Madison		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Mathews		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Mecklenburg		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Middlesex		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24

Nelson		09/22	09/22	09/22					
New Kent		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Northampton		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Northumberland		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Nottoway		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Orange		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Page		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Pittsylvania		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Powhatan		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Prince Edward		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Prince George		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Prince William		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Rappahannock		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Richmond		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Rockbridge		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Rockingham		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Shenandoah		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Southampton		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Spotsylvania		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Stafford		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Surry		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Sussex		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Warren		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Westmoreland		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
York		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Alexandria – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Bedford – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Buena Vista – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Charlottesville – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Chesapeake – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Colonial Heights – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Danville – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Emporia – independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Fairfax – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Falls Church – Independent City		09/20	09/20	09/20					
Franklin – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Fredericksburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hampton – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Harrisonburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Hopewell – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Lynchburg – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Manassas – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Manassas Park – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					
Newport News – Independent City		09/18	09/18	09/18					
Norfolk – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Petersburg – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Poquoson – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Portsmouth – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Richmond – independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Staunton – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Suffolk – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Virginia Beach – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24	9/24
Waynesboro – Independent City		9/20	9/20	9/20					
Williamsburg – Independent City		9/18	9/18	9/18					
Winchester – Independent City		09/22	09/22	09/22					

CATEGORY KEY

A: Debris removal

B: Emergency protective measures

C: Road systems and bridges

D: Water control facilities

E: Public buildings and contents

F: Public utilities

G: Parks, recreational and other

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Schrader.

Mr. SCHRADER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Governor Ehrlich sends his appreciation for your support, and asked me to send his best, Mr. Chairman.

In Maryland, we have gone down the road of an all-hazards approach by establishing a homeland security office, and from a perspective of long-term sustainability and resource conservation, we are integrating those two efforts so that the way we respond to a natural disaster will be the same as we would respond to a man-made disaster. I am not going to read my remarks, they are in the record, but I did want to leave with you three points that I will summarize.

Right now, we are in the recovery phase, and one of our major concerns is making sure that we put as much focus on the recovery phase as we had on the preparation phase. We are anticipating that the recovery is going to take several months. And we will begin our lessons-learned process in a deliberate way, probably in the early part of November. I would like to say that FEMA did an outstanding job of being on the ground very early in the process. A week before the storm actually came, they were there providing advice and guidance to the State. And afterwards they put an outstanding gentleman from Tacoma, WA, Bill Lokey in as the Federal coordinating officer. He is doing a tremendous job of integrating with our State. I think the biggest issue on the front end of this was the risk management decisions that had to be made. It is always easy to criticize after the fact. But the reality is we really didn't know how devastating this storm was going to be, and we were really lucky.

Our biggest fear was that if this storm had stayed for another 12 hours we would have had significant rains in western Maryland which would have had simultaneous flooding as well as the situation that we experienced. So, due to the grace of God, we were very, very fortunate.

The second point I wanted to make is that the National Capital Region process, which has been around about a year, is evolving in concept. The relationships are growing. You know, we know each other, we meet regularly, and we are making a lot of progress. There's a $60 million urban area security initiative that is being managed by the region; and I expect that, as we look at how we are spending those dollars going down the next year, the context of the readiness for the storm will influence the decisions.

The last point I wanted to make was the whole issue of managing expectations and the communications process. The media turned out to be one of the best avenues for communicating. They did a very good job of keeping people informed and we used that extensively, both TV and radio. We also communicated with our local emergency operations centers through the weather service line, and we kept them informed from the State to the local jurisdictions. As you know, the local government is really on the front lines of this effort and bears most of the brunt of the readiness and the response process.

The only other point I wanted to make is that our focus, of course, is not just the two counties, Prince George's County and Montgomery County, which are the typical counties referred to in

the National Capital Region, but we also have to look at the commuting patterns from Anne Arundel County, Frederick County and southern Maryland, which are of concern to us when we are thinking about the National Capital Region.

Let me close by saying the one thing that could help in the future as a lesson learned would be that the FEMA brought to us an outstanding process of using their 800 line to register people, but, due to the Privacy Act, they are not able to share those data with the local and State jurisdictions. For example, in Prince George's and Montgomery County, we had over 1,400 phone calls, but it did not appear that there was a lot of damage, and we have been trying to figure out what those calls were all about. Unfortunately, they are not able to share the names and numbers, etc. So if in the future there was a way to evaluate the impact of Privacy Act on Federal sharing of information with local and State jurisdictions during these times, it would be very helpful.

I will close there, sir.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Schrader follows:]

Statement of Dennis R. Schrader
Director, Office of Homeland Security
State of Maryland

Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
October 3, 2003

TESTIMONYOF
THE DIRECTOR DENNIS R. SCHRADER
MARYLAND OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BEFORE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
OCTOBER 3, 2003

I. INTRODUCTION:

Good morning. Mr. Davis, Mr. Waxman and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear to discuss issues critical to the citizens and guests of Maryland and the National Capitol Region.

I am Dennis R. Schrader, Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security for the State of Maryland. I am representing Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. who could not be with you today, but appreciates and shares your focus on Homeland Security and the National Capital Region.

The attacks of September 11, 2001 highlighted our need to step away from limited jurisdictional thinking and responses. The lessons learned from that day propelled us to think, plan, and act as an integrated region, with common concerns, challenges, and mutually supportive capabilities.

As my good friend and Adjutant General for the State of Maryland, Major General Bruce Tuxill stated in his April 10 testimony to this committee -- the National Capital Region title should not be tied to an old definition. The statutory definition of the region, founded on decades old commuting patterns, consists of the District of

Columbia; Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland; and the Virginia counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William, plus the City of Alexandria. In this age of mobility, we have not only Marylanders, but also people transiting Maryland from Pennsylvania and Delaware to get to jobs in the District and Northern Virginia. Likewise, commuters from regions once considered southern Virginia are regularly working within the region. Artificial boundaries cannot limit our actions. Interdependencies of transportation, utility, and commercial sectors create common bonds that transcend jurisdictional lines. These interdependencies are integral to the economic security of the National Capitol Region, the states of Maryland and Virginia, and, in fact, the Nation as a whole.

To this end, my fellow Senior Policy Group members from Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Homeland Security have been active partners. Together, we seek enhanced preparedness and public safety throughout the National Capital Region as well as in our tri-state area.

I applaud this Committee and the members of the Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia Congressional Delegations. Their attention to the unique characteristics of the National Capital Region and their support of the Senior Policy Group's efforts significantly enhances our ability to provide for the security of the citizens, residents, businesses, and visitors to the region. Or, as was so eloquently stated so many years ago:

" . . .ESTABLISH JUSTICE, INSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY, PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENCE, PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE, AND SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY . . ."

II. DETAILED RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE QUESTIONS:

You asked that we address several specific areas of interest to this Committee.

WHAT PROCEDURES ARE IN PLACE TO RETROSPECTIVELY ASSESS THE SITUATION AND HOW DECISIONS WERE MADE?

In Maryland, as in other states, it is standard practice for emergency operations centers to chronologically record an emergency as well as to produce periodic status reports. In the case of Isabel, these procedures recorded pre-storm, storm, and post-storm actions. Examples of information include key metrics, significant information related to the lifecycle of the storm and storm damage, specific requests made to operations centers and the center's response. Following the emergency, this record provides the data to identify both the successes and challenges of an incident and permits a systematic review and assessment of policies, decisions, and actions which are compiled in an after incident report. Currently, Maryland is working with the Department of Homeland Security on the implementation of the Remedial Action Management Program (RAMP). An effort lead by FEMA, this will provide for a more consistent, uniform, and ultimately actionable approach to addressing issues from events. We have already begun collecting recommendations from agencies as well as gathering several

hundred pages of data recorded at the emergency operations centers for analysis and review.

In Maryland, the Ehrlich-Steele administration is committed to a systematic review and assessment of the public and private response to Isabel. We believe the after incident report will be a fundamental tool for the identification of opportunities to enhance our preparedness for the future.

Throughout this event, the Ehrlich-Steele administration was committed to an integrated response. This commitment continues. Following the publication of the traditional after incident report, the state will be hosting a summit of private sector and not-for-profit organizations, with state agencies and county and local government representatives to review our integrated performance and to search for opportunities for improved future performance.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS ARE THERE FOR REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS AS A WHOLE?

The governmental agencies within Maryland – at all levels – responded well to the situation. In many cases, emergent and situational needs were successfully addressed at the local or county level. In incidences beyond local government's capabilities, frequent and efficient communication between State and local government fostered accurate and timely state support. While regional preparedness is strong, the Ehrlich-Steele administration is committed to

enhancing preparedness and public safety. Corrective actions based on the lessons learned will improve the overall ability of government agencies and NGO's to respond to situations.

The storm has raised several policy issues that require examination. In addition to the federal issues of the fragility of the electric power grid, regional and local issues include:

- over-head vs. in-ground power lines
- ice availability and distribution
- back-up power requirements of and supplies to critical infrastructure such as water supply, traffic signals, refrigeration of medical supplies, and support of non-hospital care facilities.

A disaster is, by definition, an event beyond the standard capabilities of immediate response. Had this simply been a spring shower with localized heavy rain, there would be no question of the ability to respond. With the widespread impact of a 600 mile wide, level-2 hurricane, our emergency management resources were tested – and they met that test. For regional preparedness as a whole, this suggests a positive trend. This does not suggest that we can respond to every disaster with no waiting time, and minimal damage. However, we are prepared to deal with disasters.

HOW WERE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES KEPT INFORMED BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE HURRICANE?

Throughout the storm, the primary outlet for current information was, and continues to be, the local media. The media's responsiveness to press releases and bulletins before, during, and after the storm was impressive and truly a public service. While there are specialized weather notification processes (cable TV's Weather Channel, or NOAA radio alerts), the commercial media outlets were the most common source of information from the State, County and Local agencies, and federal and state emergency management agencies. Information was available on internet sites, including the site hosted by the Maryland Emergency Management Agency, yet traditional broadcast media was the resource most used by our citizens.

HOW CAN THE REGION BETTER PREPARE AND RESPOND IN THE FUTURE?

The issues of Homeland Security, and Domestic Preparedness are matters which shall never be "solved". Our best hope is for an evolutionary process, in which we use what we learn from each incident to improve our abilities to address the next. There are always opportunities for improvement, and Maryland will be looking closely at lessons learned. Data are still being collected and analyzed, yet even at this early date certain assertions can be made.

- Continued *consistent* support of regional, state, and local emergency management and response capabilities is necessary to ensure an

appropriate level of readiness for the next incident. Whatever that incident may be. We know that next test is coming. We do not know where or when. As best as possible, we must prepare on all fronts.

- While addressing issues on this broad front, we must carefully manage resources to provide the greatest return to our citizens for the investment of their tax dollars.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. LaPorte. Thanks for being with us.

Mr. LAPORTE. Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ms. Norton, members of the committee. I'm Peter LaPorte, director of Emergency Management for the District.

A little more than a year ago I had the honor of testifying before the Subcommittee of the District on Columbia Committee on Appropriations about the District's preparedness. At that hearing, I detailed to the chairman, Joe Knollenberg, and the members of the committee the extensive work that we had done post September 11. I sit here today proud to explain what we've done to prepare ourselves, and I'm pleased to say my pride is not diminished at all. In fact, it is increasing. The District met the challenge of Hurricane Isabel and continues to prove itself to the citizens of the District and to the Nation. Today, I will not dwell on those extensive preparedness efforts, but I will focus on the key preparation factors that proved extremely beneficial pre-landfall of this hurricane.

First, when the District drafted its response plan, it mirrored the Federal response plan. We were convinced that it would pay dividends to have those two plans match up, and we proved right in Isabel. We followed our response plan to the letter. It proved to be a touchstone of our success. The Federal response plan works, the District response plan works and they work very well together.

Second, our investment in human resources paid off. We've conducted over five exercises this year alone. In fact, one of those exercises dovetailed exactly the track of hurricane Isabel. That storm, it was very much like deja vu. We have trained over thousands of District employees, including the Mayor on down, in all aspects of emergency management. I can say without reservation that we have some of the best-trained responders in the country, and we will continue that effort.

Third, our investment in our physical plant and equipment was worth every dime. We have a new emergency operations center in the District of Columbia that was funded by a congressional appropriation. That operations center has really truly made a difference. We never lost power. We have a communications capability second to none. We were stable to communicate entirely with the region as well as a number of stakeholders at the local level.

Last but not least in our preparations, investment in community preparedness. We've involved universities, schools, businesses, advisory commissioners, special interest groups, individual citizens in community preparedness and outreach. When Isabel struck, we had open lines of communication with all those stakeholders.

Now let me highlight our activities prior to, during and immediately after the storm. We activated our crisis management team before the storm. Mayor Williams led the early decisionmaking for preparedness actions several days out. We staffed our operations center with competent, experienced emergency liaisons, including every function of our response plan as well as the appropriate utilities, including PEPCO, WASA, Washington Gas, a number of our critical leads. We instituted incident action planning under the incident command system, developing priorities that the Mayor set down and we shared our expectations early on with the Federal Government, anticipating needs before they became reality. The District handed out over 20,000 sandbags. That started on Monday

before this storm hit. We asked for those sandbags on Sunday night, and the Corps of Engineers up in Baltimore followed through on that request. We pursued the Water and Sewer Authority in the District to clean out catch basins in low-lying areas. They were very active on Monday and Tuesday pre-storm. That emphasis in those low-lying areas certainly helped us, especially in those areas that flooded in August 2001. Two days before the storm, Mayor Williams convened a meeting with our lead response leaders in the District as well as the faith community, A and C commissioners and community leaders enlisting them to go door to door in certain neighborhoods in the city.

We focused heavily on our interagency coordination of communications. We participated in the FEMA conference calls. We set up our joint information center, literally sending out thousands of updates on our storm on a regular basis. We worked closely with Metro on its deliberations to suspend services and the impact of the decision on the government closing and the public ability to move in the pre-impact phase of the storm. Again, we coordinated with WASA and PEPCO about potential loss of power and water supplies and reviewed contingency plans. We activated our EOC at 8 a.m. on Thursday. We did not close our EOC until the last person had power restored in the District of Columbia. The Mayor declared a public state of emergency to ensure that all District resources were committed to the response as well as paving the way for potential Federal assistance. We requested supplies, light towers, heavy duty equipment from the National Guard and the Corps of Engineers. We coordinated our response at the height of the storm for rapid recovery.

One of the things that was very different is, we prestaged over 300 city employees the night of the storm at local hotels so on Friday morning we could hit the ground with an active force. We went door-to-door in some neighborhoods. We updated our Web site over 150 times. We had 150 crisis counselors out there. We had over 1,600 fallen trees or large limbs down. That certainly impacted traffic.

As a result of loss of power to the residents, we supplied over 750,000 pounds of ice to over 21,000 employees in the city. Those without power we were very concerned about feeding. We were able to feed over 22,000 meals to over 15,000 schoolchildren Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday post-storm when schools were canceled. The District's entire school system was down and closed on Monday. We worked aggressively with our schools to get them open on Tuesday, with certain targeting around those schools.

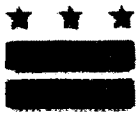
I could go on and on, just like our partners in Maryland and Virginia, about just the preparations and response as we took them. Some of our biggest concerns were traffic lights and traffic impact. I want to thank the committee. The resources that the District has received has put us in a state of readiness that we were able to respond to this storm. Our preparedness will continue. A lot of lessons were learned from this event and other events, and we continue to strive to be a better prepared jurisdiction in this region. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. LaPorte follows:]

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORMS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

THE HONORABLE TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



Testimony of

Peter G. LaPorte
Director

District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency

October 3, 2003

Good morning Chairman Davis and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am Peter LaPorte, Director of the District of Columbia's Emergency Management Agency.

A little more than a year ago I had the honor of testifying before the Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, Committee on Appropriations about the District of Columbia's preparedness program. At that hearing I detailed for Chairman Joe Knollenberg and members of the Subcommittee the extensive measures the District of Columbia had taken since 9/11 to prepare for all-hazards.

I was proud then to explain what the District had done to prepare itself, and I am pleased to say today that my pride in the District's preparedness has not diminished. In fact, my pride has grown by leaps and bounds as the District met the challenge of Hurricane Isabel and continues to prove itself to the citizens of the District and to the nation.

Today, I will not dwell upon our extensive preparedness efforts over the last two years, but I would like to focus on a couple of key preparedness factors that proved extremely beneficial to the District in its hurricane response.

First, when the District decided to craft its new District Response Plan or DRP to mirror the Federal Response Plan (FRP) of the federal government, we were convinced that it would pay dividends in any major disaster. We were proved right in Isabel. We followed the DRP to the letter and it proved to be the touchstone for our success. The Federal Response plan works. The District response Plan works. Let's build on that success.

Secondly, our investment in our human resources paid off. We have conducted five exercises in this year alone and participated in dozens more hosted by other state and federal agencies. In fact, we played an exercise almost exactly a year ago with our partners at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) in which a storm with the exact track of Hurricane Isabel was part of the scenario. It was déjà vu for us when Isabel followed the same path.

We also have trained thousands of District employees, from the Mayor on down, in all aspects of emergency management. I can say without reservation that our people are among the best-trained responders of any city in the nation.

Thirdly, our investment in our physical plant and equipment was worth every dime. We have a new EOC with state of the art technology. We have the most comprehensive communications back-up plan in the nation. We did not lose communications capability at any point in the storm. As you can see, I am a believer in preparedness.

Last but no means least, we have increased our investment in community preparedness. We have involved universities and schools, businesses, advisory neighborhood commissions, special interest groups and individual citizens in our community preparedness and outreach activities. When Isabel struck, we had open lines of communications with all of these stakeholders to let them know how to prepare and what to expect from the storm.

