

TALKING POINTS

Congressional Hazards Caucus Briefing

Remarks of David Maurstad, Acting Director,

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Department of Homeland Security

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I'd like to thank the members of the Congressional Hazards Caucus for inviting me here today to launch the presentation and discussion around a significant report that has recently been issued. I would especially like to thank the co-chairs, Senators Stevens, Landrieu, DeMint and Nelson; and Representatives Gilchrest, Moore, Bonner and Lofgren.

Natural Hazard Saves: An Independent Study to Assess the Future Savings from Mitigation Activities, is about mitigation and quantifying the benefits to the nation from an investment in mitigation. You and I know that Mitigation makes sense. Reducing loss of life and property by creating stronger and safer communities and ultimately lessen the financial impact on the Treasury, states, tribal, and local communities is good public policy.

However, in our fervor to do good mitigation, most of it in the context of post disaster operations, we have not been very good at building a system to quantify the benefits. Consequently we have had incomplete information and ad hoc examples of when mitigation works to refer to when trying to make the public policy decisions about mitigation programs.

Fortunately, the Congress asked FEMA to fund an independent analysis to assess the future savings from mitigation. In response, FEMA funded an organization of the National Institute of Building Sciences, the Multihazard Mitigation Counsel. For those of you who do not work with the Counsel, some background. The Counsel is made of up a wide range of leading building science professionals from organizations such as the American Institute of Architects, the International Code Council, the National Fire Protection Association, the National Lender's Insurance Council and the National Association of Home Builders to name a few.

I would like to personally recognize and thank the staff of the National Institute of Building Sciences and its Multihazard Mitigation Counsel, the chairman of the Board of MMC, Brent Woodworth and the Study Project Manager, Tom Tobin for

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overseeing and managing the academic panels and research teams for the four years of research and analysis that it took to develop this study.

FEMA has reviewed the report and find this to be the most conscientious and thorough analysis. We are pleased with the methodical nature in which the study design was developed and implemented.

The study has maintained a transparency of methodology so anyone can replicate their process. The MMC will be maintaining data for public access for 5 years.

One only has to look at the caliber of participants to appreciate the stature of this report:

As I mentioned, the study was conducted by the MMC- members which includes significant national professional associations and industry representatives in the building sciences

The study design and oversight was conducted by leading national academic experts in a wide range of academic fields.

The study research team was composed of nationally recognized experts in wide range of technical disciplines to include engineering, economics, community planning, and hydrology to just name a few.

The MMC's report provides quantitative, objective data that supports what we've known for years: mitigation works

We are very pleased that the MMC report concludes that "mitigation saves society on the average, \$4 for every dollar spent. In addition to savings to society, the federal treasury can redirect an average of \$3.65 for each dollar spent on mitigation as a result of disaster relief costs and tax losses avoided."

The autonomy of the research and oversight teams assembled by the MMC gives these numbers excellent credibility. This study was conducted independent of FEMA, and was purposely designed to generate conservative estimates when there was any ambiguity.

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We believe this report creates a basis for local, state and federal officials to make sound public policy regarding hazard mitigation and breaking the costly cycle of disaster-destruction-rebuild.

In the wake of the deadliest and costliest hurricane season on record, the findings of this study are even more important to us. I want to assure you that we are not only aggressively pursuing viable Mitigation practices; we are actively supporting Gulf Coast States and communities and using incentives to promote sound recovery decisions.

There are many ideas being worked on right now in Congress that will be important for members of the Congressional Hazards Caucus. I know that you will be working to balance the overwhelming desire to re-build immediately with the need to re-build wisely. I am confident that you will find this study, and the people involved, to be an invaluable resource to you.

Thank you.