



United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548

January 25, 2013

The Honorable Mark L. Pryor  
United States Senate

*Subject: Performance Measures and Comprehensive Funding Data Could Enhance Management of National Capital Region Preparedness Resources*

Given its political and historical significance as home to the most important institutions in the nation, protecting the National Capital Region (NCR) from both man-made incidents and natural disasters is of particular concern. Regional stakeholders at the local and state levels receive preparedness funding from a variety of federal grant programs, but the Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant program is the primary source of federal homeland security funding for the NCR. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) allocated over \$560 million through the UASI grant program to the NCR from fiscal years 2003 through 2012. However, the region's response to emergencies in 2011, including a significant snowstorm and an earthquake, as well as a severe storm in June 2012, raised questions regarding the effectiveness of regional preparedness capabilities.

The NCR is a geographic region that includes the District of Columbia and local jurisdictions in the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia.<sup>1</sup> A network of committees—composed of senior federal, state, and local officials and subject matter experts—works together to build the preparedness capabilities needed to implement the homeland security strategic plan for this region.<sup>2</sup> A key federal stakeholder in this network is a federal office called the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC), established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities in this region.<sup>3</sup> In 2007, the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Post-Katrina Act), transferred NCRC into the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).<sup>4</sup> FEMA is responsible for coordinating national preparedness efforts in response to natural and man-made disasters.

<sup>1</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2674(f)(2).

<sup>2</sup>UASI grant recipients must create a working group with representation from the region that will be responsible for coordinating development and implementation of program elements. Before funding can be distributed, DHS also requires each UASI recipient to develop and submit a strategic plan that outlines the region's common goals, objectives, and steps for implementation. The strategy is intended to provide each recipient with direction for enhancing regional capability and capacity to prevent and reduce vulnerability.

<sup>3</sup>6 U.S.C. § 462. NCRC began operations in March 2003, within the office of the Secretary of Homeland Security.

<sup>4</sup>6 U.S.C. § 315.

Since May 2004, we have reported on long-standing challenges to emergency preparedness in the NCR—including the lack of performance measures to assess preparedness capability gaps as well as a reliable, central source of data on funds available. As we reported in May 2004, without these basic elements, it is difficult to assess preparedness capabilities, identify funding priorities for the region, and evaluate the use of all federal funds in a way that maximizes their effectiveness in improving the region’s homeland security.<sup>5</sup> As a result, we recommended that DHS through the NCRC, among other things, identify and address gaps in emergency preparedness and evaluate the effectiveness of expenditures by conducting assessments of preparedness capabilities in the NCR based on established standards and guidelines. DHS concurred with our recommendations. However, the NCRC’s efforts to implement these recommendations have been unsuccessful. At the national level, we reported in March 2012 that FEMA continued to face challenges in managing preparedness grants and had made limited progress in managing preparedness grants and assessing capabilities to measure the use of federal assistance at the state and local levels, and assess how federal assistance programs are supporting national preparedness.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, in September 2012, we reported that FEMA had not yet finished developing measures and was limited in its ability to comprehensively assess jurisdictions’ disaster preparedness and capabilities.<sup>7</sup> We recommended, among other things, that FEMA develop a methodology to more accurately assess a jurisdiction’s capability to respond to and recover from a disaster without federal assistance. FEMA concurred with this recommendation and officials stated that they would conduct a review before taking additional action.

Establishing and measuring preparedness capabilities is essential to determining the impact of prior investments, identifying future needs, and prioritizing funding available from local, state, and federal funding sources. Without this information, decision makers at all levels cannot effectively answer three key questions of preparedness: *How prepared do we need to be? How prepared are we? How do we prioritize efforts to close the gap?*

You asked us to review the status of FEMA’s efforts in the NCR to enhance capabilities to prepare for, protect from, and respond to major hazards. This report addresses the extent to which FEMA has assisted regional officials in establishing performance measures and identifying federal funding available to prioritize preparedness investments in the NCR.

To respond to this question, we interviewed the senior leadership that represent the NCR as well as FEMA’s NCRC officials, and observed their interactions in regional management review meetings where the issues of the performance measures and the development of preparedness capabilities through the region’s strategic plan were discussed. We reviewed the NCR strategic plan, reports on preparedness activities, spending plans, and other grant management tools. We also analyzed

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<sup>5</sup>GAO, *Homeland Security: Management of First Responder Grants in the National Capital Region Reflects the Need for Coordinated Planning and Performance Goals*, [GAO-04-433](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 28, 2004).

<sup>6</sup>GAO, *Managing Preparedness Grants and Assessing National Capabilities: Continuing Challenges Impede FEMA’s Progress*, [GAO-12-526T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 20, 2012).

<sup>7</sup>GAO, *Federal Disaster Assistance: Improved Criteria Needed to Assess a Jurisdiction’s Capability to Respond and Recover on Its Own*, [GAO-12-838](#), (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 12, 2012).

regional emergency coordination plans and after-action reports from regionwide exercises and actual events since 2008. We reviewed our prior work on strategic plans, internal controls, coordination, and performance measures in evaluating the strategic plan and activities of the NCR.<sup>8</sup> To review the activities of FEMA's NCRC, we also analyzed documents such as NCRC's 2008 strategic plan and its most recent annual report to Congress in 2011.