Now I'd like to highlight some of our activities prior to, during and immediately after the storm. We activated our Crisis Management Team before the storm. We were monitoring the National Hurricane Center forecasts days ahead of landfall and we took action.

- Mayor Williams lead the early decision-making on preparedness actions, several days before the storm made landfall.

- We staffed the new EOC with competent and experienced emergency liaison officers from every function of our DRP and from appropriate utilities.

- We instituted Incident Action Planning under the incident command system. We developed action plans for each operational period to drive the Mayor's priorities for the District and to share our expectations with FEMA and our federal partners.

- The District handed out 20,000 sand bags to citizens and businesses prior to landfall. We also purchased 10 generators,

and worked with the Water and Sewer Administration (WASA) to prepare our catch basins for a massive influx of water.

- Two days before the storm hit, Mayor Williams convened a meeting to bring together heads of our lead DRP agencies with members of our faith community, ANC commissioners and other community leaders so that he could enlist community participation and support to help get out our preparedness message.

We focused heavily on interagency coordination and communications with our partners in the public and private sectors.

- We participated in daily video teleconferences with FEMA, the National Hurricane Center, Virginia, Maryland and other state and regional federal agencies. We shared information about resources and strategies, and we consulted with our partner states in the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

- A Joint Information Center was established under ESF-14 of our District Response Plan to manage public information and coordinate the twice-daily press briefings convened by the mayor and the news summaries that were issued each morning and evening.

- We worked closely with Metro on its deliberations to suspend Metro services and the impact of its decision on government closings and the public's ability to move in the pre-impact phase of the storm.

- We coordinated with WASA and PEPCO about the potential loss of services such as power and water supplies and reviewed contingency plans for emergency electrical generation and water and ice distribution.

- We activated our new EOC and it served us well. We had the ability to monitor the pulse of the District response in real time from our nerve center. We have a few bugs to work out, but nothing that impacted on our operation.

- The Mayor declared a Public Safety Emergency to ensure that all of the District's resources were committed to the response of the aftermath of Isabel as well as paving the way for potential federal assistance.

- We requested supplies and materials such light towers, heavy duty trucks and manpower from the DC National Guard, and sandbags and technical assistance from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, one of our most reliable and effective federal partners throughout this response.

- And, when it became apparent that it was the most prudent course, the Mayor decided to close the District Government, one of the most important and effective decisions of the operation. The federal government and Metro likewise made the same decision. This coordination was achieved through the Regional Incident Communications and Coordination System (RICCS) and it worked well.

During the height of the storm we all did pretty much the same thing. We hunkered down in the EOC or our homes and offices and watched the storm's fury through our windows or on our TVs for as long as we could. When the winds had diminished to a level that allowed us to begin to assess the storm's impact, we hit the streets with our rapid response capability.

- Our current working estimate for storm damages exceeds $10 million.

- The District updated the emergency information on its website 150 times in addition to going door-to-door in some areas with food and ice distribution information.

- The District Energy Office worked tirelessly to coordinate with PEPCO on the electrical outage estimates and priorities for restoration. We had an active running count of outages every few hours as a planning basis for ordering generators and ice and food supplies.

- A large amount of damage resulted from fallen trees and storm debris. We tracked the removal of 1600 downed trees that were impacting the District in one way or another. Some trees blocked access and others impeded power restoration. Our Metropolitan Police Department, Department of Public Works and District Department of Transportation closely coordinated the priorities for debris removal in support of our overall daily action plan.

- As a result of the loss of power to thousands of residents, we provided ice supplies throughout the city for refrigeration purposes. Our estimates are that we distributed 750,305 pounds of ice through 4 locations servicing 21,824 citizens. The US Army Corps of Engineers procured and delivered the ice under mission assignment from FEMA. The District received and distributed the ice directly to the public through a number of strategically placed distribution centers.

- Without power and without school breakfasts and lunches, many children and older people were not being fed. Through the efforts of our ESF 6 –Mass Care – the District Department of Human Services determined care and feeding requirements, opened shelters where needed, determined the needs of special populations and activated more than 300 volunteer staff to serve over 22,200 meals, 15,000 of which were to school children.

- The District's entire school system was impacted and when the coordinated decision to open schools occurred, 15 schools of 147 remained closed. Schools were impacted by the storm either through blocked access from fallen trees, drainage problems, power outages and interior or exterior damages. We recognized the importance of getting kids back to school so we formed an interdisciplinary group or "Tiger Team" to tackle the problem. We were quickly able to call together a team to assess the issues – loss of power, flood damage, access issues around the schools – at which point we sent work crews to the areas to correct the deficiencies and speed school reopening.

- Flood preparations were made with sandbagging in many low-lying areas. Following the flooding caused by the storm, we monitored closely the potential for recurring floods of some of the same areas. Fortunately, the crest on the Potomac was not as high as originally predicted, and although we did incur damage to our Metropolitan Police Department Harbor Branch office, for the most part, we experienced only some disruptions to traffic.

- Hundreds of traffic lights were rendered inoperable by the loss of electricity and falling trees and those intersections were manned by police who provided traffic control shortly after the storm. DDOT, DPW and MPD worked round the clock to get the lights back in operation. In the interim, temporary stop signs were installed where lights were out to ensure that everyone treated those intersections as 4-way stops.

- Many feared that there would be increases in crime due to sections of the city that were without power, some for more than a week. But the citizens and MPD pulled together to maintain law and order throughout the city.

- About the time we were hitting our stride and had a handle on the initial impact, we were stuck by the follow-on storm that in many regards surpassed Isabel in intensity, especially with respect to rainfall. With another 100,000 customers losing power, we once again put our plans into action and responded once more to the priorities of the day. We are now in the recovery phase of the disaster. That means that the response phase is over but considerable hard work remains for District and federal agencies. We have co-located a District recovery team with FEMA and other Federal Agencies at a Disaster Field Office (DFO) on Vermont Avenue. At the DFO the District and Federal agencies will coordinate three primary components of recovery assistance under the Presidential Declaration:
    - Individual Assistance to impacted and eligible individuals and families
    - Public Assistance to repair and replace damaged public facilities, and

- Mitigation Actions to prevent some damages from recurring in the future.

Most of this assistance is performed through a Federal – District Agreement that provides for 75% Federal - 25% District cost-sharing arrangements.

We have asked for assistance in manpower and staffing of the DFO from our Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) members in other states. We joined the compact last year and now are full EMAC members and are proud to be a part of this national mutual aid initiative.

The recovery operations will be underway for quite some time as the FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer's team phases out of the DFO and FEMA Region III in Philadelphia picks up the ball on continuing recovery closeout actions.

We have already begun an after-action review to look at our successes as well as any weaknesses in our plans and procedure that may have been revealed during our response. The George Washington University Institute for Crisis, Disaster and Risk Management is assisting us in this effort. The final report will provide recommendations on how to streamline response actions, update plans and better provide training to employees and citizens for future emergencies.

There is one final note that I would like to make as I close and that is that the Emergency Management Program of the District of Columbia recently was granted Full Accreditation by the new Emergency Management Accreditation Program or EMAP (not to be confused with EMAC).

The District is the first and only city thus far to be accredited under EMAP. Only one state has been accredited at this point of those that have been assessed. This is a Big Deal for us. Two short years ago, this would have been a distant dream. Now it is a firm reality. We have complied with every one of the national standards for emergency management and have written proofs of compliance and a certified peer review to prove it. That is a significant mark on the wall for the Mayor's preparedness program.

Our preparedness is the best that it has ever been, but it can and needs to be better. Threats change. People come and go. The emphasis shifts regularly. We must adapt and we must persist if we are to be ready for the storms of the future, natural or man-made. Relentless preparedness is the game.

We must maintain our preparedness; it is not a one-time thing. We must remain vigilant as we continue to strengthen our preparedness so that we are ready for new threats. And we must continue to build and strengthen our partnerships with our partners in the National Capital Region and the federal government.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the District of Columbia's response to and ongoing recovery from Hurricane Isabel. I would be happy now to answer any questions that you may have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you all very much.

Let me ask each of you to respond. Metro closed at 11, I think, that day. Was that in retrospect—I mean, it is always easy to second-guess. What's your opinion? I mean, it did help get people—limit the number of employees in this city that needed to move out. Schools closed early. You know, the winds didn't come in, really, until after the school hours. From your perspective now, good decisions?

Mr. LAPORTE. I guess I will take the first start at this one. I think it was a good decision. It was deliberate. It was—there was a lot of discussion, and that was the important part, was the input around the region, and there was a public safety issue as well as a public transportation issue. The idea of the strong winds and the determination early on from the National Weather Service that the winds were going to arrive a bit early, we needed to make sure that people, if they got on the system, they could get home; and so, given a date certain or a time certain to close, that certainly impacted other decisionmaking and schools in the District government and the Federal Government. But it was a collaborative effort. So I think in retrospect it was the right decision. I think there may be a little bit more we can get from the National Weather Service to tie down that particular forecast, but I think in retrospect—and I will stand with Metro in their decision and for the most part believe that was the right decision.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK.

Mr. SCHRADER. Mr. Chairman, from our perspective, having been in the command center when that decision was being made, it actually was very helpful for us because we—in Maryland, we take our cues from what OPM is doing here in D.C. and what the transportation systems are doing in D.C. What was important was that there was decisiveness and that the decision was made. At that point, the storm was just beginning. We had a lot of uncertainty in the work force, a lot of concern about the fact that the winds were picking up; and people actually wanted to move on to not get caught in traffic jams and be vulnerable later that evening. So I would say the important thing is not so much that—what the decision was, but the fact that the decision was made, and it was done decisively so that we could take action that would follow.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Chairman, I would concur with my fellow panel members. Ultimately, that decision was one that was based on public safety. It's my understanding when you're talking about the Metro and some of the elevated rails and the impending wind, we've got to react accordingly to the forecast; and I certainly think in retrospect that was a correct decision and particularly when it comes to the safety of our children. We can't be but too safe in that regard. We certainly would not have wanted to see them at the bus stops or on the streets if those winds were to arrive as forecasted.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Was there coordination among the three of you on road closings and the like? I mean, it was difficult getting in. There wasn't a lot of traffic the day after, but as I was going through northern Virginia the roads were closed here and there, and I thought the police did a pretty good job routing as best they could. But in terms of which trees are going to be cleared first off major roadways that interlock with the District and Maryland, do

you think that was coordinated? Were you all talking to each other?

Mr. LAPORTE. The coordination was outstanding, actually, knowing—especially northern Virginia on the national parks roads, Rock Creek Park, George Washington Parkway, which were impacted significantly. And there was a commuting challenge that morning, no doubt about it, especially in the District. We had a number of traffic signals that were out, and we required police officers to leave neighborhood beats, neighborhood patrols, to man those traffic routes. It's certainly an after-action report for us, is our traffic systems as well as augmenting our police services in those intersections with nonpolice civilian personnel.

Mr. SCHRADER. Yeah. We have MDOT in our command center. We actually started our command center up on Tuesday before the storm and were operational. Our MDOT folks are in constant communication. The other thing is that because of the NCR initiative, we all have each other's cell phones. I have Peter's; he has mine. George and I talk all the time, and we have weekly conference calls. So that is just part of the process so we know how to get ahold of each other and our staffs are working collaboratively.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Is there anything you would have done differently in retrospect?

Mr. SCHRADER. No, I don't think so. Not at this point. Obviously, we are going to have detailed lessons learned, but, you know, for the purposes of this committee at the level that you're looking at, I don't think, you know, nothing that I would say that would be of interest.

Mr. MARSHALL. With regard to overall, Mr. Chairman——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You got hit harder in the south than you did in northern Virginia, didn't you?

Mr. MARSHALL. We sure did. You know, Mr. Chairman, training events are always very useful and you learn a lot from training events. But, unfortunately, where you really learn the lessons, unfortunately, is doing an actual event; and that certainly is the case here. We have seen a lot of success stories, as has been mentioned, being the proactive approach, the conference calls, the communication that we had here in the NCR but, in particular, when it comes to Virginia and the issues we need to look at when we do our assessment, we've got to look at the water issues, the ice issues, the power issues, particularly as they pertain to our water pumping stations. Those are all issues that we need to work on as if you're somebody out there that needs your power or needs your water or needs your ice. You know, it took 4 days to get the ice and the water out there, and certainly we need to look at working with our partners to see if we can do that more expeditiously in the future. So certainly there will be some lessons learned, but also we did a lot of things right.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Did we have enough ice at the end of the day? I mean, seeing what was coming, getting the orders in and everything, do you think we——

Mr. LAPORTE. From the District's standpoint, we had tremendous amounts of ice.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. There were huge lines, I know, in Fairfax for people getting it, that they didn't seem to have enough.

Mr. SCHRADER. Right from the interest of managing expectations, the reality is, after a couple of days, the ice really doesn't help because the foods going to spoil anyway. And, unfortunately, there is an old saying, "No good deed goes unpunished." The power companies were providing the ice, but, you know, when they didn't have enough of it people were angry.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. It's worse than if you didn't offer it almost.

Mr. SCHRADER. One of the lessons learned that might be useful is, maybe they ought to transfer that to something like Wal-Mart and other chains and let them do it and stay focused.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I'm sure they'd be happy to do that. We'll get to the next panel. Thank you all very much. Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to ask all three of you in the debriefing and what I think is called for is a lot of self-criticism here. Because we are impressed with much of what was done, but an example of what I'd like to see you look again at is the Metro decision. And I'm the first to understand an act of God. I also bet you anything that this decision was made by liability lawyers and I can understand that, too. But the fact is that the domino effect here was colossal, and many would say that closing down Metro—and here I'm talking now to the State as it were—closing down Metro was a good decision to make and you can't hold us accountable to what hour in the day. Yet we need you to look at the forecast to see if they were off or if you were overly cautious as to when this would come in because all of our understanding was that this was set to strike in the wee hours of the next morning. Now, we know that God or whoever rules up there can come at any time he gets ready and that we could be caught short. But we didn't look good, and there are huge complaints about that decision and, of course, Metro is getting it. But we know good and well that if there was pressure from the three States not to close down that early, that there might have been some greater balance. I'm not going to ask you to rehearse that again. I'm going to ask you to be far more self-critical than I have heard. Yeah this is always a case of cost-benefit. That's how we have to rule our lives. And it seems to me that the jurisdictions decided that there should be no risk whatsoever. Again, I'm not asking you, but I am saying that I think this needs a far more self-critical look. And, hey, you know, it happened. And let me just ask you—it happened. Were there any deaths? Were there any injuries at all in Virginia, in Maryland or in the District of Columbia and, if so, how many? Surely that assessment can be made by now.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Marshall.

Mr. MARSHALL. We have had 28 storm-related fatalities in Virginia.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Most of those were in the south.

Mr. MARSHALL. Yes, sir.

Mr. SCHRADER. We had eight. Two were traffic fatalities which were both alcohol-related; we had three carbon monoxide poisonings from folks having generators in the house; one flood victim up in Baltimore County and two electrical utility workers, one in Baltimore County and one in Prince George's County, who were both from out of State.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. LaPorte.

Mr. LAPORTE. We had one death related to a four-way stop early on Saturday morning. It was Michigan and North Capitol, and that's one of the things as an after action, just better education of both people understanding that going into that intersection it is a four-way stop. I think we need to push that further. I'd love to have some pre-made stop signs early on to get into those areas quickly. We had two police officers also injured, struck by vehicles, both somewhat minor, but it does reflect the fact that they are in harm's way in intersections, and it certainly was a challenge.

On the decisions on the transit, I think there are some things that we can look at, the best practices, what are the wind impacts. What's the—possibly running trains that are in the tunnels still and underground and protected. Maybe they can't go that far, but it may make sense. I know the executive director of the Transit Authority is looking at that, and I know we're going to engage in those discussions, and I think we need to hold the light of day to every decision that was made because, no matter how well we did, we have to get better each day in this business.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. LaPorte. Let me ask you about as controversial a decision as any that was made in the District and that was, when the storm had virtually blown many of the streets dry, a decision was made—and the decision seems to have been made in advance—to close schools Thursday and Friday. Now, you know you can close schools in lots of jurisdictions and maybe it doesn't make any difference. In this jurisdiction, you close down a lot. You close down people's breakfast, people's lunch, the only family people have. What bothered me, though, was that there was recrimination about the closing of schools. You know, the Mayor at first seemed to agree, then he seemed to have some concern about it. I notice in your testimony that, when you did open, 15 schools of 147 had to remain closed anyway. My question is, why couldn't that assessment have been made so that as many of the schools as possible could have opened instead of closing down schools for 2 days in a row, which means that children have 4 days in which—certainly 2 days in which there would have been no school and the problems attending that at home. And how was this decision made? If there were recriminations between the Mayor's office and the school superintendent, does that mean that there wasn't the kind of coordination one would have expected so that this decision could have been reached collaboratively?

Mr. LAPORTE. Additionally, they closed on Monday as well; and that was really a difficult issue. And the question on Thursday——

Ms. NORTON. Well, they weren't all closed Monday, were they?

Mr. LAPORTE. They were all closed on Monday.

Ms. NORTON. So Thursday, Friday and Monday.

Mr. LAPORTE. That's when we kicked in our significant feeding in the school areas. We fed 15,000 schoolchildren, and it was government employees on liberal leave. We called at 1 a.m., on Sunday morning, Monday morning to get to staff D.C. General to get into a major feeding of folks. You're right. You're highlighting an issue that we need to continue to address with schools. We were in a state of emergency. Schools come under the purview of the Mayor of District of Columbia when we are in a state of emergency. The

collaboration wasn't there. The Mayor has spoken to the school superintendent; they have had discussions. It is something that in our after action, we will amend, the District response plan to ensure that collaboration takes place. It was a bit frustrating for the District, not necessarily for Thursday and Friday. I will say that was a decision that was collaborative. But the decision Sunday night into Monday, schools weren't forthcoming with information regarding schools; it took a tiger team. We put together with schools—we went and focused with fire, police, public works inspections around those schools so we could get them open, and we were frustrated on Monday. We had to do the feeding. But we assured them they would be open on Tuesday, and they were open, and we continue to work with schools. We will redo our District response plan to have a school-specific annex, because we do not want to face this issue again.

