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THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON:

A Leadership Change at FEMA

This is going to be a long one, folks... It's fitting that National Hurricane Preparedness Week has been jam-packed with news and updates impacting the emergency management community.

First, just hours after testifying before the House Appropriations Committee (more on that below), the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the FEMA Administrator, Cameron Hamilton, was fired Thursday morning. Shortly after the news broke, it was announced that Hamilton will be replaced by David Richardson, the Assistant Secretary for DHS's Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Office. The timing of this move is notable, as it leaves the agency with a new senior official just three weeks before the start of hurricane season. This has exacerbated existing concerns about FEMA's readiness for hurricane season, given the significant changes and staff reductions at the agency in recent months.

This week also saw three hearings before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security. At the first hearing, Homeland Security Secretary Noem defended the administration's immigration policies and the planned cuts at her agency, including FEMA and CISA. Notably, Noem stated that "The president has indicated he wants to eliminate FEMA as it exists today, and to have states have more control over their emergency management response." The following day, (now former) Senior Official Performing the Duties of the FEMA Administrator Hamilton testified before the subcommittee, expressing concerns about an overextended federal bureaucracy and how FEMA assistance is administered. The key moment of the hearing, however, came when Hamilton said he did not believe the agency should be eliminated, emphasizing its critical role in disaster response and recovery. While there has been no official justification for Hamilton's firing, many speculate that his testimony—which some viewed as diverging from the administration's messaging about FEMA—led to his ouster from the agency.

Lastly, the committee heard from Bridget Bean, the Acting Director of CISA, who discussed the agency's initiatives to enhance cybersecurity resilience across critical infrastructure sectors. These hearings highlighted ongoing debates over the balance between federal oversight and state autonomy in emergency management, funding allocations, and agency roles.

Additionally, late last week, the Trump Administration released its "skinny" budget for FY26 (ending September 30, 2026). The budget provides topline funding requests but does not include many specifics. The only information we have on FEMA's budget is a reduction in grant funding of \$646 million--approximately 20% of the total grant account. At this point, there are no details about how that reduction will break down among the different grant programs administered by FEMA. We are obviously concerned with the prospect of additional grant cuts and are continually working to emphasize the importance of those grants to the states in our conversations with Congress and the administration.

Finally, Congress remains actively engaged in a contentious budget reconciliation process. The debates are very dynamic and changing by the hour, as Speaker Johnson tries to bring House moderates and conservatives together to support a bill. There are various sticking points, including proposed cuts to Medicaid and others, and the regular updates from GOP leadership show that things are very far from settled. Despite these challenges, Speaker Johnson remains publicly committed to passing the reconciliation bill by Memorial Day. While that's not impossible, I think it's very unlikely to happen given the number of inter-party issues that need to be worked out...

Upcoming Congressional Hearings...

Hearings to Examine the Insurance Industry's Claims Practices Following Recent Natural Disasters

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee | Subcommittee on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, and Census
Tuesday, May 13; 2:30 PM (ET)

A New Era of Homeland Security: A Review of the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security

House Committee on Homeland Security
Wednesday, May 14; 10:00 AM (ET)

Forecasting Disaster: NOAA's Transparency, Trust, and Scientific Integrity in Crisis

House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology | Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
Wednesday, May 14; 10:00 AM (ET)

Preparing for Disasters: Unique Challenges Facing Older Americans

Senate Special Committee On Aging
Wednesday, May 14; 3:30 PM (ET)

In Defense of Defensive Measures: Reauthorizing Cybersecurity Information Sharing Activities that Underpin U.S. National Cyber Defense

House Committee on Homeland Security | Subcommittee on Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Protection
Thursday, May 15; 2:00 PM (ET)

More News from the Nation's Capital...

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP RELEASES DRAFT FEMA REFORM BILL

On Thursday, Transportation and Infrastructure (T&U) Committee Chairman Rep. Graves (R-MO) and Ranking Member Rep. Larsen (D-WA) released draft legislation that seeks to substantially reform FEMA and federal disaster assistance programs in decades.

Graves and Larsen released a "discussion draft" of the *Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act of 2025* to solicit feedback from Members of Congress, emergency management stakeholders, and others. The draft bill aims to streamline the federal government's disaster response and recovery programs while also making FEMA a cabinet-level agency. The bill also includes provisions to reward effective state and local preparedness; protect taxpayers; cut red tape; and ensure that relief efforts are fast, fair, and free from political bias.

You can review the discussion draft bill text [here](#).

