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January 31, 2025



## THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

### Never a Dull Moment

My last newsletter was only one week ago, but it feels like about 3 months of news has taken place since then. As President Trump continues issuing Executive Orders (EO) at a historic rate, two naturally caught NEMA's eye in particular. The first EO, titled "[Council to Assess the Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)," establishes the FEMA Review Council, composed of relevant federal and private actors. It instructs the council to produce a report evaluating FEMA's ability to effectively and impartially address disasters and provide other recommendations. The council must hold its first public meeting within 90 days and submit their report within 180 days of that meeting.

President Trump also issued an EO titled "[Emergency Measures to Provide Water Resources in California and Improve Disaster Response in Certain Areas](#)," which focuses on addressing the ongoing wildfires in California. The EO directs multiple federal agencies to coordinate and take action to manage water supplies and expedite regulatory processes. Additionally, it includes provisions for assisting wildfire survivors, and outlines federal support for road repairs and housing in North Carolina.

For our part, NEMA issued a statement noting that we agree there are systemic issues to address concerning federal disasters. In the statement, Lynn Budd, NEMA President and Director of Wyoming Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, stated that "NEMA offers to serve as a resource to the administration and the FEMA review council to achieve outcomes that benefit all levels of emergency management, but especially the disaster survivor." The statement also notes that "We strongly support the personnel and mission of FEMA and believe there is a prudent, policy-driven approach to move us all forward. A strong local, state, and federal emergency management system is necessary to save lives and reduce future damage."

Just as we were starting to have discussions about the FEMA EOs, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) dropped a bombshell. In a memo issued to all federal agencies, the OMB placed a pause on financial assistance to recipients and subrecipients pending a review of grants, cooperative agreements, and projects that may be in violation of the President's EOs. This directive, which would potentially freeze as much as \$3 trillion in federal funding for grants, loans and other programs, immediately caused widespread confusion. 23 state attorneys general filed a lawsuit to block the freeze, as did a coalition of non-profit groups that receive federal funding.

Shortly before the directive took effect, a federal judge issued an administrative stay, blocking the funding pause for a week. Ultimately, on Wednesday, OMB rescinded the memo, while also noting that "The Executive Orders issued by the President on funding reviews remain in full force and effect and will be rigorously implemented by all agencies and departments." Despite the memo being rescinded, there's still a lot of confusion surrounding the status of the federal funding freeze, due to unclear public statements from the White House. We're keeping a close eye on this, and hope things are clearer in the coming days...

Lastly, I wanted to acknowledge the many agencies working tirelessly in response to the tragic DCA Airport plane crash. Their coordinated efforts, expertise, and commitment to ensuring public safety are vital during situations like this.

### [Upcoming Congressional Hearings...](#)

#### **[Preparing the Pipeline: Examining the State of America's Cyber Workforce](#)**

House Committee on Homeland Security

Wednesday, February 5; 10:00AM (ET)

### [More News from the Nation's Capital...](#)

#### **REINTRODUCTION OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT COSTS MODERNIZATION ACT**

On Tuesday, Rep. Neguse [D-CO] reintroduced the [Disaster Management Costs Modernization Act](#) (H.R.744), which NEMA continues to strongly support. He was joined by multiple bipartisan co-sponsors, including Rep. Ezell [R-MS], Rep. Harder [D-CA], Rep. Stanton [D-AZ], Rep. Stansbury [D-NM], Rep. Bonamici [D-OR], Rep. Jayapal [D-WA], Rep. Titus [D-NV], and Rep. Raskin [D-MD]. This bill greatly reduces complexity for state and local emergency managers when administering FEMA disaster programs.

State and local emergency managers are allowed a small percentage of disaster costs to manage the complexities of federal programs. This bill will allow those management costs to be spread out across all disasters and allow emergency managers to better leverage resources. This flexibility will incentivize faster disaster closeout, thereby driving down the costs of disasters. It will also better enable state and local governments to manage smaller disasters without a large FEMA footprint, allowing FEMA to focus their resources on catastrophic events. Moreover, by allowing states to use excess management costs for building response and recovery capacity, this legislation will help ensure the nation is better postured to address future disasters.

#### **SENATE CONFIRMS KRISTI NOEM AS SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

On Saturday, the US Senate voted to confirm Kristi Noem as the 8th Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security in a vote of 59-34. Prior to her confirmation as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Noem served as South Dakota's 33rd Governor. Noem also served in the South Dakota legislature and was later elected to serve as South Dakota's sole member of the House of Representatives.

#### **FEMA WEBINAR SERIES: RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAM**

FEMA will host a series of new weekly webinars every Thursday, beginning in February and concluding on March 6. These sessions will focus on FEMA's updated Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program Manual, which provides planning and assessment guidance for state, local, Tribal Nations and territorial partners located near commercial nuclear power plants. Each webinar will cover a different topic, including:

- Overview of the FEMA Technological Hazards Division's Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program
- Overview of the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program Manual
- Overview of the Advisory Team for Environment, Food and Health (A-Team)
- Hurricane Florence Impacts and the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program

The registration links are listed below. You can also find the sessions on the [FEMA Events page](#). Once registered, you will receive a meeting invitation with the link to join the session. For more information about sessions and registration, visit [FEMA Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program Lunch and Learn Webinar Series](#).