Ms. NORTON. Could all of you tell me—Mr. Chairman, this is just about the food stamps coming out today. You know, 2 weeks later——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me just say, Fairfax had their schools open Monday, and there are many more trees in that jurisdiction. Other jurisdictions were open in the region, too.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. Yes, my goodness. Final question among a number I want to ask, but I see we have colleagues that the chairman wants to certainly get to the last panel. But I do want to ask about the notion—because I assume this comes through the jurisdictions of food stamps being made available today for poor people and even marginally poor people. I mean, 2 weeks later, I don't understand what—if this means additional food stamps. I want to know what these folks were doing for 2 weeks. These are the people least able to deal with food problems.

Mr. LAPORTE. For the District, our major disaster declaration—we requested a food stamp program as well as unemployment insurance and all of the benefits of a major disaster declaration. So as we received our individual family assistance disaster declaration we made sure our food stamp program was there. We've actually been giving out food stamps pretty regularly.

Ms. NORTON. Are you all telling me that you can't give out food stamps without—what is it—FEMA that tells you when you can in an emergency use food stamps? Do you have no authority of your own to use food stamps for poor people whose power is gone? Because that may be something that we need to look at, too.

Mr. LAPORTE. It was one of the challenging areas that we faced, so that's why we went into a significant feeding program. We gave out vouchers to McDonalds and Popeyes and to other feeding folks before we got into our feeding program.

Ms. NORTON. As long as they weren't vouchers to private schools, you're fine.

Mr. LAPORTE. That's exactly right. Not those kind of vouchers.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Those are coming, though.

Ms. NORTON. Go ahead. This is something the chairman and I just said we want to look into. I don't know, perhaps Maryland or Virginia can respond in your jurisdictions to the food stamp dilemma.

Mr. SCHRADER. I can just tell you that our Secretary of Human Resources, Secretary McCabe, took an initiative to get more food stamps out. I don't have the details on it here, but I can get back to you on it, if that's an interest.

Mr. MARSHALL. In Virginia, we are running into a few problems as far as actually at the distribution locations not having adequate personnel there to handle the long lines and the demands, and we are certainly working at the State level to help the localities get them distributed.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Please don't hesitate to call us if we can help with that, too. I mean, the Governor I know in Virginia just said he's pretty proactivate. We had conference calls throughout and appreciate your help.

Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you Mr. Chairman. I only have one quick question for one of the panel members. Mr. Marshall, of the millions of dollars in reimbursement that you will be getting from FEMA—three-quarters of the State and local expenditures for emergency assistance reimbursed by FEMA, I understand—have you put together any plans for mitigation of flooding along the banks of the Potomac River which happens every time we have a major flood? Do you have any idea how you might use that money since it has to be directed by the State?

Mr. MARSHALL. Certainly, Congressman Moran, that is a key issue; and we will look to work with, particularly Alexandria, and other communities. As mentioned earlier, the pre-disaster mitigation grant is so important to us; we would certainly appreciate your assistance in that regard because, as was mentioned by Mr. Tolbert, that amount has been reduced by 15 percent of what we're reimbursed to now 7.5 percent. So any assistance in that regard would certainly help us greatly in our mitigation efforts. But we certainly share your concern with those areas.

Mr. MORAN. Well, we'll discuss it with the Governor. I am trying to get some money for the Corps of Engineers to do a study as well, and perhaps the State can direct that some of the FEMA money be used for the results of the Corps of Engineers study on how to reduce the siltage buildup along the banks of the Potomac. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MARSHALL. We look forward to working with you on that, Congressman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Moran.

Mr. Van Hollen.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In the interest of time, I only have two quick questions for Mr. Schrader. Thank you for all you have done.

The first question is, do you have a damage estimate in terms of dollars and with respect to the damage that is eligible for some compensation from FEMA? Second question, has the Governor called upon the Public Service Commission in Maryland to do an investigation analysis of the power outages lessons learned, how we can do better?

Mr. SCHRADER. Let me do the power first, and then I'll get to the damages. He has directed the chairman of the Public Service Commission, Ken Schisler, last week to do an inquiry; and that will be

done in the near future. So, you know, we definitely want to make that inquiry.

On the damage assessments, of course, we are being careful, but we estimate between State and local government on the public assistance side there's probably going to be upwards of about $80 million of damage that we will be looking for reimbursement. That's both the local jurisdictions as well as the State. Of course, that could change, but you know it's in that ball park.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. I appreciate all of you being here today, and you've been very helpful to us. We'll do some followup. Thank you.

We'll take about a 1-minute recess as we clear this table and get the next panel ready to go. Thank you all.

We have now Richard White, the Chief Executive Officer for WMATA; William Sim from PEPCO; Admiral Jay Johnson, president and CEO of Dominion Delivery, Dominion Virginia Power; Charlie Crowder from the Fairfax County Water Authority; Jerry Johnson, general manager of D.C. Water and Sewer Authority; and Leslie Violette, the treasurer of the Belle View Condominium Unit Owners Association. Would you all please rise with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I think, just to remind you, we have a 5-minute rule. Your entire statement's in the record already so our questions will be based on the entire statement. When your light turns orange, that gives you a minute, and when it turns red if you could move to sum up about that time.

Mr. White, thank you for being with us. We'll start with you, and we'll move straight on down.

STATEMENTS OF RICHARD WHITE, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY; WILLIAM J. SIM, PRESIDENT, PEPCO; ADMIRAL JAY JOHNSON, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF DOMINION VIRGINIA POWER; JERRY N. JOHNSON, GENERAL MANAGER, D.C. WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY; CHARLIE C. CROWDER, JR., GENERAL MANAGER, FAIRFAX COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY, ACCOMPANIED BY JAMES A. WARFIELD, JR., EXECUTIVE OFFICER; AND LESLIE A. VIOLETTE, TREASURER, BELLE VIEW CONDOMINIUM UNIT OWNERS ASSOCIATION COMMUNITY

Mr. WHITE. Chairman Davis and members of the committee, good morning and thank you for asking me to testify at today's hearing on the National Capital Region's preparedness and response to Hurricane Isabel.

As the largest transit provider for the National Capitol region, Metro actively participated in the region's planning, coordination and response to the threat posed by Hurricane Isabel. There was an unprecedented level of regional coordination and collaboration at critical periods before, during and after the storm. The coordination procedures were conducted pursuant to the region's Regional Emergency Coordination Plan using its Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System [RICCS]. The system enables National Capital Region entities to quickly review and coordinate

actions that individual decisionmaking bodies were planning to take and underscores the significant progress the region has made since the tragic events of September 11.

In the 30 years of bus service and 27 years of rail, WMATA had no history of dealing with a hurricane with the size and strength of Hurricane Isabel, but we do, of course, have a reservoir of experience in dealing with severe weather conditions. Our actions were guided by an evaluation of two overarching threshold questions. First, when is it unsafe to operate and, second, how much advance notice do we provide regarding our intentions to restrict service? Emphasis was placed on safety, safety to our customers and employees and certainly in terms of communicating to the public our decisions on service.

On the issue of safety, given our lack of experience with the heavy winds that were being predicted, we sought guidance from the National Weather Service, emergency management authorities, the Federal Transit Administration, and transit agencies that have frequently experienced hurricane-force winds such as the Miami/Dade system in Florida. Based on these consultations, a determination was made that our mass transit operations would be unsafe for customers, pedestrians and our employees when our weather conditions resulted in sustained winds at or in excess of 40 miles per hour.

The region conducted two RICCS conference calls on Wednesday, September 17, under the auspices of the COG Chief Administrative Officers Committee. Approximately 60 separate parties participated on these calls, reflecting the interdependencies of decisions that are made by the Federal Government, local governments, private employers, schools, and transportation providers. These calls enabled stakeholders to make individual agency or jurisdictional decisions in a regional context that allowed for an exchange of information discussion and, to the extent possible, regional consensus. The safety of citizens was the priority consideration for participants during the RICCS calls.

During the afternoon call, the National Weather Service confirmed its earlier forecast of sustained winds in the 40 to 45 miles an hour range and with gusts of 60 miles an hour, but moved up the arrival time on the following day from late afternoon to early afternoon. As a result of these calls we were strongly encouraged to shut down the entire Metrorail system, not just the aboveground portion, out of concern that we were sending a mixed signal to our customers by contradicting others who were saying it would not be safe to be out at all once the hurricane's full force arrived in the region. Also, during these calls an overwhelming consensus emerged among the group that, in an effort to avoid ambiguity, we needed to err on the side of being early rather than late on announcing and implementing plans and actions. Call participants wanted WMATA to announce its decision to the public on Wednesday, rather than to wait till the next day. This would be consistent with the approaches that were being taken by other decisionmakers on announcing school and local government closings and would minimize the potential for chaos in the region.

Based on these factors, we announced our intention to stop accepting customers into the Metrorail and Metrobus system at 11

a.m. Thursday morning in order to ensure that our customers and employees would be out of harm's way by 2 p.m., which was the National Weather Service forecast for arrival, and that all local bus systems would complete their services by 2 p.m. as well. By announcing our decision early Wednesday evening we were able to get the word out in time for evening newscasts on radio and television and for the next day's newspapers.

I would like to bring to the committee's attention the October 2nd letter that was signed by CAO Chair Anthony H. Griffin and delivered to the committee that further explains the RICCS conference call process and which provides considerable additional detailed reports and documentation on this decisionmaking process.

We are now in the process of doing a self-assessment and working with our partners to assess the regional coordination process in ways in which the planning and response to threats can be improved in the future. We are going to be looking at our safety criteria in consultation with others, our operational plans that guided our decisions, exploring ways that we can improve getting our message out to the public, reviewing our fare policy, and documenting the impacts to WMATA of the extra costs and lost revenues caused by the storm.

I want to thank you Mr. Chairman, and the rest of the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present these remarks and for the support you have provided to Metro over the years, and I'll be happy to answer your questions at the appropriate time.

Ms. NORTON [presiding]. Thank you, Mr. White.

[The prepared statement of Mr. White follows:]

STATEMENT OF RICHARD A. WHITE
GENERAL MANAGER
AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
WASHINGTON METROPOLITAN AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

OCTOBER 3, 2003

Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee, good morning and thank you for asking me to testify at today's hearing on the National Capital Region's preparedness and response to Hurricane Isabel. I am Richard White, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Unprecedented Regional Coordination

As the largest transit provider for the National Capital Region (NCR), Metro actively participated in the region's planning, coordination and response to the threat posed by Hurricane Isabel. There was an unprecedented level of regional coordination and collaboration at critical periods before, during and after the storm. The effort underscores the significant progress the region has made since the tragic events of 9/11.

In response to 9/11, the NCR, using the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) as the organizing structure, developed and adopted a Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP). The RECP was developed to provide a framework for assisting the local, state, federal, and private sector partners in coordinating their preparations for a response to a regional emergency. It has been formally approved by the 17 local governments, the State of Maryland, The Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia, numerous federal agencies and regional private and public sector entities. A critical component of the RECP is the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS). The RICCS provides a system for COG members, the states, the federal government, other public agencies, the private sector, schools and volunteer organizations to collaborate in

planning, communication, information sharing, and coordination on decision making before, during and after a regional emergency or incident. In the case of Hurricane Isabel, these procedures and communications capabilities that were put into place after 9/11 enabled NCR entities to quickly review and coordinate actions that individual decision making bodies were planning to take.

WMATA's Decision Making Process

In the 30 years of bus service and 27 years of rail, WMATA had no history of dealing with a hurricane with the size and strength of Hurricane Isabel, but we do have a reservoir of experience in dealing with severe weather conditions. Our actions were guided by an evaluation of two overarching threshold questions. First, when is it unsafe to operate? And second, how much advance notice do we provide regarding our intentions to restrict service? Emphasis was placed on safety – safety to our customers and employees – and certainty in terms of communicating to the public our decisions on service.

On the issue of safety, given our lack of experience with the heavy winds that were being predicted, our top operations and safety staff conducted an overall risk assessment based on the probability of a severe weather event, and the severity of such an event. In doing so, we sought guidance from the National Weather Service, the Federal Transit Administration and transit agencies that have frequently experienced hurricane force winds, such as the Miami/Dade transit system. Based on these consultations, a determination was made that our mass transit operations would be unsafe for customers, pedestrians, and our employees when weather conditions resulted in sustained winds at or

in excess of 40 miles per hour (mph). We did evaluate operating a limited service on our Metrorail system restricted to our underground service area.

RICCS Conference Calls

The region conducted two RICCS conference calls on Wednesday, September 17, under the auspices of the COG Chief Administrative Officers (CAO) Committee. Approximately 60 parties participated on these calls, reflecting the interdependencies of decisions that are made by the federal government, local governments, private employers, schools, and transportation providers. An important part of the calls were the specifics of the weather assessments provided by the designated officer of the National Weather Service. WMATA participated in both of these calls, as well as 6 separate conference calls (over a three day period) that coordinated activities for various operators of transportation systems in the NCR, including WMATA, local bus systems, and the region's two commuting rail systems (VRE and MARC).

During these calls, there was a strong consensus that a coordinated and unified message should be delivered to the public reflecting the serious nature of the impending weather event and the public safety consequences. As a result, we were strongly encouraged to shut down the entire Metrorail system, not just the above ground portion, out of concern that we were sending a "mixed message" to our customers by contradicting others who were saying it would not be safe to be out at all once the hurricane's full force arrived in the region. We were also concerned that some people could become confused and stranded in the Metrorail system just as conditions were worsening and becoming unsafe.

During the afternoon call, the National Weather Service confirmed earlier forecasts of sustained winds in 40-45 mph range and with gusts of 60 mph, but moved up the predicted arrival time from late afternoon on the following day to early afternoon. During this call, an overwhelming consensus emerged among the group that in an effort to avoid ambiguity, we needed to err on the side of being early rather than late on announcing and implementing plans and actions. It was reaffirmed that conference call participants wanted WMATA to announce its decision to the public on Wednesday rather than wait until the next day. This was consistent with the approach being taken to announce school closings and local governments closures. The federal government reaffirmed that it would be announcing its final decision by the Wednesday evening news cycle. Based on all these factors, we announced our intention to stop accepting customers into the entire Metrorail and Metrobus system at 11:00 am Thursday morning in order to ensure that our customers and employees were out of harm's way by 2:00 p.m., and that all local bus systems could complete their services by 2:00 p.m. as well.

By announcing our decision early Wednesday evening, we were able to get the word out in time for evening newscasts on radio and television, and for the next day's newspapers. We wanted to give our customers as much information and notification time as possible in advance when faced with making decisions about their Thursday morning and afternoon commutes. We also provided notification and updates of our service changes on our web site, e-alert messages to customers and through our automated customer service call line. We utilized all these public outreach outlets again following the third RICCS conference call at 5:00 a.m. Friday, where after conducting an early

morning impact assessment, we announced to the region our intention to re-open the system at 8:00 a.m.

Post Storm Assessment and Next Steps

WMATA is currently in the process of completing a self-assessment and working with our partners to assess the regional coordination process and ways in which the planning and response to threats posed by hurricanes can be improved in the future. Hurricane Isabel was the main agenda item at two COG meetings conducted this week - the region's Chief Administrative Officers and COG's Emergency Planning Council. I participated in both of these meetings, and aside from providing a postmortem analysis on the actions taken two weeks ago, we also discussed ways in which we can tighten up the process for managing the RICCS calls and reporting out information derived from these calls.

In the hours during the storm, and for some of us for several days after its passing, we were reminded of how dependent we all are on a reliable source of electricity. WMATA is a major consumer of power and has a critical stake in the evaluation of how to improve the region's grid/transmission system. While we were never without power necessary to run trains, we did temporarily lose power at five rail stations, four rail yards and two bus garages during the storm. All things considered, we were lucky and our operations people were able to work around the outages. Even prior to Hurricane Isabel, we had begun to conduct an internal power vulnerability assessment throughout the entire system. Given how critical a reliable source of electricity is to our ability to provide our

transit services, we need to communicate to all pertinent parties that we are a significant stakeholder in regional power assessments.

Aside from the power issue, we are also conducting assessments and evaluating next steps to be taken in other areas critical to operating the system. We have discussed with our Board revisiting circumstances under which we might adjust our peak period fares charged when we are not able to provide a full level of service. Currently, our Board's directive stipulates that rush hour fares must be time based and not service based and can only be changed by Board action.

We are reevaluating the safety criteria that guided our decision and we are looking at the pluses and minuses of creating an underground only service plan in future scenarios comparable to Isabel. We're exploring ways that we can improve getting our message out to the public and assessing proper notification periods for service disruption announcements. We have also conducted a preliminary assessment of the extra costs and lost revenues caused by the storm.

The preparation and response to Hurricane Isabel reinforced the critical role Metro plays in the region. People ride Metro to activities and destinations that sustain the lifeblood of the regional economy and functions of government. Reliable Metro service ensures the continuity of operations of governments, businesses, schools and hospitals throughout the region. As we all witnessed just two weeks ago, a shut-down of Metro service for even a limited period of time has a significant impact on the region. I'm not suggesting that under perilous conditions we can avoid limiting service. We will always operate from a clear and direct intention not to put customers and employees at risk in the

face of severe weather conditions, such as the near gale-force winds experienced two weeks ago.