GAO REPORT: QUADRENNIAL HOMELAND SECURITY REVIEW

On Tuesday, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review: Improvements Needed to Meet Statutory Requirements and Engage Stakeholders. The *Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act* requires that every 4 years DHS—in consultation with other stakeholders—conduct a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, which is a comprehensive examination of the nation's homeland security strategy. GAO was asked to assess DHS's 2023 review and report. This report assesses the extent to which (1) DHS met statutory requirements and (2) DHS and its stakeholders use the report to execute their homeland security roles. GAO analyzed relevant statutes and documentation of the review and report. GAO also interviewed stakeholders, including representatives of eight DHS component agencies; three other federal agencies, such as the Department of Defense; and 11 external stakeholders, such as state agencies.

GAO found that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not fully meet 10 of the 21 identified statutory requirements for the 2023 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review and accompanying report. Among other elements, DHS did not fully meet requirements for prioritizing missions, providing a budget plan to meet those missions, and issuing the report by the established time frame.

PROPOSED FCC RULE ON WIRELESS E911 LOCATION ACCURACY REQUIREMENTS: COMMENTS REQUESTED

On Wednesday, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) published a proposed rule in the Federal Register focused on Wireless E911 Location Accuracy Requirements. The FCC proposes rules to strengthen wireless 911 location accuracy rules and to put more actionable location information in the hands of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) and first responders. Comments are due on or before **June 6, 2025**.

The FCC proposes to focus their approach on making the information available to PSAPs more valuable and directly applicable to incident response. Better location information from the outset of a 911 call translates to time saved during a response, and that time saved translates to lives saved. From the handsets in consumers' hands, to the provider networks and technologies used to derive and deliver location data to the PSAPs, to the equipment and systems used by the PSAPs, the FCC's goal is to encourage cooperation and collaboration among all parties involved to achieve the ultimate goal of better location accuracy, delivered as quickly and reliably as possible, to every PSAP nationwide.

You can submit comments, identified by PS Docket No. 07-114, electronically using the internet by accessing the ECFS: <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs>.

PEW TRUSTS ISSUE BRIEF: HOW STATES CAN BUILD DISASTER-READY BUDGETS

Late last week, Pew Charitable Trusts published an issue brief focused on strategies states can take to reduce fiscal risks in the face of rising costs. A series of Pew studies from 2018 to 2022 examined how states manage the fiscal impact of natural disasters, including their spending practices, funding mechanisms, and mitigation investments. The research revealed that data on public disaster spending is lacking, that states' typical budgeting approaches have not adapted to recent disaster trends, and that efforts to reduce loss of life and property, which could help control rising costs in the long term, are inconsistently and insufficiently funded.

As a result of these findings, along with lessons learned from observations of state practices and conversations with public finance and emergency management

practitioners (including NEMA), Pew developed a set of strategies that state budget officials can adopt to improve disaster budgeting. These recommendations are organized around three key principles that can help minimize the fiscal risks stemming from natural disasters:

- Measure the total impact of natural disasters on state budgets across all agencies and activities.
- Manage disaster funding in a manner that ensures availability of funds when needed and that minimizes disruption from the year-to-year volatility of disaster costs.
- Mitigate future risks by investing in, requiring, and providing incentives for activities that can reduce the harms associated with disasters.

This brief details Pew's recommendations, including specific actionable steps that policymakers can take—regardless of their state's particular financial situation or disaster risks—to work toward these three principles and build fiscal resilience to increasingly costly disasters.

DHS PODCAST ON FIRST RESPONDER TECHNOLOGY

This week, the DHS Office of Science and Technology (S&T) released the [latest episode](#) of its “Technologically Speaking” podcast. In the podcast, Emergency Prevention and Response Director Luke Watko discusses how S&T gathers and prioritizes first responders’ technology needs and drives innovation to help them safely answer every call. Examples of discussions include technology that helps firefighters find their way out of complete darkness, technology that allows colleagues to pinpoint their location to within a centimeter if they are in trouble, and how artificial intelligence and virtual reality can support agency operations.

Other News from DC and Around the Country...

TIME: [The Challenge of Overhauling FEMA In a Climate Changed World](#)

Politico: [FEMA Chief is Fired](#)

Politico: [Congress is ‘Prepared to Act’ on Disaster Aid as FEMA Runs Out of Cash, Cole Says](#)

Wired: [FEMA Is Ending Door-to-Door Canvassing in Disaster Areas](#)

HS Today: [China is Using AI to Sharpen Every Link in Its Attack Chain, FBI Warns](#)

Route Fifty: [First-of-Its-Kind Assessment Maps States’ Public Health Data-Sharing Policies](#)

Roll Call: [Appropriations Panel Chair Asks Noem for More Budget Information](#)

HS Today: [Data, Policy and the Disaster of Misrepresentation and Mistrust](#)

USA Today: [Trump Administration Continues to Suggest FEMA Could Go Away](#)

E&E News: [Noem Backpedals on Her Claim that FEMA Will be Eliminated](#)

The Hill: [Noem Defends Plans to Slice FEMA, DHS Programs](#)

E&E News: [FEMA Overhaul Would Slash the Number of Declared Disasters — But Not Payouts to States](#)

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