

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2015

SEN. CARPER: "WE CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE THE IMPACTS OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS"

WASHINGTON – Today, the first day of the Atlantic hurricane season, Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.), ranking member of the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, wrote to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Craig Fugate requesting information on FEMA's efforts to help states and communities across the country prepare for and respond to extreme and catastrophic weather events, including hurricanes. In the letter, Sen. Carper underscores the importance of preparedness and resilience efforts to mitigate the increasingly costly impacts of extreme weather events.

"Our nation's ability to withstand and recover from devastating storms such as Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy depends on communities being prepared and resilient," Sen. Carper wrote. **"Assistance from the FEMA is critical to ensuring that states, such as my home state of Delaware, are prepared for and can recover from these kinds of disasters. As our country debates how to address our changing climate and the extreme weather it is causing, one thing is clear: the increase in intensity of extreme weather events is costing our country tremendously – not only in lives impacted – but also in economic terms. We can no longer afford to ignore the impacts these weather events are having on federal spending,"** Sen. Carper continues. **"A little extra planning – combined with prudent, targeted investments – can go a long way in saving both lives and**

taxpayers dollars. I believe this is a perfect example of that very wise maxim, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.' The federal government must be a partner in this effort."

Last week, Sen. Carper highlighted National Hurricane Preparedness Week (<http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/minority-media/sen-carper-highlights-national-hurricane-preparedness-week>) and called on Americans to be prepared for the 2015 Atlantic hurricane season.

A copy of the letter follows:

June 1, 2015

The Honorable W. Craig Fugate

Administrator

Federal Emergency Management Agency

500 C Street SW

Washington, DC 20472

Dear Administrator Fugate,

With the start of Atlantic hurricane season today and devastating floods impacting states across the country, I know that you and your team at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are hard at work helping to ensure state, local, tribal and territorial partners are prepared for extreme and catastrophic weather events. Our nation's ability to withstand and recover from devastating storms such as Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy depends on communities being prepared and resilient. Assistance from the FEMA is critical to ensuring that states, such as my home state of Delaware, are prepared for and can recover from these kinds of disasters. With this in mind, I would like to take this opportunity to inquire about FEMA's efforts to foster preparedness and resiliency throughout the country.

On February 12, 2014, the Committee held a hearing titled *Extreme Weather Events: The Cost of Not Being Prepared*. During the hearing, expert witnesses provided testimony regarding the significant and growing challenge extreme weather events pose and the need to build communities back stronger in the wake of disasters. On May 18, 2015, *Nature Climate Change* published the findings of a study which concluded that, due to the changing climate and warmer oceans, hurricanes may be less frequent but more powerful.^[1] As our country debates how to address our changing climate and the extreme weather it is causing, one thing is clear: the increase in intensity of extreme weather events is costing our country tremendously – not only in lives impacted – but also in economic terms. That is one of the reasons the Government Accountability Office has listed climate change as one of the biggest fiscal risks facing our nation in its two most recent High Risk List reports.^[2] We have also been told time and time again that every dollar spent on resiliency before a disaster strikes saves on average four dollars on response and recovery operations in its aftermath.^[3] We can no longer afford to ignore the impacts these weather events are having on federal spending.

A little extra planning – combined with prudent, targeted investments – can go a long way in saving both lives and taxpayers dollars. I believe this is a perfect example of that very wise maxim, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” **The federal government must be a partner in this effort.** To that end, I commend FEMA’s efforts, particularly its recent changes to the State Mitigation Plan Review Guide, to ensure that state and local officials are taking into account all potential threats as part of their mitigation analysis and planning. I have also been encouraged by the Department of Homeland Security’s planning for climate change, as discussed in action plans and strategy documents.^[4] Planning for future weather events and wisely investing in the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program makes our nation stronger.

With hurricane season upon us, I ask that you provide the following within 30 days of receipt of this letter:

- A description of the actions FEMA has taken in advance of hurricane season to assist its state, local, tribal and territorial partners in preparing their communities for a major storm;

- A description of the resources and technical assistance FEMA provides state, local, tribal and territorial partners to facilitate mitigation assessments;
- A description of how FEMA is ensuring that when rebuilding is necessary after a storm, communities are rebuilding to better standards that can withstand stronger storms;
- A description of FEMA’s efforts to remove barriers that inhibit actions to increase the nation’s resilience to climate change, as identified in the DHS Climate Action Plan; and
- The status of the implementation actions FEMA is responsible for in accordance with the DHS Climate Action Plan.

I look forward to working with you and members of your team at FEMA to address this critical issue. Thank you again for your leadership and attention to this important topic.

With best personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Thomas R. Carper

Ranking Member

[1] Nam-Young Kang and James B. Elsner: “Trade-off between intensity and frequency of global tropical cyclones”.

[2] Government Accountability Office, GAO-15-290, "HIGH-RISK SERIES: An Update", (February 11, 2015).

[3] National Institute of Building Sciences, The Multihazard Mitigation Council, *Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings from Mitigation Activities* (2005); see also American Society of Civil Engineers, Natural Hazards Review, "Benefit-Cost Analysis of FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grants" (2007).

[4] DHS Climate Action Plan Addendum June 2014; FEMA Climate Change Adaptation Policy Statement (January 2012).