Even under the best weather conditions, however, Metro in the near future faces significant challenges towards maintaining the standard of service our customers rightfully demand and expect. Metro is facing a funding crisis, as a result of our aging infrastructure and growing ridership. In essence, we're a victim of our own success. If we don't address these "aging pains," these funding challenges will push Metro into the downward spiral that previously affected other older, major transit systems such as New York, Chicago and Philadelphia. WMATA is appreciative of the support that Chairman Davis and other regional delegation members have provided Metro over the years. We look forward to continuing to work together constructively on maintaining, leveraging and securing the investment in our system as well as enhancing the region's emergency preparedness and response.

I want to thank you Mr. Chairman and the rest of the members of the Committee for the opportunity to present these remarks. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Sim.

Mr. SIM. Thank you, Madam Chairman and members of the committee. My name is William Sim, and I am president of PEPCO.

As you know, PEPCO's the electric company that serves Washington, DC, and most of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland. I'm here to talk about PEPCO's overall preparation and response to Hurricane Isabel and the steps we're taking to ensure that we can do everything we can to satisfy our customers' needs and expectations in the future.

We at PEPCO recognize our unique role among electric utility companies as the company that delivers electricity to the Nation's Capital. Our single largest customer is the Federal Government and we deliver power to such critical installations as the U.S. Capitol complex, the White House, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security, amongst others. The magnitude of this responsibility does not escape us.

At this point, everyone is familiar with the devastation caused by Hurricane Isabel. It disrupted electric service to millions of people in the eastern United States. For PEPCO, it meant more than half a million customers—two-thirds of our customers—were without power; and the President declared our entire region a natural disaster area. However, I am pleased to report there were no significant interruptions of power supply to any major Federal facility. A pumping station at the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority was affected, but it was prioritized through coordination with the District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency and was quickly restored. With respect to State facilities, power supply was interrupted to two department of motor vehicle offices, one in the District of Columbia and one in Maryland. Thus, the outages resulting from Hurricane Isabel primarily affected residential and commercial customers.

PEPCO made unprecedented preparations prior to Isabel's arrival. We brought in crews from other States, trained additional telephone representatives and secured large quantities of electric equipment and materials for restoration. As our emergency measures anticipated, the damage was devastating. Let me give you some brief examples.

In PEPCO's service area, there were more than 5,000 wires down—that is more in one storm than we see in a year—and myriad trees uprooted which caused the vast majority of the damage. Crews had to replace more than 75 miles of cable, along with record amounts of other equipment. In the face of these massive challenges, our employees did everything in their power to restore service to our customers as quickly and safely as possible. In fact, PEPCO restored service to more than twice as many customers and repaired more than four times the damage we did in the same period after the 1999 ice storm.

However, I believe that every event is an opportunity to learn and improve our service to customers. In the aftermath of major storm events, PEPCO always assesses its efforts to restore the system and files reports with the District of Columbia and Maryland Public Service Commissions. We support these efforts and will cooperate fully with them.

However, we want to do more; and, as we announced earlier this week, we are taking a significant additional step. We have asked an expert in natural disasters, James Lee Witt Associates, to conduct a thorough and independent assessment of PEPCO's and our sister company Conectiv's response to Isabel, including the coordination between the companies and with the disaster response agencies and others. We believe Mr. Witt is uniquely qualified to oversee this important work. As Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for 8 years, he led the Agency response to more than 348 Presidentially declared disasters. His work included the oversight of emergency response efforts to a dozen damaging hurricanes. Mr. Witt and his team will have free rein to ask any questions of any person on any issue related to our preparation and response to Isabel and will evaluate all aspects of our performance; they will seek input from customers, public officials and others. You can rest assured that his recommendations will get our prompt and serious attention.

Turning to regional preparedness and coordination, PEPCO mobilized the entire company in accordance with its Emergency Response Plan which includes participation in the utility mutual assistance pact. This pact allows us to pull in system repair crews from areas that are not impacted by the storm and generally increases our ability to respond. In this effort, we had 966 crews working to restore power. Hundreds of these crews were on loan from other utilities from as far away as Kansas and Mississippi. PEPCO coordinated with our local emergency management agencies and provided liaison in the command centers in the District of Columbia, Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, as well as coordination with the States.

In terms of outreach, PEPCO's primary way of communicating with the public was through our call center representatives, our government affairs staff, our Web site, and our news media. I personally conducted daily telephone teleconferences with elected officials and a special phone line in the emergency command center was manned 24 hours a day by government affairs staff and staff that handle large commercial accounts. In addition, there was a special phone line for government officials also staffed around the clock to provide the most updated information.

Finally, as we begin to assess our performance in preparing and responding to Hurricane Isabel one issue comes up time and time again. Trees. I'll be just 1 second, Mr. Chairman. Local governments, the National Park Service and all utilities need to work together to assess the tree issue; and we need an open dialog of setting priorities for restoration.

This concludes the formal part of my testimony. I'd like to thank you and members of the committee for your attention. We will be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS [presiding]. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Sim follows:]

TESTIMONY OF WILLIAM SIM
ON BEHALF OF POTOMAC ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY (PEPCO)
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
OCTOBER 3, 2003

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is William Sim and I am the President of Pepco. As you know, Pepco is the electric company that serves Washington D. C., and most of Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland. I am here to talk about Pepco's overall preparation and response to Hurricane Isabel and the steps we are taking to ensure that we do everything we can to satisfy our customers' needs and expectations in the future.

Before I begin my formal remarks, my Chairman, John Derrick asked that I thank you, Chairman Davis, for your leadership and the hard work of your staff on emergency management issues. You have been tremendously supportive of Pepco's efforts to increase security to protect our infrastructure against terrorist attack. I want to personally thank you for your efforts, as well.

We at Pepco recognize our unique role among electric utility companies as the company that delivers electricity to the Nation's Capital. Our single largest customer is the Federal government and we deliver power to such critical installations as this U. S. Capitol complex, the White House, the FBI, and the Department of Homeland Security. The magnitude of this responsibility does not escape me.

At this point everyone is familiar with the devastation caused by Hurricane Isabel. It disrupted electric service to millions of people in the eastern United States. For Pepco, it

meant more than half a million customers – two thirds of our customers – were without power, and the President declared our entire region a natural disaster area. However, I am pleased to report that there was no significant interruption of power supply to any major Federal facility. A pumping station at the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority was affected, but it was prioritized through coordination with the D. C. Emergency Management Agency and was restored quickly. With respect to state facilities, power supply was interrupted to two DMV offices, one in D. C. and one in Maryland. Thus, the outages resulting from Hurricane Isabel primarily affected residential and commercial customers.

Pepco made unprecedented preparations prior to Isabel's arrival. We brought in crews from other states, trained additional telephone representatives, and secured large quantities of electric equipment and materials for the restoration. As our emergency measures anticipated, the damage was devastating. Let me give some brief examples. In Pepco's service area, there were more than 5,000 wires down and myriad trees uprooted, which caused the vast majority of damage. Crews had to replace more than 75 miles of cable, along with record amounts of other equipment. In the face of these massive challenges, our employees did everything they could to restore service to our customers as quickly and safely as possible. In fact, Pepco restored service to more than twice as many customers and repaired four times the damage we did in the same time period after the 1999 ice storm. So I think we did pretty well, but I believe that every event is an opportunity to learn and improve our service to customers.

Regardless of what I think, what our customers think is of the utmost importance to us. We understand that families and businesses without power for extended periods were frustrated and angry, and they want answers. They want to know what went well, what could

have been done better, and if we will do a better job in the future? We are going to answer their questions, but we want to do **more.** As we announced earlier this week, we are taking a significant additional step.

We have asked James Lee Witt Associates to conduct a thorough and independent assessment of Pepco's and our sister company, Conectiv's, response to Isabel, including the coordination between the companies and disaster response agencies. We believe Mr. Witt is uniquely qualified to oversee this important work. As Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency for eight years, he led the agency's response to more than 348 Presidentially declared disasters. His work included the oversight of emergency response efforts to a dozen damaging hurricanes.

Mr. Witt and his team will have free rein to ask any question on any issue related to our preparation and response to Isabel and will evaluate all aspects of our performance. They will seek input from customers, public officials and others. You can rest assured that his recommendations will get our prompt and serious attention.

My remaining remarks will focus on answering the Committee's specific questions:

1. What procedures are in place to retrospectively assess the situation and how decisions were made? In the aftermath of major storm events, Pepco always assesses its efforts to restore the system and files reports with the District of Columbia and Maryland Public Service Commissions. These reports, which were standardized following Hurricane Floyd in 1999, are due within three weeks of the end of the system restoration efforts.

As I just mentioned, as an additional measure we have hired former FEMA Director James Lee Witt to conduct a thorough and independent assessment of Pepco's response.

2. What implications are there for regional preparedness as a whole? The damage from Isabel was so substantial that President Bush declared the Nation's Capital and the surrounding area a natural disaster area. We believe that the final numbers will show that Hurricane Isabel inflicted more damage than any other storm in our region's history.

Against this backdrop, Pepco mobilized the entire company in accordance with its Emergency Response Plan. One key element of this plan is the reliance on the regional utility mutual assistance pact. This pact allows us to pull in system repair crews from areas that are not impacted by the storm and greatly increases our response capability. For example, at the height of the effort we had 966 crews working to restore power. Hundreds of these crews were on loan from other utilities; some crews were mobilized as far away as Kansas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

In terms of regional cooperation, Pepco coordinated with our Local Emergency Management Agencies and, given the sheer magnitude of the storm throughout the region, we provided Emergency Management Liaisons for each of the command centers in Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Montgomery and Prince George's counties. In turn, State and Local Emergency Management Agencies provided outstanding support to the company. Importantly, we worked in unison with our fellow Emergency Managers on life safety situations to ensure that hospitals and water pumping and treatment facilities impacted by the hurricane were identified and properly prioritized for restoration.

3. **How were residents and businesses kept informed before, during and after the hurricane?** Pepco's primary ways to communicate with the public was through call center representatives, our government affairs staff, our web site and the news media.

Prior to the storm, we issued media releases to let customers know how to prepare for the storm and what steps the company was undertaking to prepare. After the storm, we held news media conferences and issued multiple releases daily to update the public on our restoration efforts. Call center representatives were kept updated on our restoration progress and were provided information on restoration priorities and the answers to the frequently asked questions. In addition, we used recorded phone messages to convey customer outage numbers and estimated restoration times.

The government affairs staff manned a special phone line 24 hours a day after the hurricane at the Emergency Command Center to receive calls and provide information to our large commercial and governmental customers. A special phone line for government officials also was staffed around the clock to provide the most up to date information to elected officials throughout the area. I personally conducted daily teleconferences with elected officials, and Pepco staff participated in conference calls with school administrators and others when requested.

4. **How can the region better prepare and respond in the future?** As we review and begin to assess our performance in preparing and responding to Hurricane Isabel, one issue comes up time and time again: trees. Local governments, the National Park Service, the public and all utilities need to work together to address the "tree issue." Moreover, I believe we need to engage in an open dialogue on setting priorities for restoration. Many

public officials are calling for a robust public policy discussion on these issues and Pepco welcomes the opportunity to participate in such discussions.

This concludes the formal part of my testimony. I would like to thank you and the Members of the Committee for your attention and would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Admiral Johnson, thanks for being with us.

Admiral JAY JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Jay Johnson. I'm the president and CEO of Dominion Virginia power. We provide electric service to 2.2 million customers in Virginia and North Carolina.

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. I want to discuss Dominion's role in dealing with Isabel, but I would also say the implications for improving future emergency preparedness in the Metro D.C. area are many, and I commend the committee for stepping forward and taking this action. Mr. Chairman, you have my written statement, and I'd just like to highlight a few points if I could.

Hurricane Isabel, as we know, was the most devastating natural disaster in Dominion's 100-year history. The hurricane covered an area the size of the State of Colorado; and at the peak of the storm 1.81 of our 2.2 million customers—that's 82 percent—were without power. The damage to our electrical system was catastrophic in much of central and eastern Virginia and North Carolina. In northern Virginia the damage was less severe but still very, very significant. In northern Virginia, for example, 16 area water pumping stations lost power, as did 91 schools across the region; and that's about a quarter of the schools in northern Virginia. The good news is that no hospitals in northern Virginia were affected; and other important facilities, including the Pentagon, Fort Belvoir, Dulles and Reagan airports and the Metro system did not lose power. Although we continue to catalog the damages, we know the storm destroyed more than 10,700 utility poles, broke 14,600 cross arms. We had to replace 13,000 spans of wire and almost 8,000 transformers. More than 60 percent of our 1,600 primary circuits were badly damaged. The scope and impact of Isabel were unprecedented, as were our preparations and response.

We placed emphasis in two areas: first, mobilizing the manpower and materials we needed to safely restore electrical power; second, providing timely and up-to-date information to government officials, media and customers before, during and after the event. We knew this was going to be a big storm. We initially mobilized a work force of 7,000 which grew to 12,000 over the following days. We had crews from 20 different States and the Province of Quebec assisting in this restoration effort. Our top priority, initially, was restoring critical public health and safety facilities as soon as the hurricane passed—hospitals, water pumping and treatment stations, 911 services, fire stations, and the like.

Recognizing the crucial importance of the region's water supply, we also sent members of our management team to work onsite with our colleagues at the D.C. Water Authority and the Fairfax County Water Authority soon after the storm hit. We restored 14 of the area's 16 pumping stations on Friday, September 19, the day we began restoring power. The other two pumping stations were located at Occoquan. They suffered major damage to the electrical infrastructure but were restored within a week.

I've got a more complete accounting of all of this in my written testimony, but I would comment that, in many cases, what we're talking about here is rebuilding the distribution system, not just

simply repairing it. Suffice it to say, our line crews performed superbly, working long hours under extremely difficult conditions. I am pleased to report that, as of today, our crews have restored power to virtually all of Dominion Virginia Power's 1.8 million customers. When I left Richmond this morning at 0600 it was under 500 and counting, and we feel pretty confident we will get the rest of those today.

In addition to the physical work of setting poles and pulling wire, we implemented a comprehensive and proactive public communications plan. Providing up-to-date information to government officials and the public was a priority before, during and certainly after the hurricane. Among other things, we conducted regular briefings for State and local officials. We exchanged information with local EOCs, Emergency OP Centers. We issued radio, print and electronic communications to our customers, including targeted messages to 10,000 customers with special medical needs 2 days before the storm hit. And, for the first time, we posted information about the location of repair crews and their daily work plans on our Internet Web site, which had over a half a million hits in the first 2 days after the event. From the outset, we were very clear about our restoration priorities, and we repeatedly emphasized two things in our public communications: one, the importance of safety to our crews and to the public; and, two, the inescapable fact that the restoration effort would more closely resemble a marathon than a sprint due to the catastrophic damages suffered.

By and large, we believe our efforts to keep local authorities and the public informed were quite successful. That said, we know we can do better; and we have every intention of doing so. Dominion's corporate culture is grounded in the mind set of continuous improvement. Once we complete all aspects of the restoration effort we are going to take a hard look at everything we did. We will conduct a thorough assessment of our planning, our implementation, our materials management, and communications. The implications for regional emergency preparedness will emerge more clearly as we examine the entire Isabel experience with the clarity of 20/20 hindsight. We're committed to partnering with all levels of government and all the emergency agencies to address their concerns as part of this ongoing assessment.

The 12,000 member team we assembled for Isabel was the largest we have ever fielded. These men and women, some Virginians, some from other States, some from Canada, performed extraordinarily well under adverse conditions. We're very proud of them. I would also say that we are grateful, in closing, to the many Dominion Power customers who shared a kind word with our crews, who gave them the thumbs up as they worked hard to restore electrical service as quickly and safely as they could. We value our customers' support, and we appreciate their patience and understanding.

Isabel was a harsh teacher. She brought many hardships to the area. We intend to learn from her presence here and build on our restoration success to achieve even greater preparedness in the fu-

ture. Mr. Chairman, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the committee; and I stand ready to answer your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Johnson follows:]

Testimony of
Jay L. Johnson
President & CEO
Dominion Delivery
To the
House Committee on Government Reform
October 3, 2003

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee.

My name is Jay Johnson, and I am the president and CEO of Dominion Virginia Power. My company provides electric service to about 2.2 million customers in Virginia and North Carolina.

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before this committee to discuss Dominion's preparations for and response to Hurricane Isabel. The implications for future emergency preparedness in the metro-D.C. area are many, and I commend the Committee for taking up this matter in such a swift and timely fashion.

Isabel's Impact

Hurricane Isabel was the most devastating natural disaster in Dominion's 100-year history. The storm blew through Virginia on September 18, bringing hurricane-force gusts ranging from 74 to 107 miles per hour. Weather stations clocked sustained tropical storm-force winds from 44 to 69 miles per hour over what the National Weather Service described as "an unusually extensive area."

The huge storm system covered an area the size of Colorado. One weather expert called it "a storm of historic proportions." In its official report on the hurricane, the National Weather Service said Isabel had brought "permanent change to the landscape" in Virginia from fallen trees and storm surges.

Throughout most of Dominion's service territory, the winds bombarded homes, businesses and our distribution facilities with falling trees and limbs. Soil saturated from recent record rainfall made trees with root systems already weakened by drought much more susceptible to winds.

As Virginia state climatologist Pat Michaels recently put it, Isabel wreaked havoc on "the forest of urban and suburban trees...Many of them are so big that, when blown over by tropical-storm force winds, they're likely to find a power line that was once thought safely distant."

Although Dominion's tree trimming expenses rose by more than 50 percent over the last four years to $30 million, no amount of cutting could prevent the massive destruction wrought by a violent storm such as Isabel.

The hurricane affected about 96 percent of Dominion's customers in eastern Virginia, 95 percent in central Virginia and 69 percent in Northern Virginia. At the peak of the storm, 1.8 million of the company's 2.2 million customers in Virginia and northeastern North Carolina lost power.