#### **[Topic: Overview of the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program Manual](#)**

- Date: Thursday, February 20
- Time: 1:00-2:00 PM (ET)
- Location: MS Teams [Register Here](#)

#### **[Topic: Flexibilities in the Protective Action Guides Manual](#)**

- Date: Thursday, February 27
- Time: 1:00-2:00 PM (ET)
- Location: MS Teams [Register Here](#)

#### **[Topic: Hurricane Florence Impacts and the REP Program](#)**

- Date: Thursday, March 6
- Time: 1:00-2:00 PM (ET)
- Location: MS Teams [Register Here](#)

#### **[Topic: An Overview of the FEMA Technological Hazards Division's REP Program](#)**

- Date: Thursday, March 13
- Time: 1:00-2:00 PM (ET)
- Location: MS Teams [Register Here](#)

#### **DHS OIG REPORT: FEMA FOLLOWED APPLICABLE LAWS AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFERRING DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS**

On Tuesday, the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) [released a report](#) on their audit of FEMA's uses of disaster relief funding for Stafford Act disaster-related activities. The report found that FEMA obligated \$267.7 billion (95.3 percent) of disaster relief funding available between 2017 and 2023 for disaster-related activities, as authorized by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, 42 United States Code 5121 et seq. (Stafford Act). Approximately \$8.1 billion (2.9 percent of the disaster relief funding available) was set aside or transferred to other programs in accordance with applicable laws. Specifically, FEMA set aside \$4.6 billion for pre-disaster mitigation and transferred \$3.5 billion out of the Disaster Relief Fund to other appropriations.

Of the \$3.5 billion transferred out of the Disaster Relief Fund, \$3.3 billion was transferred to other disaster functions and \$193.8 million was transferred to non-disaster-related activities. These transfers and reprogramming actions were either permitted or required by appropriations laws or directed by DHS, per applicable laws and congressional guidance. The DHS OIG did not make any recommendations in this report.

#### **NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE ADVISORY COUNCIL REPORT: REIMAGINING DISASTER RESPONSE AND RESILIENCY**

Late last year, the President's National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC) released a report titled "[Reimagining Disaster Response and Resiliency](#)." The NIAC is composed of senior executives from industry and state and local government who own and operate the critical infrastructure essential to modern life. The Council was established by executive order in October 2001 to advise the President on practical strategies for industry and government to reduce complex risks the designated critical

infrastructure sectors. Several NEMA members are on the Council and participated in the development of the report.

At the President's request, NIAC members conduct in-depth studies on physical and cyber risks to critical infrastructure and recommend solutions that reduce risks and improve security and resilience. Members draw upon their deep experience, engage national experts, and conduct extensive research to discern the key insights that lead to practical Federal solutions to complex problems.

The Reimagining Disaster Response and Resiliency Subcommittee heard from nearly 50 experts from across the United States (U.S.) on aspects of disaster response, hazard mitigation, recovery, and resiliency. Their top recommendations—listed below and detailed in the report—represent essential steps to strengthening the nation's preparedness and response capabilities and increasing resiliency to disasters:

- Align FEMA's Mission with Funding Levels
- Engage Americans in Disaster Readiness by Providing Better Awareness of Future Hazards and Arming Americans with the Ability to Prepare for and Insure against Disasters
- Share Accountability and Responsibility for Disaster Response and Resiliency
- Build a Better, More Resilient America
- Enhance Disaster Response and Resiliency Through the Use of Data and Technology

For more information on the NIAC and its work, please visit its website [here](#).

***Other News from DC and Around the Country...***

**HSToday:** [U.S. Senate Confirms Kristi Noem as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security in Sweeping Bi-Partisan Vote](#)

**Guardian:** [Trump Orders Review of FEMA After Saying 'Disaster Agency 'Is Not Good'](#)

**Columbus Dispatch:** [What is Next Gen 911? Ohio Gov. DeWine Announces New Emergency Response Technology](#)

**E&E News:** [FEMA Disbands Membership of Katrina-Era Advisory Panel](#)

**Axios:** [Trump, Vance Vault FEMA Overhaul High on Agenda](#)

**The Hill:** [Trump Administration Directs Widespread Pause of Federal Loans and Grants](#)

**Reuters:** [Head of Disaster Relief Agency FEMA Reassures Staff After Trump Criticism](#)

**CNN:** [Everyone Agrees FEMA Needs to Change - The Question is How](#)

**Politico:** [Trump Administration Targets Thousands of Programs in Funding Freeze](#)

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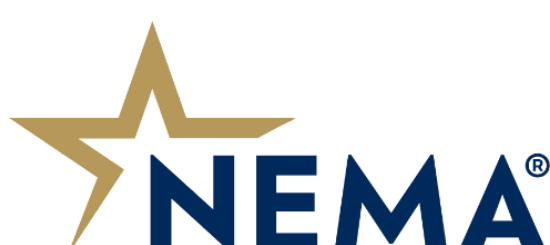
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