

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Federal Emergency and Management Agency

May 29, 2009

The President. All right. Well, for all of you who've just joined us, I've just received a briefing here at FEMA at the National Response Coordination Center for our preparations for this year's hurricane season, which begins on Monday. And I want to thank Secretary Napolitano, as well as John Brennan, my Homeland Security Adviser. And we've welcomed Craig Fugate, who has hit the ground running and is already doing an outstanding job not just leading this briefing but leading this excellent agency. And I want to thank all the people here at FEMA who do such an excellent job for their diligence and their commitment for this task.

We are all here together because we are determined to be as prepared as possible when the next catastrophic hurricane hits the United States. And we want to make sure that cities and our people remain resilient enough to weather any storm.

Our top priority is ensuring the public safety. That means appropriate sheltering in place, or, if necessary, getting as many people as possible out of harm's way prior to landfall. But most of the work, as you would hear from these individual agencies, most of the work takes place before a hurricane hits. True preparedness means having Federal and State and local governments all coordinating effectively, and as you just heard, one of the most important things we can do is make sure the families have prepared appropriately.

We just saw some statistics coming out of Florida indicating that a huge percentage of people in hurricane areas simply don't make plans. They don't have a plan, they don't have a set of contingencies that will allow them to respond in an effective way. Those people who have the capacity to plan, they will thereby relieve some of the resources that the Government has to provide, and we can stay focused on those folks who are most vulnerable and have the most difficulty dealing with a storm.

So I hope that message of personal responsibility sinks in. And, Craig, is there a web site that we want to provide that would help people formulate a plan right now?

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate. Yes, sir, it's real simple, ready.gov.

The President. Ready.gov.

Administrator Fugate. It will help you get ready for your disaster threats.

The President. Okay. That's the reason that all the representatives here met and have been meeting over the last several months, is because they want to be ready. And States are going to have the primary responsibility in preparing for and responding to disasters, but they're going to have the full resources of the Federal Government backing them up.

And the last point, I guess, I would like to make, is that when you go on ready.gov, you'll see that—I think the public will see that a lot of these plans are not complicated. They're pretty simple. It's a matter of having a basic emergency supply kit with items such as water, some nonperishable food, an all-weather radio, a flashlight, a first aid kit; making an emergency family plan; staying informed of developments in your area; and learning about your community's emergency plans.

So I have no greater responsibility than the safety of the American people. I want to thank all of the people here today who, in their various roles, do such a terrific job even in non-emergency situations, helping to keep the American people safe. But as we enter into hurricane season, I hope that everybody who's watching is going to be paying attention and take seriously their responsibilities as citizens so that the entire country is ready.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan.

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