



BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR

State of Louisiana
Regional Parish Office of Homeland Security
and Emergency Preparedness
Parish Directors Subcommittee

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Honorable Bobby Jindal
Governor of Louisiana
P.O. Box 94004
Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9004

Dear Governor Jindal:

On behalf of the Regional Directors, I am please to submit this semi-annual report on the status and accomplishments of the Regional Directors for the Parish Offices of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness Sub-Committee.

While the Regional Directors routinely met with the Director of the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) prior to the passage of Act 797 (SB788), this act codified into law the existence of this group and ensured that the Regional Directors will always have a formal direct line of communications with the Director of GOHSEP. The unanimous adoption of this law by both houses will ensure that a collaborative State and local approach will be made on all matters concerning Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, thus strengthening the capabilities of state and local emergency managers to successfully respond to any disaster.

Since the enacting of this law on August 15, 2008, this sub-committee has scheduled monthly meetings and to date has conducted four meetings (meetings scheduled in September and October were cancelled as a result of Hurricanes Gustav and Ike) to discuss issues that are specific to the emergency management community. Topics covered at these meetings include, but not limited to, commodities management, response and recovery to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, and Urban Search & Rescue initiatives.

The primary function of this sub-committee, as identified in Act 797, is the planning and advising on strategic emergency management issues from a regional perspective. While there are numerous issues that need to be addressed, this sub-committee has elected to focus its efforts on providing solutions in five strategic initiatives. The five strategic initiatives adopted by the sub-committee are as follows (each initiative is ranked by importance to the sub-committee):

- 1) **Parish Funding:** Thanks to the efforts of Senator Michael Walsworth and the support of Governor Jindal, the parish Offices of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness were provided a base line funding of \$46,875 to operate and maintain the local office. This funding has proven to be critical to establish a full-time emergency management capability within all 64 parishes. Without this support the ability of the parishes to provide a dedicated effort in homeland security and emergency preparedness will be severely curtailed. In addition, under the leadership of Director Mark Cooper, GOHSEP has willingly given up dedicated funding that had in the past been kept by the agency from the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). In light of severe reductions of funding in State revenues, Director Cooper has stated he will continue to support an increase share of EMPG to the parishes. By reducing the amount of funding maintained by GOHSEP, Director Cooper has been able to allocate a minimum of \$20,000 to each parish to provide a minimum level of support for each office. In addition, GOHSEP has reached out to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and has been granted authority by DHS to meet the required 50% match of the entire grant, thus eliminating this burden from the parishes and allowing them to accept the grant. This committee is committed to working with Director Cooper to maintain this minimal level of support to the parishes. In addition, we will continue to work with Senator Walsworth to maintain the State's level of funding to each of the Parish offices.

- 2) **All Hazards Planning:** While the State and local Offices of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness have been fully engaged following the devastating destruction caused by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on updating State and local Emergency Operation Plans, there is still a need to continue to refine and enhance plans for all hazard planning. Efforts need to be focused on refinement and strengthening of Regional Plans, response to Homeland Security events, Recovery from natural and man-made disasters, as well as citizen preparedness. The Regional Directors will continue to work with GOHSEP and the parish offices to develop new plans and refine existing plans for a true all hazards approach.

- 3) **Professional Development:** Establish a multi-disciplined Executive Command College for key leaders in the first responder community. While this type of training exists throughout the county, the cost and wait to attend these types of courses prohibits this training from reaching a large audience of critical leaders in the first responder community throughout Louisiana. Under the vision of Mark Cooper, GOHSEP is in the process of establishing a curriculum that will provide executive level training to Sheriff's, Fire and Police Chiefs, Emergency

Management Directors and their chief deputies. The intent of this training is to reinforce the Incident Command System model, provide training on the integration of multi-agency and multi-disciplined responders, establish continuity of government, and providing discipline specific training for each of the primary first responder groups. This training will be delivered in Louisiana and made to be delivered in modules to ensure that it reaches the largest number of key leaders throughout the first responder community.

- 4) **Statewide Mutual Aid:** While many parishes, agencies, and associations have worked collectively to enter into mutual aid agreements, there is a need for a statewide mutual aid agreement that will cover all agencies that have the capability to provide mutual aid to other local and state governments. During Presidential Declarations, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will not provide reimbursements to agencies that provide mutual aid during an event unless a written agreement is in place. While local mutual aid agreements are usually sufficient to provide response to regional events, it is not feasible for a parish in the South to enter into mutual aid agreements with parishes in the North. During large scale disasters, such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, it may be necessary for affected parishes to receive mutual aid from all over the state. However, without a mutual aid agreement in place, those responding parishes will not be reimbursed for their efforts. To remedy this, it is necessary for the Louisiana Legislature to codify into law a Statewide Mutual Aid agreement that will establish procedures for providing mutual aid and recovering the cost for any mutual aid that has been provided during a disaster. In addition, this Statewide Mutual Aid law would immediately cover all State and local agencies unless they chose to opt out of the program. This would greatly enhance the ability of agencies across the state to provide assistance that can be delivered quicker than if requested through other States via the Emergency Management Assistance Compact or through FEMA.

- 5) **Information Sharing:** Working with GOHSEP, the Regional Directors Sub-Committee will establish protocols and procedures to better share information with the State office and the local Offices of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. This effort has already been successful with the formalization of the Regional Director's Sub-Committee, which has been meeting regularly since its inception. Director Cooper is fully committed to ensuring the parishes have a direct voice and capability to share information and address issues through the sub-committee. As we continue to work on information sharing, we will work with GOHSEP to develop a clear chain-of-command for all to follow in requesting assistance for day-to-day activity as well as resources during disasters. In addition, we will work with GOHSEP to ensure that each Director has a clear understanding

of the expectations that the local offices are expected to meet in performing their duties as Emergency Managers. GOHSEP has already developed a web-based calendar to share important information with the Directors. In addition to the GOHSEP calendar, there is a need for a similar calendar to be put in place that provides information for each Region to include state and local events that are scheduled throughout the Regions.

While there are numerous other areas that we need to work on to improve the overall preparedness of the State and local agencies, by focusing our efforts on the five most important strategic areas that will provide the greatest impact, we believe we will be more effective. Recently during the response and recovery for Hurricane's Gustav and Ike, there was a significant improvement in the information that was shared between the state, the coordination of resources, and enhanced plans to effectively assist the citizens of the State than was realized during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. While the overall effort was improved, there are still other areas that have been identified and will continue to need modifications for a more effective response. This sub-committee is committed to working with Director Cooper and GOHSEP to ensure that we work together to address those areas to improve the overall preparedness for the State.

Sincerely,

Richard "Dick" Gremillion