In much of central and eastern Virginia, the damage was catastrophic. The damage was less severe but still very significant in most of Northern Virginia.

For example, 16 area water pumping and treatment stations lost power, as did 91 schools across Northern Virginia – about one in four.

The good news is that no hospitals in Northern Virginia were affected. Other important facilities, including the Pentagon, Fort Belvoir, Dulles and Reagan airports, and the Metro system, did not lose power.

Throughout our two-state service area, more than 10,700 power poles were destroyed, and 14,600 pole cross arms were broken. About 13,000 spans of wire had to be re-strung, and 7,900 transformers replaced. We are still counting the damage.

More than 60 percent of our primary distribution circuits were affected, causing service disruptions to more than 80 percent of our customers. These circuits deliver power to the lower-voltage circuits that serve homes and businesses. They had to be repaired before service to the lower-voltage circuits could be restored.

The cost of the restoration will be significant. To repair and rebuild facilities, we had to acquire enormous amounts of supplies. We used a year's supply of poles, cross arms and transformers in just 10 days. We are nearing four years' worth of usage of some other materials, such as secondary wire and insulators. This presented a daunting logistical challenge, but we got the material we needed to complete work without interruption.

The operations and maintenance costs we incurred while restoring service will <u>not</u> result in higher bills for our Virginia customers. The 1999 Virginia Electric Utility Restructuring Act caps our base rates through mid-2007.

<u>Preparations for Isabel</u>

Isabel's scope and impact were unprecedented, as were Dominion's preparations and response.

We began preparing for Isabel well before it arrived in Virginia. As the hurricane moved through the western Atlantic Ocean, meteorologists determined the enormous storm was likely to strike our service area and cause extensive damage.

We initially mobilized a workforce of 7,000 to deal with the anticipated outages. Repair crews were placed at staging areas in central, eastern and Northern Virginia so they could respond quickly to storm damage. The company also secured the supplies needed for massive service restoration, including poles, cross arms, transformers and wire.

On the communications front, we issued several news releases before the storm arrived to warn customers to expect lengthy outages because of Isabel's expected impact. On Sept. 17, we began airing radio ads in central and eastern Virginia, urging customers to prepare for the worst. We even contacted 10,000 customers with special medical needs and suggested they make alternative arrangements due to the anticipated outages.

We also set up extensive contacts with all levels of government. In advance of the storm, we briefed officials on our prognosis for the hurricane – which we expected to be severe – and our preparations for it. We also provided Dominion contacts for all officials.

Regional storm centers set up by the company also interfaced with all local Emergency Operations Centers through special telephone lines. This expedited the exchange of critical storm-related information.

In addition to media outlets and Dominion's customer call centers, we used Dominion's web site (www.dom.com) as a crisis communications tool. We set up links to emergency information, provided hurricane preparedness tips and posted the company's news releases as they were issued.

Response to Isabel: Manpower and Materials

Responding to the storm's devastation, Dominion immediately increased the size of its work force to more than 12,000 people. We set ambitious public restoration targets to bring the lights back on across the Commonwealth, and we achieved those targets.

Our assembled workforce was by far the largest in Dominion's history. It included more than 9,000 tree and line workers from Dominion and 18 utilities and 21 contractors as far away as Quebec and Oklahoma. We are very grateful for their help. We are proud of their selfless and heroic efforts, both in the field and in support roles.

We initially assigned the highest priority to restoring service to critical public health and safety facilities, such as hospitals, water pumping and treatment stations, 9-1-1 services, fire stations and the like.

Recognizing the crucial importance of Northern Virginia's water supply, we also sent Dominion personnel to work on site with our colleagues at the DC Water Authority and the Fairfax County Water Authority soon after the storm hit.

We restored 14 of the area's 16 pumping stations on Friday, September 19 – the day we began our restoration effort. The other two, located at Occoquan, suffered major damage to the electrical infrastructure. One was restored on Sept. 23, the other one on Sept. 26.

We made significant progress quickly with other critical public health and safety facilities as well.

No hospitals in Northern Virginia were affected. Other critical facilities in this region, including the Pentagon, Fort Belvoir, Dulles and Reagan airports, and the Metro system did not lose power.

With the critical facilities returned to service, we continued to turn our attention to the primary delivery circuits affecting homes and businesses.

Crews reported significant levels of devastation, with mangled and twisted power poles and wires. Some areas were virtually impenetrable, due to masses of fallen trees and limbs.

The pace of restoration was somewhat faster in Northern Virginia, since our facilities in this area generally incurred less damage. But the task of reconnecting customers was difficult and time consuming virtually everywhere.

Despite significant obstacles, we were able to meet or exceed the restoration timetable we set for ourselves every step of the way.

Of the approximately 485,000 customers affected by the storm in Northern Virginia, more than 60 percent were restored by Friday, Sept. 19.

By Monday, Sept. 22, three days after restoration work began, fully 89 percent had their power back on.

By Friday, Sept. 26, almost all 485,000 Northern Virginia customers had power.

And I'm very pleased to say that as of today, Friday, October 3, virtually all of Dominion's customers system-wide now have electric service.

Response to Isabel: Proactive Communications

In addition to the physical work of setting poles and pulling wire, we implemented a comprehensive and proactive public communications plan. Providing up-to-date information to government officials and the public was a priority before, during and after the hurricane.

From the outset, we were very clear about our restoration priorities. And we repeatedly stressed two things in our radio, print and electronic communications to customers:

- **One, the importance of safety around downed power lines and the proper use of generators;**
- **And two, the inescapable fact that the restoration effort would more closely resemble a marathon than a sprint, due to the extent of damages suffered.**

In the days following the storm, Dominion representatives engaged in regular dialogue with the public officials and local Emergency Operations Centers they contacted before September 18. They were informed of the storm's devastating impact on the electrical system and given preliminary assessments of the damages in their areas, which in many cases were catastrophic.

We announced that the storm had disrupted service to 1.8 million customers – a record outage for Dominion – eclipsing the 1.1 million customers out during Hurricane Fran in 1996.

We assured the officials that we would work around the clock to restore power safely. We identified for them our top restoration priorities, as I described earlier. Dominion representatives provided restoration updates and answered any questions they had about the storm and our response to it.

Members of the company's management team participated in daily conference calls with the Virginia Emergency Operations Center to discuss the status of the restoration efforts.

Company officers held daily news conferences with the media to keep them abreast of the latest developments.

Dominion bought radio time daily in all markets to relay critical messages to officials and customers. These messages emphasized safety and the status of the response effort and expected progress.

We continued to use the Internet (http://www.dom.com/news/restoration.jsp) to post valuable information for all users, including

- **emergency shelter locations, directions and contact information;**
- **dry ice distribution plans and locations;**
- **work plans for electric restoration by community and date;**
- **damage assessments; and**
- **system maps and related outage information.**

One indication of the Internet's value as a crisis communications tool was the number of visitors who went to dom.com between Sept. 18-28. During that 10-day period, we experienced more than 575,000 visits to our site. That's more than four

times the number of visits received in a comparable stretch of time during the month of August.

Building On Our Success

By and large, we believe our efforts to keep local authorities and the public informed were quite successful. That said, I assure you that we have embedded in Dominion's corporate culture a mindset grounded in continuous improvement. Consistent with that outlook, once we complete all aspects of the restoration effort, we're going to take a hard look at everything we did – leading up to, during and after the storm.

We will conduct a thorough assessment of our planning, implementation, materials management, and communications. The implications for regional emergency preparedness will emerge more clearly as we examine the entire Isabel experience with the clarity of 20/20 hindsight.

We are committed to partnering with all levels of government and all types of emergency agencies to address their concerns as part of any ongoing assessment of the region's emergency preparedness.

As I stated earlier, Isabel's scope and impact were unprecedented – and so were Dominion's preparations and response.

The 12,000-member team we assembled in response to this historic storm was the largest Dominion has ever fielded. These men and women – some Virginians, some from other states, some from Canada – performed extraordinarily well under adverse conditions. We are very proud of them.

We are also grateful to the many Dominion customers who shared a kind word with our crews or gave them a "thumb's up" as they worked hard to restore electric service as quickly and safely as possible. We value our customers' support, and we appreciate their patience and understanding.

The British statesman and author, Benjamin Disraeli, once said: "There is no education like adversity."

Isabel was a harsh teacher. She brought many hardships to the area. We intend to learn from her presence here – and build on our success to achieve even greater preparedness in the future.

That concludes my prepared remarks, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this Committee. I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.

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Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Crowder, thanks for being here. I see Harry Day, your chairman is here as well. I want to recognize him. And, Harry, welcome to the room.

Mr. CROWDER. Chairman Davis, thank you very much. Congresswoman Norton and Congressman Van Hollen and members of the committee, good morning. I'm Charlie Crowder, and I'm the general manager of the Fairfax County Water Authority. I have over 30 years experience in planning, building and operating major metropolitan water systems; and I'm pleased to be here today to discuss tropical storm Isabel and its impact on the Water Authority and the customers we serve.

Our Water Authority is the largest in Virginia and one of the 25 largest drinking water utilities in the country. Approximately 1.2 million people in northern Virginia use our water. The Water Authority operates two water treatment plant industrial complexes. Our plants are located on the Potomac River and on the impounded Occoquan River.

Drinking water systems frequently face power outages caused by storms, icy weather, high winds, and similar natural occurrences. Systems like ours that must respond to these types of outages are generally well prepared with extensive system architecture, along with trained and knowledgeable personnel. Outages generally caused by severe weather tend to be of relatively short duration, impacting small portions of a system. It is highly unusual for local weather conditions to have such a devastating impact. In fact, it was the first time in the 50-year history of the Fairfax County Water Authority that we lost all the power feeds to our treatment plants.

Now I'd like to recap what occurred 2 weeks ago, then describe some important reliability improvements the Water Authority has initiated in recent years and also mention some prospective facility improvements we are reexamining in the wake of Isabel. The Water Authority entered the day of the storm's arrival with our employees mobilized, facilities fully operational and all of our storage tanks full. We experienced intermittent power outages, but these impacted only individual facilities and were quickly restored by the power company, and our redundant features offset the impacts. However, late on Thursday, September 18th, electrical power was lost to all four treatment plants. By 4 a.m. on Friday, some of our customers began to experience low water pressure and the potential for contamination from siphonage became possible. Out of an abundance of caution, our customers were advised to boil that small portion of their water that they wanted to drink. The precautionary boil water advisory was lifted at 7 p.m. Sunday, September 21st.

During this entire time, Dominion Virginia Power responded with priority service to the Water Authority. The power company worked through the storm to restore power to our facilities. Despite those efforts, it still took over 13 hours to restore power to our Potomac plant, with the other plants regaining power several hours later. In total, customers who awoke Friday morning to no water had their water service restored by Friday evening. With the exception of the inconvenience of boiling water needed for direct consumption, all water services were restored in about the same

amount of time it takes to fix a major water main break. However, the fact that this was a system-wide outage made it serious indeed, and we will take steps to prevent its reoccurrence. We must have virtually uninterruptable power for the system by one means or another. Mr. Chairman, a 13-hour power outage for a public water system is significant. The Water Authority does not believe this is acceptable nor do we believe that Dominion Virginia Power does. The reasons behind the delay in regaining power to the water system need to be examined and preventive measures put in place.

Throughout our history, we have made improvements to increase the water system reliability. We have two sources of water, two treatment complexes with similar production capacities at opposite ends of our service area and a strong interconnected transmission system. These are protections enjoyed by only a handful of major water utilities. Our Potomac plant has dual power feeds, with one placed underground to avoid ice and windstorm outages. Next year, when we bring a new state-of-the-art 120 million gallons per day water treatment facility on line at Occoquan, it will further increase our power supply reliability. We took the initiative with this new plan to have its power feed and substation connected directly to the national grid, which will provide extraordinary power reliability.

Looking to the future, we are re-examining constructing more elevated storage tanks and we are reexamining onsite emergency power generation at our facilities, all the while taking a fresh look at power generation feasibility from a Fairfax County incinerator. We estimate onsite emergency power generation could cost as much as $50 million and will require a significant increase in our water rates.

Although the feasibility and cost of these options have been considered in the past, it is important to reevaluate previous assumptions and examine new ones in light of Isabel. We have already engaged a nationally recognized engineering firm to conduct an assessment of options and recommended actions that will allow us to prevent another situation like the one Isabel inflicted on us.

Let me stop at this point and express that the linkage between the power sector and water sector is one of the key infrastructure interdependencies under study at the local and national level throughout the water industry. Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee, and I would be happy to answer your questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crowder follows:]

TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BY
CHARLIE C. CROWDER, JR.
GENERAL MANAGER
FAIRFAX COUNTY WATER AUTHORITY
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

OCTOBER 3, 2003

Good morning, Chairman Davis, Congresswoman Norton, and Members of the Committee. My name is Charlie Crowder and I am the General Manager of the Fairfax County Water Authority. I have over 30 years experience in planning, building and operating major metropolitan water systems. My academic background includes a technical undergraduate degree from Virginia Military Institute and a graduate degree in public administration from George Washington University. I am pleased to be here this morning to discuss Tropical Storm Isabel and its impact on the Fairfax County Water Authority and the customers we serve.

Introduction

Fairfax County Water Authority is one of the 25 largest drinking water utilities in the country. It is Virginia's largest water utility, providing water to about one out of every five Virginians who obtain water from a public utility. Approximately 1.2 million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William, Alexandria, Herndon and Vienna use our water. In addition, we provide water to Ft. Belvoir, the Washington Dulles International Airport complex and many federal government facilities within our service area.

The Water Authority operates two water treatment plant complexes with a rated capability of producing 262 million gallons per day. Our plants are located on the Potomac River and on the impounded Occoquan River. The Occoquan plants will be replaced in 2004 by a new, state-of-the-art water treatment plant, currently under construction.

General

Drinking water systems frequently face power outages caused by storms, icy weather, high winds and similar natural causes. Systems that must respond to these types of outages, like ours, are generally well prepared with extensive system architecture, along with trained and knowledgeable personnel. Outages generally caused by severe weather tend to be of relatively short duration, or impact only a relatively small portion of a system. It is highly unusual for weather conditions such as Isabel to have such a devastating impact and to result in power supply failures like the one we experienced. In fact, it was the first time in the 50 year history of the Fairfax County Water Authority that we lost all the power feeds to our treatment plants.

Key elements that drinking water systems use to weather typical power outages include multiple power feeds, backup power, redundant facilities, and system storage. Most drinking water systems have elevated storage tanks that can provide short-term water service even when the ability to produce treated water is lost.

Tropical Storm Isabel

I want to recap what occurred two weeks ago, and then describe some important reliability improvements that the Fairfax County Water Authority has initiated in recent years. Also, I would like to mention some prospective facility improvements that we are re-examining in the wake of Isabel.

Fairfax County Water Authority entered the day of the storm's arrival with our employees mobilized, facilities fully operational and all of our storage tanks full. The water system performed well during the initial stages of the storm. We experienced

intermittent power outages, but these impacted only individual facilities and were quickly restored by the power company and our redundant features off-set the impacts. However, late on Thursday, September 18, all electrical power was lost to all four treatment plants. The water storage held our system for the next five hours. By 4 a.m. on Friday some of our customers began to experience low water pressure and the potential for contamination from siphonage became possible. Out of an abundance of caution, our customers were advised to boil that small portion of their water that they wanted to drink. Most domestic water is used for bathing, washing clothes and flushing toilets, and only a relatively small portion is consumed.

During the early morning hours of September 19, the water system status, the impending loss of system pressure, and "boiled water notice" possibilities were coordinated with the Virginia Department of Health, the Fairfax County Executive, Fairfax County Fire Chief, the Fairfax County Health Department and our counterparts in Loudoun and Prince William Counties, among others. The news media were informed through our Public Affairs Office as well as that of Fairfax County. We used our web site as well as our reinforced customer service operations to personally answer calls that began pouring into the Water Authority.

During this entire time, Dominion Virginia Power responded with priority service to the Water Authority. The power company worked through the storm to restore power to our facilities. Despite those efforts, it still took over 13 hours to get power to our Potomac plant with the other plants regaining power several hours later. In total, customers who awoke Friday morning to no water had their service fully restored by Friday evening. With the exception of the inconvenience of boiling water needed for direct consumption, all water services were restored in about the same amount of time it takes to fix a major water main break. However, the fact that this was a *systemwide* outage of 13 hours made it serious indeed, and it is an event that we will take steps to see does not occur again. We must have virtually uninterruptible power for the system by one means or another.

After two consecutive days of sampling water from the retail and wholesale service areas, we demonstrated to the satisfaction of the State of Virginia and Fairfax County Health Departments that our system was not, and never was, contaminated. The Boil Water Advisory was lifted at 7 p.m. Sunday, September 21.

Mr. Chairman, a 13-hour power outage for a public water system is significant. Fairfax County Water Authority does not believe this is acceptable nor do we believe that Dominion Virginia Power does. The reasons behind the delay in regaining power to the water system need to be examined and preventative measures put in place. A stable and reliable power supply is essential to water service in this area and to the vast majority of drinking water systems around the country.

System Improvements

Throughout our history, we have made improvements to increase the reliability of our water system. We have two sources of water, two treatment complexes with similar production capacities at opposite ends of our service area and a strong interconnected transmission system that allows us to move water from the treatment plants to where it is needed. These are protections enjoyed by only a handful of major water utilities.

We have done many things in past years to reinforce our electrical power reliability. For example, our Potomac plant has dual feeds serving it, with one of these services placed underground to avoid wind-storm outages. Next year when we bring a new 120 million gallons per day water treatment facility on line in Lorton, Virginia, we will further increase our power supply reliability. We took the initiative with this new plant to incorporate our own electrical power substation, served directly from the national power grid. With this direct connection, this new plant will have extraordinary power reliability.

The Future

Looking to the future, we are again reexamining constructing more elevated storage tanks to provide for longer service times, on-site emergency power generation at

our facilities, and power from one of Fairfax County's incinerators to serve as an emergency back-up at one of our plants. We estimate that the cost of on-site emergency power generation could cost as much as $50 million and will require a significant increase in our water rates.

Although the feasibility and cost of these options has been considered in the past, we feel it is important to re-evaluate previous assumptions and examine new ones in light of the events of Isabel. Just like "9/11" caused the nation to evaluate afresh the vulnerabilities of its critical infrastructure, recent storm events and their ability to overwhelm system redundancies, require that we re-examine all options. In fact, we have already engaged a nationally recognized engineering firm to conduct as assessment of options and recommended actions that will allow us to prevent another situation like the one inflicted on us by Isabel.

In addition to working with the power company, Fairfax County Water Authority will also be re-examining agreements with other critical suppliers of things like telecommunications to ensure support and responsiveness during natural and manmade emergencies.

Conclusion

Members of the Committee, in closing, let me recognize that the tie between the power and water sector is one of the key infrastructure interdependencies under study at the National level and among drinking water suppliers. The National Infrastructure Advisory Council has established a Task Force to develop recommendations on critical infrastructure interdependencies including drinking water. In addition, Fairfax County Water Authority, along with the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies and the Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center are gathering information on the mid-August Northeast power outage and the Isabel storm power outage in order to better prepare for events in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to address the committee. I would be happy to answer yours questions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Johnson. Thanks for being with us.

Mr. JERRY JOHNSON. Thank you and good morning, Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Norton, Congressman Van Hollen. I'm Jerry Johnson, general manager of the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority. We're pleased to be invited to provide testimony today on emergency preparedness.

WASA, as you know, provides wastewater collection for the Nation's Capital and wastewater treatment for Prince George's, Montgomery and Fairfax Counties as well as the District of Columbia at the large, advanced wastewater treatment plant that we call Blue Plains. WASA also purchases 76 percent of the drinking water produced by the Washington aqueduct and provides retail water delivery in the District of Columbia to portions of northern Virginia to include the Pentagon and National Airport.

Generally, a major storm event can impact WASA's system and customers in a number of different ways. Fortunately, by 9 a.m. on Friday, September 19, WASA's emergency operations determined that WASA had fared very well through the initial hurricane, had no major damage to our facilities or operations and had no unusual customer calls or complaints, and cleanup of minor localized flooding areas and the treatment plant were under way at that time.

WASA worked closely with the District of Columbia agencies to ensure timely information sharing coordination and reallocation among agencies' resources during the storm and for clean-up operations. Our designated personnel reported to the EOC Emergency Management Agency at the District of Columbia upon its activation at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, on September 17. The WASA Emergency Operational Center was activated Thursday, September 18th, at 12 noon and continued to operate through Friday, September 19th, until 3 p.m. WASA EOC was fully staffed and included extra customer service reps to respond to customer calls; public affairs and other management staff, who were available to respond to media inquiries and to contact media and provide updates or bulletins to help customers be more informed; procurement staff to insure that equipment services and other purchases that may have been required for the emergency were available.

WASA's preparation and mobilization, however, began well in advance of the activation of the EOC. Operational departments distributed emergency duty schedules and deployment plans. Operating departments and procurement cooperated in advance to ensure that WASA had the flexibility to use contractors and others sufficient to supplement our own water and sewer operations and plant maintenance functions in the emergency.

As was noted by Mr. LaPorte in his testimony, WASA accelerated system maintenance schedules in advance of the storm's arrival by clearing large areas of catch basins in flood-prone areas of the city in a successful effort to help avoid localized flooding. We prepositioned equipment, supplies and personnel, and certain other facilities. As I said earlier, WASA and our customers seem to have weathered the storm reasonably well.

Although I have included additional information in my testimony, I will comment on a problem that was significant but of short duration. The storm water pumping station used to pump runoff away from I–395 roadway as it continues north across the

14th Street Bridge was overwhelmed by rising waters from the Potomac River and the Washington Canal, causing a closure of 395 on September 19. The facility near the Case Bridge was simply overwhelmed by the high flows, and the electrical system failed as water entered the station. I–95 traffic was diverted around this location, and WASA personnel removed reconditioned electrical equipment and pumped away the water, but, unfortunately, it took 48 hours for us to recover from this flooding incident on the roadway.

WASA is continuing a formal debriefing and will be informing our Board of Directors. Some of that information that they will be receiving is included in the testimony. We will continue to evaluate and enhance our capability as a first responder for emergencies, focusing on employee training, facility maintenance, access control, remote monitoring, and other issues that are critically important for preparing for either a natural disaster or other catastrophic event. We continue to work with local and Federal Government, the Council of Governments and other water utilities in the region on these challenges we face. Through COG, for example, we are exploring the feasibility and wisdom of system interconnections where major intersections can be done with what currently is a separate system that will allow us to share critical important water resources in the case of emergencies. We will continue these efforts, Mr. Chairman and we appreciate the committee's interest in this important but usually invisible work that we perform. We also thank this committee for its continued support of the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority and the activities that we undertake to serve the residents of the District and the region.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Johnson follows:]

The District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority

Testimony

Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives

2154 Rayburn House Office Building

Impact of Hurricane Isabel on the Nation's Capital

Friday, October 3, 2003

Serving the Public • Protecting the Environment

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to be here to represent the District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority or "WASA."

We are pleased to be invited to provide testimony today on emergency preparedness, and specifically on:

- how the Authority prepared for the potential effects of Hurricane Isabel
- how we coped with the actual impact of the storm, and
- how any lessons learned will inform plans for any similar events in the future

Just to provide the Committee with a context, WASA is an independent authority of the District of Columbia governed by an eleven-member board of directors named by the local jurisdictions that we serve.

WASA's operations and capital program are financed through user fees paid by water and sewer service customers, including the federal government. The Board of Directors determines the retail rates and the budget, but the United States Congress as part of the DC Appropriations Act must approve WASA's annual budget.

WASA provides wastewater collection for the nation's capital, and wastewater treatment for Prince George's, Montgomery and Fairfax Counties as well as the District of Columbia at the largest advanced wastewater treatment plant in the world, Blue Plains.

WASA purchases about 70 percent of the drinking water produced by the Washington Aqueduct, and provides retail water delivery in the District of Columbia and to portions of Northern Virginia, including the Pentagon.

Potential for Problems

Generally, a major storm event can impact WASA's systems and our customers in a number of ways:

1. a Potomac River flood stage that is in excess of 13 feet may create localized flooding at Blue Plains that could affect wastewater treatment plant operations
2. heavy rainfall in a short period of time may potentially overwhelm different parts of the system intended to collect and direct runoff away from structures and city streets
3. electrical power outages may affect storm and wastewater collection system pumping stations
4. similarly, electrical power outages may impact the drinking water distribution system pumping stations

The Storm

Approximately, three inches of rain fell the first night and some flooding was anticipated the next few days. The Potomac River was reported to reach a peak level of 11.7 feet Sunday afternoon.

Fortunately, WASA was relatively successful in weathering this event -- we benefited from both good fortune and appropriate preparations in advance of Isabel's arrival.

By 9:00 am on Friday, September 19, 2003, the WASA Emergency Operations Center determined that WASA:

- had fared very well through the initial hurricane
- had no major damage to our facilities or operations
- had no unusual customer calls or complaints, and
- clean up of minor localized flooding at the treatment plant was underway.

Preparations for the Storm

WASA had worked closely with District Government agencies to ensure timely information sharing and coordination. WASA and the District Emergency Operations Center were prepared to reallocate resources as necessary during the storm and for clean-up operations.

WASA's assistant general manager and two WASA department heads reported to the DC Emergency Management Agency's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) immediately upon its activation at 8:00 AM Wednesday, September 17, 2003.

So that our leadership and essential personnel were fully prepared to manage any emerging issues, the **WASA** Emergency Operational Center was activated on Thursday, September 18, 2003, at 12:00 noon. The WASA EOC continued to operate through Friday, September 19, 2003, until 3:00 p.m.

The WASA EOC was staffed by the Office of the General Manager, Sewer Services, and Water Services. As important:

- extra customer service reps were available to respond to customer calls
- risk management staff was on hand to handle any customer claims issues
- public affairs and other management staff were available to respond to media inquiries, and to contact the media to provide updates or bulletins to help keep customers informed
- procurement was on hand to help secure equipment, services or other purchases that may have been required on an emergency basis
- IT maintained computer and communications equipment required to monitor WASA facilities, communicate with field crews and the District's EOC, as well as to update information on WASA's website for customers.

It is important to note, however, that WASA's preparations and mobilization began well in advance of the activation of the District of Columbia EOC. For example, WASA:

1. prepared and distributed updated lists of essential personnel contact information
2. operational departments distributed emergency duty schedules/deployment plans
3. major operating units conducted an assessments of in-service equipment; parts, equipment and supplies
4. vehicle maintenance was reviewed and accelerated
5. fuel for vehicles and emergency generators was checked
6. operating departments and procurement cooperated to ensure that WASA had flexibility to use contractors (and that contractors had sufficient capacity) to supplement our water and sewer operations and plant maintenance functions in an emergency
7. accelerated system maintenance schedules in advance of the storms arrival, (we, for example, cleaned a very large number of catch basins in flood-prone areas in a successful effort to help avoid localized flooding)
8. re-enforced and raised the height of existing protective berms that form a barrier between the Potomac and operating facilities at Blue Plains.

The possibility that transportation could be badly disrupted during the storm and its aftermath was an additional concern.

Because WASA operates a large number of facilities, many of which are underground and all of which are widely distributed throughout the District of Columbia, we also pre-positioned some of our operating equipment, supplies, materiel and personnel.

The Aftermath of the Storm

As I said earlier, WASA and our customers seem to have weathered the storm reasonably well. The initial operational findings are as follows:

- Electrical power was lost to the Alaska and 16th Street drinking water pumping station, but a standby generator and operating personnel were placed at the facility for continuous operation until the power was restored – there was no reported interruption of service

- There was minor flooding at the Blue Plains Plant and at a large wastewater pumping station on the Anacostia River, but there was only minor damage

- Three smaller waste and storm water pumping stations lost power, but only one was placed out of service; the other two were quickly restored to service, one having been switched to a standby generator

- A fourth storm water pumping station at 14th Street, NW was more problematic. This facility near the Case Bridge flooded because of the very heavy rainfall. The pumps were overwhelmed, resulting in damage to electrical equipment. As a consequence, I-395 traffic was disrupted. Our personnel were dispatched to scene to assist in reducing the flooding. WASA personnel remained on site to ensure no further flooding.

  We are reviewing the specific problems that created this unfortunate situation to ensure that it is not repeated.

With respect to customer services, we were, again, very fortunate. WASA only received 34 catch basin complaint calls the first night of the storm. Calls then fell to the normal weekend levels.

Conclusions and the Future

WASA is conducting a formal debriefing that will form the basis of a report for our Board of Directors in the aftermath of the storm associated with Hurricane Isabel, Mr. Chairman. Some of the information for that work is embodied in our testimony today.

WASA, however, continues to evaluate our capacity as a first responder in an emergency, employee training, facility hardness and access, remote monitoring and other issues that are critically important in preparing for either a natural or other catastrophic event.

WASA is committed to provide the best possible service to each and every one of our customers. We are also mindful of the fact that we serve a very large number of federal facilities that are critically important to the nation.

With the support of the EPA, we were among the first organizations of our kind to undertake and conclude a major vulnerability analysis.

Within a matter of 95 days after September 11, WASA eliminated the use of gaseous chlorine at Blue Plains in order to eliminate any potential for its accidental or intentional release in the nation's capital.

We continue to work with the Council of Governments and other water utilities in the region on the challenges we face in this new environment. One option that has been discussed is the feasibility and wisdom of creating system "interconnections". Such a major pipeline connecting the currently separate water systems in this region would allow us to share critically important water resources in an emergency.

We will continue these efforts, and we appreciate the Committee's interest in this important, but often invisible, work. Again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important Hearing today.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Ms. Violette, last but certainly not least, thank you for staying with us and being here today.

Ms. VIOLETTE. Well, good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. I'm Leslie Violette. I am the treasurer and former president of the Belle View Condominium Unit Owners Association. This association is comprised of owners of 980 condominium units within the Belle View Condominium and is responsible for the management and the maintenance of the common areas of the Condominium. Belle View Condominiums is located in an area of Fairfax County that lies along the George Washington Parkway, which is adjacent to the Potomac River.

During the early hours of Friday, September 19, Hurricane Isabel created a storm surge that pushed a 9½ foot wall of water over the banks of the Potomac River and into the Belle View Condominiums, flooding homes, damaging utilities and destroying property. All 65 buildings within the condominium were flooded. Seventeen homes remain uninhabitable; family heirlooms and mementos have been destroyed; and many residents today are without hot water, heat, gas, or electricity. Preliminary estimates of the damage to the Belle View Condominium common elements alone range between $4 and $6 million. The losses suffered by the Belle View families cannot even be estimated.

Fairfax County officials issued warnings of this calamity only 9 hours before the surge occurred, although county engineers knew as early as the preceding Wednesday night that the storm surge would flood the Belle View area; in fact, many Belle View residents learned of the surge only when Fairfax County firemen notified Belle View residents by knocking on their doors, beginning 7 p.m. on the night of the storm, leaving them with precious little time to move vehicles to higher ground or to remove personal property from basement storage areas in below grade residences.

Fairfax County officials have described Belle View as the most vulnerable point in the county, and county engineers knew days before that a storm surge was likely and as early as the preceding Wednesday that it was likely that Belle View would be flooded. However, the county waited until the night before the storm to hastily announce a meeting of the members of the boards of directors of area residential associations, including Belle View. The county official conducting the meeting reported that he had already been briefing communities for approximately 1 week before the arrival of Isabel. In answer to questions, the official said that the community could expect that the side streets, the main roads, and intersections within the community would likely be covered with 6 inches of water, making them impassable for a time. He also anticipated a 3- to 5-foot tidal surge, not the 9½ feet tidal surge that Isabel delivered. During this briefing, the county official was uncertain whether evacuation would be necessary and offered no direction on what residents should do in the event of an evacuation order or where we should go if we were evacuated. Those 40 people attending this meeting and the many residents of Belle View who were not notified of the meeting were given no further information by the county until the television stations began broadcasting the evacuation order and firemen appeared at their door.

On the Friday and Saturday following the storm, the county worked to bring together and coordinate resources to assist us in recovering from the calamity that had befallen us. Several meetings were held for the Belle View community over these 2 days, but there were continuing problems in coordinating the meetings and notifying residents and the Association of those meetings. Since these first 2 days, county officials, specifically Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Mount Vernon Police Captain Larry Moser and Fairfax County Fire Chief John Caussin have been tireless in assisting our residents in coordinating relief efforts and in communicating with the Association and our owners. In addition, Congressman Moran responded to our needs quickly and vigorously, bringing Federal emergency relief resources such as FEMA and the SBA to bear. Likewise, the American Red Cross responded immediately to our human needs and was a godsend to our dispossessed residents.

Our region can and should respond to future emergencies more effectively. In our particular case, if the area of the county in which Belle View is situated is the most vulnerable part of the county, we need to develop better means to protect it. We need to develop better means for prompt, early dissemination of information and warnings about approaching dangers. With more warning than we received here, valuables could have been preserved, vehicles could have been moved and special needs residents could have been cared for better.

Long-range planning for emergencies is everyone's business. The Belle View Board of Directors has already begun steps to understand what can be done better to protect our physical plant. We believe a coalition of local governments, businesses and residents should be developed to work toward improving our systems for identifying, grading and warning of potential dangers and to respond to the dangers as they occur. Only now, after the damage has been done and all the necessary parties are talking with each other and cooperating with each other, has something started to really jell. I wish this had happened before and as the storm approached and I hope this developing dialog will continue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to address you and to report to you what we experienced.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Violette follows:]

Statement of
Leslie A. Violette, Treasurer
Belle View Condominium
Unit Owners Association

On the Subject of Washington, D.C., Regional Preparedness and Response In Case of Emergencies

Before the House Committee on Government Reform.

October 3, 2004.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Leslie Violette. I am the Treasurer and former president of the Belle View Condominium Unit Owners Association. This Association is comprised of owners of the 903 condominium units within the Belle View Condominium and is responsible for the management and [illegible]nance of the common areas of the Condominiu.... [illegible]lle View Condominium is located in the Fort Hunt area of Fairfax County and lies along the George Washington Parkway adjacent to the Potomac River and Dyke's Marsh.

During the early hours of Friday, September 19th, Hurricane Isabel created a storm surge that pushed a 9 ½ foot wall of water over the banks of the Potomac River and into the Belle View Condominium, flooding homes, damaging utilities and destroying property. All sixty-five buildings within the Condominium were flooded. Seventeen homes remain uninhabitable; family heirlooms and mementos have been destroyed; and, many residents remain today without hot water, heat, gas or electricity. Preliminary estimates of the damage to the Belle View Condominium common elements alone range between four and six million dollars. The losses suffered by Belle View families cannot yet even be estimated.

Fairfax County officials issued warnings of this calamity only nine hours before the surge occurred, although County engineers knew as early as the preceding Wednesday night that the storm surge would flood the Belle View area. In fact, many Belle View residents learned of the approaching surge only when Fairfax County firemen knocked on their doors beginning at 7:00 p.m. on the night of the storm, leaving them with precious little time to move vehicles to higher ground or to remove personal property from basement storage areas and below grade residences.

Fairfax County officials have described Belle View as "the most vulnerable point in the County" and County engineers knew days before that a storm surge was likely and as early as the preceding Wednesday that it was likely that Belle View would be flooded. However, the County waited until the night before the storm to hastily announce a meeting of members of the boards of directors of area residential associations, including Belle View. The County official conducting the meeting reported that he had already been briefing communities for approximately one week before the arrival of Isabel. In

answer to questions, the official said that the community could expect that the side streets, main roads and intersections within the community would likely be covered with six inches of water, making them impassable for a time. He also anticipated a three to five foot tidal surge; not the 9-½ feet Isabel delivered. During this briefing, the County was uncertain whether evacuation would be necessary and offered no direction on what residents should do in the event of an evacuation order or where we should go if we were evacuated.

Those forty people attending this meeting and the many thousands of Belle View residents who were not notified of the meeting were given no further information by the County until televisions stations began broadcasting the mandatory evacuation order and firemen began appearing at their door.

On the Friday and Saturday following the storm, using the Mount Vernon Recreation Center, the County worked to bring together and coordinate resources to assist us in recovering from the calamity that had befallen us. Several meetings were held for the Belle View community over these two days but there were continuing problems in coordinating the meetings and notify residents and the Association of the meetings. Since these first two days, County officials, specifically Supervisor Gerry Hyland, Mount Vernon Police Captain Larry Moser and Fairfax County Fire Department Battalion Chief John Caussin have been tireless in assisting our residents, in coordinating relief efforts and in communicating with the Association and our owners. In addition, Congressman Moran responded to our needs quickly and vigorously, bringing federal emergency relief resources, such as FEMA and the SBA, to bear. Likewise, the American Red Cross responded immediately to our human needs and was a godsend to our dispossessed residents.

Our region can and should prepare and respond to future area emergencies more effectively. In our particular case, if the area of the County in which Belle View is situated is the "most vulnerable part of the county," we need to develop means to better protect this portion of the county. We need to develop better means for prompt, early dissemination of information and warnings about approaching dangers. With more warning than we received here, valuables could have been preserved, vehicles could have moved to safety and special needs residents could have been cared for better.

Long range planning for emergencies is everyone's business. The Belle View Board of Directors has already begun steps to understand what can be done to better protect our physical plant. We believe a coalition of local governments, businesses and residents should be developed to work towards improving our systems for identifying, grading and warning of potential dangers and to respond to the dangers as they occur. Only now, after the damage has been done, are all the necessary parties talking with each other and cooperating with each other. I wish this had happened before and as the storm approached and I hope the developing dialogue will continue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and committee members for the opportunity to address you and to report to you what we have experienced.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you and thanks for being with us.

Ms. Violette, let me start with you. Some of your residents there are really tenants, right? You have good condominium owners, but that lease—is that right?

Ms. VIOLETTE. That is correct.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And are they going to be covered with homeowners insurance of any kind or have some of them lost everything?

Ms. VIOLETTE. Well, I will tell you, Mr. Chairman, what happened is, everybody has—almost everybody has contacted their homeowners insurance, myself included, and unless you have flood insurance, which nobody seems to have had or we thought we had, most of us thought we had a, "water policy," it is not covering our damages.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And had the county come 12 hours earlier or given more warning, obviously, things could have been salvaged.

Ms. VIOLETTE. Right. We could have sandbagged, we could have moved our vehicles. What happened is people were sort of lulled into a sense of, well, you know, every time it rains in Belle View we take on water, and I think when we were told there was 6 inches of water coming people left their cars there. Their cars are flooded out, so they are total losses. When we have a heavy rainstorm, 6 inches of water comes on the road, so we assumed this is the normal storm in Belle View. Why leave?

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The reason people left is because somebody came to the door; is that right?

Ms. VIOLETTE. Right, and said you should leave. And for me, I had an older dog so I didn't want to take the chance. Some people took their pets and left, some people had elderly parents that were there, they came and got those folks, but I tell you when the firemen came door-to-door, bless them for coming door-to-door, but I asked them, "Why are you coming around? What has changed?" They said, "Well, you are going to flood." And we said,"How much?" They said, "We don't know." They did not know, so why would someone leave if the firemen can't tell you why you are leaving.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Thank you.

Mr. White, we have heard the testimony on the closing. I think you did everything right; I mean, as I listen to this, you had the conference call. You can never predict with certainty. I remember that day driving home; we held a hearing that morning, everything else was shut down, and I thought, "Jeez, why are they closing?" I understand the process that went into it and you are never perfect in terms of timing everything. As you look back, you didn't have the kind of damage you could have had, but I remember during the last snowstorm how bad it was and the damage that occurred and actually you were the only ingress and egress through that area, so any thoughts afterwards of what might have been different?

Mr. WHITE. Well, thank you for your comments, Mr. Chairman. I think our process was as good as it could be. We wanted to make sure we weren't making any decisions in a vacuum and that we were consulting with as many people and conferring with as many people as possible. I was very glad to hear the observations of Director Tolbert and other members of public safety management. I

think there was a clear understanding that this was a very serious event, and though one could not predict when it was going to happen it was a near certainty that a very severe event was going to take place. In trying to provide certainty, we could have held off and made the decision the next day, closer to when events were going to take place, but we were going to have conflicts with schools and local governments that were making decisions earlier than that. We are certainly willing and prepared, and have already told people in after-action meetings, "Please give us your expertise on the decision that came down on." This standard or threshold of 40 miles an hour was really not a safe condition and, we would be happy to entertain any advice people have around that technical standard. But I think it really comes down to that simple matter, that when safety people tell you there is a threshold condition, you must err on the side of being conservative and I would much rather be here talking to you and others about the decision we made and why we did it, rather than explaining why people got hurt.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I don't think there is any question about that. Had you waited until that day, you could have had all kind of clusters there, right?

Mr. WHITE. Right.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. The key is you didn't lose any equipment, did you?

Mr. WHITE. No, we didn't, sir. We lost power temporarily.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. I am talking about long-term damage like you had from the snowstorm.

Mr. WHITE. No, we did not.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Let me ask Mr. Sim and Admiral Johnson, was there a clear cut difference in the loss in power between those communities that were underground versus those that had the wires running through the trees?

Mr. SIM. From my point of view, yes, obviously. I think it is 63 percent of the D.C. system is underground. The downtown area, basically, was unaffected by this, and remember the downtown area is underground, as part of the old fire code and everything else, but, yes, there was a considerable difference.

Admiral JOHNSON. I would give the same answer, Mr. Chairman, with one caveat, and that is, we have 35,000 miles of distribution system. About a third of that is underground, yet we still lost 82 percent of our customers, so——

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You lose some along the way?

Admiral JOHNSON. Yes.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And sometimes it is tougher when it is underground to correct it than when it is above, but there is a marked difference, it is fair to say. My time goes quickly but let me yield to Ms. Norton for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. White, how often do we get 40 mile per hour winds in this jurisdiction?

Mr. WHITE. Well, we certainly know that we have not had it since the Metrorail system opened up. I cannot tell you when we had it before then but I can tell you we have not had it since the system opened up.

Ms. NORTON. In your testimony, you said you were strongly encouraged, you used those words, to shut down. Who strongly encouraged you to shut down, the elected officials?

Mr. WHITE. On the COG-RICC's conference call, for which there were 60 different parties, every official who is the lead official in county government, the lead staff official in county government, all the emergency management agencies, the school support, several members of the Federal Government, public safety, homeland security and personnel officials from the States, Michael Byrne from the Office of the National Capital Regional Coordination, and actually an official from the White House as well, those were the ones that participated in the call. As I said, there were more than 60 parties. There were two separate calls on Wednesday, the day before the event, and there was one official party that the COG uses as the authoritative source on the weather event, an official of the National Weather Service. So that is the process we went through and those are the parties who participated in the dialog, and that was the outcome of those dialogs and again, Ms. Norton and other members of the committee, I would encourage you to take a look at the letter and attached documentation that Tony Griffin sent in last night. They have already prepared the documentation on the 19 separate conference calls that regional officials participated in, 9 of which were transportation calls, and they have already done a preliminary after action assessment report, and all of that information was contained in that.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. White, I would hate to have been in your position, to have had to make the call, and the last thing we want to do is to second-guess you, and I do note that there is agreement among officials, I guess there is, since you say they were all in audit; I am not sure who had the necessary expertise. I know if I were on the call, I certainly wouldn't have had it and therefore I would have had to rely on somebody who did know more than I knew.

I am impressed that with all of the concerns there have been, Mr. Sim, with PEPCO, that PEPCO is calling in an outside analyst to review what happened. The District told me before they left, the representative of the District told me, that George Washington University was doing an independent assessment, but I note, Mr. White, that in your testimony you say only that Ramada is currently in the process of completing a self-assessment. Let me congratulate all of you on doing a self-assessment, but in light of the outcry from residents, the need to fully understand what happened, your answer to me that somehow this decision was made collectively by 60 people and therefore it is hard to know where responsibility lies or should lie in the future, Mr. White, don't you think that there should be an outside assessment as well and that you would be assisted if you were—if you had more than your own self criticism. And in a real sense, to me it is like if Eleanor writes something and then she proofreads her own thing, I can't see anything because it is all in my own head, and I am only human. If you were only human, wouldn't the better procedure be to have a fresh side look at what you did and not only your own eyes?

Mr. WHITE. Well, I agree with you entirely, Ms. Norton. I didn't mean to imply that we were just looking at this issue ourselves. As

a matter of fact, I have personally participated in two meetings this week at which regional officials have come back together to begin the review and after action assessment process.

The COG chief administrator's——

Ms. NORTON. Mr. White, I am really talking about an entirely—those people were involved in a conference call. Mr. Chairman, I am not talking about a special council here, but I am talking about a totally independent, fresh eyes; I had nothing to do with the decision, but let me look at it. That is really my question.

Mr. WHITE. We have already asked the State——

Ms. NORTON. And I will give you as an example what PEPCO is doing.

Mr. WHITE. We have already asked the State emergency management officials as to whether they would be willing to offer us any such advice about the threshold decisions that we made on public safety issues.

Ms. NORTON. Well, who did you ask, I am sorry?

Mr. WHITE. The State emergency management agencies.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. White, I mean, you get my point. You keep—you are circular. You are asking people who were a part of the decision to assess the decision. I am making my point by pointing to Mr. Sim and PEPCO; they have also had an outcry. I am not looking—we are making no assessment, we are making no judgment. We just want to make sure that there is improvement and we are going by standard operating procedure. We thought in the private sector somebody would come in and, in addition to our own assessment, do an assessment.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You are saved by the red light there, but we may get another round there.

Ms. NORTON. But you do get my point?

Mr. WHITE. I do get your point.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. OK. Thank you very much. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Well, he is not exactly safe. I think he would have been better of if he was just responding to Eleanor, because I agree with Eleanor, and I appreciate that you want to be a nice guy, Tom, and normally you ask pretty probative questions. I don't mean to be dismissive, but, you know, I think this is a tougher issue than to have all these folks who work together, all of whom are going to get paid whether they work on that day or not. I mean, some of them may be docked for cover time or something, but, you know, they are all folks in white collar jobs, and it is not a big deal to call off Metro at 11 a.m. In retrospect, it was the wrong decision. The storm didn't start until all the weather forecasters said it was going to start, which was late afternoon, and, you know, if you had watched the weather reports then all of them were consistent, all of them said we are tracking the storm.

In listening to the guy that said that he was the one that wound up closing down the Washington region, all he said was, it is possible some of the storm could arrive earlier, but, you know, you have to make an executive judgment, and your judgment resulted in the loss of $70 million. I like your dad, I think you are doing a great job, Mr. White, and this is an important hearing and it is being conducted properly, but, you know, none of the people who were reliant upon Metro truly for their whole lives were consulted.

There are people who don't have a car, who can't get around without Metro. Most of them tend to be low-income people, but we have also got a lot of communities in Arlington and D.C.; for example high-rise communities. They don't own an automobile. I mean, they had to leave work whether they were going to get paid or not, and it was a beautiful day as it turned out until the storm started coming in the late afternoon. To dismiss it 2 hours earlier would have saved a lot of money and would have been a lot less disruptive to people's lives. Not a question, just an observation.

Mr. Johnson, I am really glad you are heading Dominion Power. You were a wonderful leader in the U.S. Navy and, boy, Dominion Power made a great decision to pick you and I don't have any complaints about your watch, but there are a lot of places where wires ought to be underground and they are not, and it is because you have to be competitive with other utility companies vis-a-vis your shareholders and there is a disinclination to make the kind of capital investments that need to be made by utility companies all over the country. That is one of the reasons we had the blackout that we did. I know you are aware of it and know you are a proactive person, so I have no questions but I hope utility companies across the country—you know, it would be nice if we could take a little piece of the money we are sending, the $6 billion we are giving to Iraq, to establish an electric power grid, if we could share some of that in the United States, but that is a digression.

OK, now. Leslie, thank you so much for being here, particularly thank you for your leadership. I understand that you are angry and dissatisfied with the information you got from the seat of government in Fairfax County, which was pretty much removed from the scene of the action in southern Fairfax, but I really appreciate what you said about Mr. Hyland's office. I know he was deeply involved in this, and particularly those police and fire emergency responders assigned locally. Boy, they did a great job, and I really appreciate your giving the credit that they are due and I know you have done that at every meeting you have had. But what could the Federal Government have done better than what we did. We now finally have a disaster recovery center and that is good and I appreciate the FEMA people doing that; and SBA was good and they did come to a meeting. But what are the things that they could have done, either in direct assistance or to at least provide information that you think they could look for if we have a future disaster like this, where they might be able to be a little more responsive from your perspective, it being right there on the field and being the first one, one of the first people that affected residents who asked for advice and what to do?

Ms. VIOLETTE. Well, as far as the Federal Government is concerned, you know, when the gentleman was here from FEMA and he was talking about them handing out pots and pans and what not, I will be honest with you, I never saw any of that. I never saw any of the things that he was talking about. So I will be honest with you, we did not see very much of FEMA onsite in our neighborhood, so the stuff you were talking about their presence and what not, I have to agree with you. They just were not around very much in our neighborhood, and that was one of our concerns. They just were not down in the neighborhood, down in the trenches, and

the problem was that they were there—they said they were going door-to-door during the day, but I will be quite honest with you, if they were going door-to-door during the day they are not going to get people door-to-door during the day. People do have to work, and I did tell the gentleman when he called, I said that if you were hitting people door-to-door during the day, I know for a fact you did not hit people on my street and I said, "can you come at night," and he said, "we don't work at night," and I said, "well, I work for the Federal Government," and I said, "that is part of the knock on the Federal Government." People think a 9 to 5 job. Well, this is not a 9 to 5 job when you are in disaster relief. People are not home during the day. You have to go at night, and there was a sign posted on the door of my neighbor. I was here between 9 and 5. Well, "duh," she was working. You are not going to get her, you know. I mean, you have to be available when the people are available. If you are not willing to come out in the evening hours, you are not going to get ahold of people. I am sorry to be so frank, but that is the truth. You are asking me for the truth, I am telling you the truth.

Mr. MORAN. That is what we wanted and that is why we are having the hearing, and, Mr. Chair, this is going to be our last opportunity for questioning? Thank you so much for having the hearing. We get information that we wouldn't otherwise get and it was really timely and I really appreciate your letting us do this.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Yes, and this was one of the real tragedies that happened, down in Belle View, and I hope we can learn from that and the county can learn from that in the future. Let me say one thing before I recognize Mr. Van Hollen and go back to the Metro closing. Sure, you might have moved it to 3 o'clock or 1 or 2, but you made the decision the day before, which was critical. Can you imagine not having made that decision and having people in their offices and people relying on it and closing it down and I think as we have heard from the State officials who approved what you did, Congress closed down that day. Only activity up here was this committee.

Ms. NORTON. Because Metro closed down.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, Members of Congress don't use Metro.

Ms. NORTON. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Well, Monday morning quarterbacking aside, I think the decision matrix was good and I came here prepared to go the other route, but after hearing from our State and from FEMA and from everyone saying you got a tough job, as you can see, we can never satisfy anybody up here either and we can always learn and get a little better at it. But I just want to reiterate my support for the process and the way it happened. Sure, if we could go back and revisit it, maybe we could hone it the second time. It is great to second-guess. Mr. Van Hollen.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman, and just for the record, there are many occasions when this Member of Congress does actually ride Metro, but I didn't ride it that morning, and it was a ghost town down here that day.

Let me direct my questions to Mr. Sim, and again I appreciate you being here. I also appreciate the fact that during the period of

the power outage you had an open line of communication with the elected officials. I am also glad that PEPCO has recognized it has a crisis of confidence among many hundreds of thousands of its customers, and again I commend you on bringing in an outside expert to evaluate the situation.

I would just like to raise a couple issues and have you respond if you could. One is the long-term issue. In our region, there are many people who say that power outages, when you have storms, are not unusual circumstances. There are pockets of Montgomery County and Prince George's County where this is not an unusual occurrence.

Second, with respect to Isabel and the response and bringing in out-of-state crews, I mean, the reports indicate that other utilities in the region were able to recruit more out-of-state people more quickly, Dominion Virginia Power being one, and the ability to get people's power back online seems to reflect the fact that was a successful strategy by those utilities. Just a few figures: by Saturday evening, after the hurricane Thursday evening, in Virginia, 323,000 of 440,000 customers without power had their power restored versus in the PEPCO region, 205,000 of 531,000 had had theirs restored. The following evening, as you know, 86 percent of Virginians who had no power had their power restored and 60 percent in PEPCO, according to the report in the Washington Post.

The final issue, and I got so many letters from so many different people on the issue of, you know, managing expectations and customer relations. What I would like to do is just read very briefly excerpts from one as an example of the kind of issue I think we have to address going forward, and this is a letter from someone who lost their power in Silver Spring. It was a live wire situation which I understand should have been a priority and must be a priority, and she writes, as follows, and I am reading just excerpts:

PEPCO continually provided us with inaccurate information, demonstrating an inability to coordinate between crews and phone representatives as well as an inability to track information. We lost power mid-afternoon on Thursday, September 18, 2003. Overnight a tree fell on a power line in a front yard, bringing down one power line and breaking another, leaving exposed wires. Friday morning, I called PEPCO and was told that it would be a high priority to see if the wire was live and to repair it. We hired a contractor to remove the tree and several others still on our house. On Friday afternoon, I provided that information to PEPCO. On Sunday and Monday, many residents in our neighborhood had their power restored. Tuesday, September 23, PEPCO informed me that they had completed repairs and had taken us off the list. Unfortunately, this was far from true. The power line was still down; we had no power. They asked if we still had a tree on the line and they said they could not fix it, the tree was there. I informed them again that the tree had been removed. Wednesday, September 24, a supervisor told me that it looked like the repairs had been made. When I told her once again that the line was still down, the wire is still exposed and that we had no problem, she said that we had been assigned a crew and they would arrive during the night. Five hours later on the night of the 25th, no crew had arrived. I called again Friday morning, September 26. This is more than a week after PEPCO had said they would originally come out. I was told there was no information regarding when a crew would arrive and no guarantee they would make their repairs by 6 p.m. Finally, after losing power, finally, Friday morning, exhausted and frustrated, I called several local news stations. A reporter from Channel 9 asked to interview us and take footage of the live exposed wire. I then called PEPCO to alert them the reporter was coming and would be arriving in our home. Less than 20 minutes later a PEPCO crew arrived on the scene and in less than 15 minutes confirmed that the wire was live, completed a temporary repair and restored power to the house.

Now, that is an example. Kind of disconnected between the information that, you know, people were giving to PEPCO and the information they were giving back. I mean, they would call 1 day and there seemed to be no ability to keep the information on a particular consumer so the consumer felt that their particular case was being actually followed, and I recognize the fact that you had people calling from all over, but it seems to me we have to develop a better system for communicating with consumers and I think this is a perfect example of it.

Mr. SIM. Well, yeah, let me try and take your questions in order, Congressman, and I appreciate that and I am sure we have that issue under investigation right now. With regard to the pockets of outages, we have that high on our list and we have actually put in a new outage restoration system that will allow us to collect that information much more quickly and identify those areas much more quickly. That is actually under way, right now, to try to find out the pockets and areas and we have actually been reviewing those for some time with both public service commissions and we think we can find these possibilities more quickly and get these possibilities restored.

With regard to the Isabel response, I think the history will show when we have these revisions that the crews were probably about what were needed. It is very difficult to repair a system as wide as the Admiral's with us. We all were on the mutual assistance crews beforehand and identified the crews we believed necessary for the storm and we had almost 1,000 crews on our system, and so I think that when the reviews are done we will obviously be looking at a number of crews on the system but I really don't believe that this is an issue right now. All these crews have to be properly equipped, and they were. We never ran out of equipment on these systems. It has to be done safely, there have to be people with these crews and we did that with no injuries and no fatalities on the system. So I think that will be reviewed.

With regard to overall review of the storm system, I think there are clearly three areas, even this early, lessons learned you want to look at. One is clearly communication with customers. We put in a new outage restoration system that in normal times will give each individual customer when they are going to be restored based on the crew going out there, identifying the damage, putting the equipment in the computer, and immediately giving that automatically to the customer. In storms like this, that is difficult to do. We have chosen because of the damage to tell everybody, giving certainty, saying it won't be till Friday. We are trying to give people certainty. However, we understand that is not enough in this day and age and we were trying to go beyond that. We did some things like the Admiral; in fact, I just learned some things from the Admiral that he did that we didn't do that I think will help. We put outages by zip code on our Web site for those that can get access to our Web site; we put up scatter diagrams. We also started identifying in the middle of the storm the feeders we were working on, so if someone called in at least the customer rep could tell them we were working on their feeder. Unfortunately, in a storm like this you have no idea how long it is going to take to work on the feeder, so that will be very, very high on our priority to do that job better.

The other issue we are working very closely with others on is the wires down situation. We have a system that works very well, but there are two things that are different now over the last few years. First of all, there are many, many, many more wires on those poles than there ever was before due to open access to those wires in there. Now, we are the ones to say, when that pole comes down, that wire comes down, you have to assume that wire is live, and we tell everyone that. Second, we saw more wires down in this storm than we do in a normal year, so we need to work with the many, many companies whose wires are on that line and even more closely with the emergency management agency, and I think during the storm we were. I will give you an example in your neighborhood or your county. In order to respond to this in the middle of the storm, we ran 150 wire down complaints one night; 16 of them were ours; 15 of them were another electric company and another 120 were other wires. Now, we need to get better to make sure that, if we haven't been out there, that we make sure it is identified as having been out there and so it is a live situation. Then a decision has to be made on what happens to those wires. So this is a complex area and clearly one we are going to be spending a lot of time on.

And the last one at this point is I think we need to have a better dialog on priorities and what the priorities are and work with the local communities to figure out what those priorities should be going forward. Thank you.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Van Hollen. Let me just—I think we are going to just go quickly to members to kind of sum up.

Let me ask Mr. Sim and Mr. Johnson: In retrospect, could we have gotten more crews here. I know they came from across the country but looking at the severity of the storm in retrospect, were there even more we could have gotten here?

Admiral JAY JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, I think the answer is yes, we could have gotten more crews here, but as a practical matter I will tell you that managing a force of upwards of 12,000 people across 30,000 square miles was a pretty sporting proposition at the start, so I felt that the phasing of the mutual aid and the contractors in was just about right.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. You had about all you could handle?

Admiral JAY JOHNSON. Yes, sir. So, yes, you could have gotten more. I think we had about the right number to handle the tremendous task that we had.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Mr. Sim.

Mr. SIM. I agree with that. There is a safety issue here, and even if these people are qualified you do need to have people with them. But I would agree with that.

The other thing I would like to point out is we did continue to share crews during this. We added to our people, and as we finished we passed people on. So the cooperation continued.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. I can understand that response, but, you know, this was Category 3. I am not sure what you would have done given your response if it was Category 5, because it took 12 days for PEPCO with, you know, almost 1,000 people here. So I think you

have to consider in fact, what kind of management grid you need, in case you needed more folks.

I do want to say to PEPCO, because I spent most of my time on Mr. White and again I want to reiterate, Mr. White, each of you have a confidence restoring issue, and you may all be right, but you got to look at ways that the public can be satisfied, and we know as elected officials that the public will grind you. Of course, we have to stand for election, so we know how to be responsive or at least to act like we are being responsive, and I suggest that you need to get help, all the help you can get in this regard.

PEPCO, the communication problem is huge, and I don't know the answers. I would like to suggest that when schools close, and here we have a very complex region, they run these scrolls under the screen, and it is very useful to people, and I tell you I got tired of TV because they were telling me the same thing. Some of the information was subject to change, it seems to me, using e-mail, radio, TV, saying, you know, we are reliant on—this is going to change but we may get to X, Y or Z area within some time. I often find in constituent services that people need to find somebody is paying attention to them. Then they of course are willing to cut you some slack, but when they can't get some sense of when you are trying to get to them is when you really get people pounding on you.

And finally, let me say to PEPCO, there were complaints that we heard about PEPCO trucks going out doing their job but unable to do it because of fallen trees yet to be removed. The notion of that raises a question about coordination, and I am going to have a written question for you on whether or not it is possible to deal with that kind of coordination. That is a wasted trip for that PEPCO employee and further delay.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, Ms. Norton. Mr. Moran.

Mr. MORAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As we all know, most hearings that we have, we never actually hear from the direct victims of a situation, and I appreciate your insight and understanding in inviting particularly Miss Violette to testify from a firsthand perspective of somebody who actually was victimized and the leader of a very large condominium area.

I can understand what you were saying in terms of not having people on the scene; in other words, people making decisions that were removed from what was happening on the scene. It happened at the county level, you have told us in your testimony, but the supervisor at the scene and the public safety people at the scene, they knew exactly what to do because they could see what was happening, and apparently that is not our responsibility. But our responsibility is what happens with Federal resources. Apparently, same thing happened at the Federal Government. You are saying that if you had FEMA people at the scene, for example, they would have known that virtually everybody there had a 9 to 5 job, so going door-to-door to interview them face to face was not going to be effective because they were not going to see their faces. They were obviously at work, so one thing FEMA could do is understand that if you are contracting with FEMA you have to recognize—and your job is to interview people then you are going to have to work at night when they are at home if you are not going to go to their of-

fices during the day. That seems to be an obvious thing, but apparently that isn't being done.

The second thing is to have a FEMA representative there onsite so that they could take questions, they could serve as an information clearing house for other Federal resources and they could understand what needed to be done when it needed to be done. That kind of thing I think is very helpful and I know you don't—you are not the kind of person to be particularly critical of anybody and appreciative of everybody that helps, but I think your observation in that regard was very helpful. Is there anything else that you would suggest from a Federal response that could have made a real difference?

Ms. VIOLETTE. I think, after the fact now, looking back, you know, something has to be done, I think, like you said, Congressman Moran, around the area, around the Potomac area, about the flooding issue. That definitely has to be something, because if we have another storm of this magnitude—I mean, we are going to get walloped again. There is only so much we can do with our physical plant and we definitely have to look at that issue, and I would ask that you do whatever you can with the State for addressing not only us but with Old Town Alexandria, because they are obviously victimized by it, too.

Mr. MORAN. So we can't just be reactive every time a storm comes; we have to be proactive and figure out how to mitigate?

Ms. VIOLETTE. Exactly. We are looking at things with our own association, but there is only so much we can do.

Mr. MORAN. Understand. That is a very thoughtful response. Thank you, Miss Violette.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. Any other questions?

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. No questions, just a brief comment.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Yes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. First, very briefly, for Mr. White: We talked today about closing down Metro for a certain period of time. In the long term, as a region, we have to make sure we make a large investment in Metro, just to make sure that it doesn't break down and people are without service. I know that is a concern to you. You talked about $1.5 billion over a 6-year period of investment. I know the chairman of this committee shares the concern of all of us in this region in making sure Metro is adequately funded, and I look forward to working with you to make sure that the State of Maryland meets its commitments, because I feel there is not enough priority in the State of Maryland given to that, and we are talking about potential breakdowns if we don't make that investment.

Just in closing, again, Mr. Sim, I would urge you, as part of this investigation you are launching with an outsider, that you encourage him to take seriously the testimony and the statements of the consumers. Again, I will provide to you and your office the letters that I have; they are very thoughtful letters. I think we can all learn from some of the suggestions of people who have been directly impacted, so I urge that he not just talk with the experts but really go out in the field and talk to people who have personal experience with the problem and have some very creative ideas as to how we can address it.

Mr. SIM. I believe he intends to have some community meetings in all three jurisdictions.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you, and we appreciate your sharing your insights with us, all of us. Mr. White, just one last question: What was the damage Metro incurred in the snowstorm from keeping trains on the track too long?

Mr. WHITE. In the snowstorm, I don't have a direct answer on that one. What it was was the extra amount of time that it basically took to bring our trains back into service, so, I mean, we spent a considerable amount of time.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Maintenance.

Mr. WHITE. And extra effort in terms of overtime to get the trains back into service.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. And you didn't lose any this time, did you?

Mr. WHITE. No, we didn't lose any of our equipment. We were largely ready for rush hour service on Monday. Obviously, we had extra expense with the storm and lost revenue with the storm, too.

Chairman TOM DAVIS. Thank you. I just want to thank all the witnesses for taking the time from your busy schedules to be with us today. As you learn lessons from this, if you could forward them to us, it would be helpful for us, and the meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:43 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

[The prepared statement of Hon. Elijah E. Cummings and additional information submitted for the hearing record follows:]

Statement of Congressman Elijah E. Cummings
Government Reform Committee Hearing
"What If Isabel Met Tractor Man? A Post Hurricane Reassessment of Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region."

October 3, 2003

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Two weeks ago Hurricane Isabel slammed into the east coast. Hurricane and tropical storm warnings stretched from the coast of North Carolina to the shores of New York and New Jersey. Hurricane Isabel had a devastating impact on our entire region.

Fells Point and much of the Baltimore Inner Harbor, in my district, was under water because of flooding. The region had an unprecedented number of power outages with over a million customers losing power. Yet, despite the extended work-shifts and out-of-town power crews, it took 12 days before power was fully restored. In fact, a couple of people on my staff were without power. Some residents were advised to boil water when the systems used to power the water and sewer plants lost electricity. According to Insurance Services Office Inc., Maryland had about $410 million in insured losses.

Motorist driving on city streets and highways passed through many intersections without working traffic lights. Fallen trees blocked many roads. The region's

Metro subway system, airports, and railways, including MARC and VRE were shut down. Many Governors along the east coast declared states of emergency for part or all of their states.

This region's power outages, transportation disruptions, and loss of food and water contributed to many public safety concerns. As a result, schools, businesses, and local and federal governments were closed for several days.

Mr. Chairman, our Committee held a hearing in April to assess the national capital region's ongoing efforts to prepare for and respond to potential terrorist attacks in the nation's capital. At that hearing, we reiterated that response capabilities in the area rely heavily on local first responders. Local police, fire, emergency medical systems, and transportation officials will likely be the first and most comprehensive response assets deployed.

So, we were fortunate to have many of the emergency plans in place. However, there still needs to be better coordination and readiness among the different segments of the public sector responsible for public safety and emergency preparedness. Information sharing is key to responding to disasters.

I look forward to hearing from all of today's witnesses as we reassess the impact of Hurricane Isabel on the national capital region and our overall emergency

preparedness and readiness for potential disasters of all types. I am sure my colleagues agree that we must continually reassess our emergency plans.

Thank you.

Written Testimony of Michael F. Byrne

Director, Office for National Capital Region Coordination

Department of Homeland Security

Committee on Government Reform

U.S. House of Representatives

October 3, 2003

Introduction

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the hearing of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform on the impact of Hurricane Isabel on the Nation's Capital. As Director of the Office for National Capital Region Coordination, I am honored to submit this written testimony to you for your consideration.

As was reported to you in April, success in preparing the National Capital Region for a disaster is contingent upon the coordination and integration of many separate local jurisdictions working in concert with each other, their State counterparts, the Federal government – all three branches – and the private sector. Hurricane Isabel afforded this region an opportunity to test its coordination and communication capabilities.

Preparatory Actions Taken Prior to Hurricane Isabel

On Tuesday, September 16, 2003, my staff and I proactively participated in a number of regional conference calls to obtain the status of critical services and key infrastructure. Information gathered during these calls was used to create a National Capital Region Status Report that was distributed to the Emergency Management community, Federal and State government officials in the National Capital Region and representatives of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments at 6:00 p.m. that evening. Additional National Capital Region Status Reports were compiled and distributed by my office at 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. the following day.

During Hurricane Isabel

The Department of Homeland Security activated its Crisis Assessment Team. This team is assembled to provide strategic situational awareness, synthesize key intelligence and operational information, frame operational courses of action/policy recommendations, anticipate evolving requirements, and provide decision support to the Secretary and his senior staff during periods of elevated alert and national-level incidents. To accomplish this mission, the Crisis Assessment Team is task-organized to include representation from across the Department and a tailored group of interagency participants. This structure provides a full spectrum of subject matter expertise and reach-back capability.

We staffed the National Capital Region-specific position on the Department of Homeland Security Crisis Assessment Team. At 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 18, 2003, my staff began working with the Crisis Assessment Team to monitor the approach of Hurricane Isabel. This support continued until 6:00 p.m. on Monday, September 22, 2003. I, too, was involved with the Crisis Assessment Team as the Team Director. I split this responsibility with Bob Stephan, Special Assistant to Secretary Ridge, serving in rotating shifts.

With the support of the National Capital Region Chief Administrative Officers and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, coordination in the region has become routine and throughout the event, my staff and I participated in frequent regional teleconference calls identifying concerns and needs, sharing information with local jurisdictions as warranted. While supporting the Crisis Assessment Team, my staff also maintained regular contact with State and local government Emergency Operations Centers located within the National Capital Region to obtain a clear and direct picture of

the storm impact. We participated on the twice-daily teleconference calls facilitated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency pre-event, during the event, and post-event. In addition, we sustained constant communication with the designated Federal Coordinating Officers with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This continual communication allowed my staff to provide pertinent and timely region specific information for the Crisis Assessment Team Situation Reports.

Post Hurricane Isabel – Lessons Learned

The region, through the coordination of my office, is presently engaged in numerous efforts to enhance the preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery capabilities of the National Capital Region. A number of issues identified during the response and recovery phases validated our current focus and efforts in key areas: Critical Infrastructure Protection; Community Planning; Decision Making; Protective Action Guidance; and Citizen Preparedness. In addition, this experience highlighted current projects requiring expedited focus. For example, my office is currently working with critical infrastructures companies that provide power and water to the region to identify steps necessary to improve recovery and response to catastrophic events. Additionally, my office and the Senior Policy Group are supporting a review of the decision-making process as it pertains to closing schools and government agencies. While the response to Isabel was very well done, there is room for improvement. We are privileged to have the will, the support, and the resources to incorporate the Lessons Learned into our planning processes for fine tuning and continuous improvement.

As we are early in the post incident assessment process, we are open to recommendations. My office is committed to ensuring cooperative actions are taken to enhance the response capabilities of the National Capital Region.

Close

During this incident, the National Capital Region benefited from the diligence in coordination and information sharing of local jurisdictions through the support of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and local, State and Federal agencies. We were fortunate for the efficient and effective way the Federal Emergency Management Agency prestaged resources and established clear leadership for providing support to affected States and local jurisdictions. The communication among these organizations provided my office a viable mechanism to maintain open lines of communication to better protect the residents of this region.