We conducted this performance audit from April 2012 through January 2013 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

## Results in Brief

FEMA's NCRC officials are not assisting regional officials in (1) developing performance measures to better assess the implementation of their strategic plan and (2) identifying federal funding available to prioritize preparedness investments. They are not doing so because they view their role as that of acting as a coordinator for other federal agencies, although they agreed that they could do more to support regional efforts and are positioned to do so. The NCR Strategic Plan helps regional officials identify the capabilities needed to strengthen the region's homeland security efforts and defines the framework for achieving those capabilities. NCR preparedness officials said that they have been working to develop preparedness measures since 2003, but noted that these measures are difficult to link to a measured improvement in regional preparedness. For example, while the region identified more than \$25 million in UASI grant projects invested in providing public alerts and warnings, regional officials have not developed a measure to determine the effectiveness of these activities. Without such measures, it is unclear to what extent the efforts will advance the region's goals.

Also, FEMA officials have not yet addressed long-standing challenges to establishing a process for collecting comprehensive information on available federal preparedness funding related to homeland security and emergency management. Aside from UASI grant funding, regional officials do not have access to comprehensive information on all local, state, and federal funding sources; instead they collect this information on a project-by-project basis. These officials stated that awareness of all available homeland security and emergency management federal grant funding in the NCR could improve their management of resources.

FEMA's NCRC is in a position to assist regional officials in the NCR in (1) developing measures so that regional preparedness officials can better assess the

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<sup>8</sup>GAO, *Internal Controls: Standards For Internal Control In The Federal Government*, AIMD-98-21.3.1, (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 1, 1999); *Urban Area Security Initiative: FEMA Lacks Measures to Assess How Regional Collaboration Efforts Build Preparedness Capabilities*, GAO-09-651 (Washington, D.C.: July 2, 2009); *Homeland Security: Managing First Responder Grants to Enhance Emergency Preparedness in the National Capital Region*, GAO-05-889T (Washington, D.C.: July 14, 2005); and *Homeland Security: The Status of Strategic Planning in the National Capital Region*, GAO-06-559T (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2006).

implementation of the region's strategic plan and (2) collecting comprehensive information on federal preparedness grant funding in the region. Assisting regional officials in these two efforts would help NCR better prioritize funding. We are making recommendations to address these challenges.

## **Background**

### The NCR

The NCR includes the District of Columbia and local jurisdictions in the State of Maryland and the Commonwealth of Virginia, as pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991.<sup>9</sup> The region, with a population of about 5 million, includes the nation's capital, headquarters to all three branches of the federal government, with federal departments such as Defense housed throughout the jurisdictions surrounding Washington, D.C. There is no single operational authority for emergency response in the NCR because these responsibilities reside with state and local jurisdictions. Nonetheless, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, highlighted the need for regional coordination, and in response, the region's jurisdictions created a collaborative network of committees to serve as a governance structure to coordinate regional homeland security planning and emergency management operations and funding. These committees worked together to create the strategic plan called for by DHS's UASI grant program requirements, as well as regional coordination and communications plans.<sup>10</sup> Additional information on the NCR is included in enclosure I.

The NCR Strategic Plan is intended to help regional officials identify the capabilities needed to strengthen the region's homeland security efforts and defines the framework for achieving those capabilities. The plan identifies a vision and mission statement, the region's four goals, and corresponding objectives and initiatives. Specifically, the four broad goals are: (1) ensure interoperable communications capabilities, (2) enhance information sharing and situational awareness, (3) enhance critical infrastructure protection, and (4) ensure development and maintenance of regional core capabilities. A full list of the NCR Strategic Plan's goals, objectives and initiatives can be found in enclosure I. According to regional policies, the projects implemented under the NCR Strategic Plan may be local in nature, but must support a regional capability. For example, the plan includes an objective to share situational awareness with NCR partners so they have the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Situational awareness, regional coordination, and public alerts and warnings were cited by regional officials as capabilities needing enhancement in the region's assessment of the response to the January 26, 2011, snowstorm and the August 23, 2011, earthquake. During the January 26, 2011, snowstorm, for example, many commuters experienced 8- to 12-hour commutes due to snow- and ice-covered

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<sup>9</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2674(f)(2). This definition of the NCR encompasses the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland and Virginia, including the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park, and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William in Virginia, and Montgomery and Prince George's in Maryland, which include the municipalities of Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville, and Takoma Park.

<sup>10</sup>For additional information on the grant requirements under the UASI program, see [GAO-09-651](#).

roads; abandoned and disabled cars, trucks, and buses; as well as outages to traffic signals lacking backup power. A report in November 2011 by regional officials found that some of the problems cited during the snowstorm were caused by early dismissal of many of the region's employees, which resulted in a compressed rush hour just as weather and traffic conditions were deteriorating.<sup>11</sup> Regional officials found that, despite the worsening traffic, no regional officials initiated a conference call to exchange information, discuss regional coordination, or consider a region-wide message to the public. Most jurisdictions' emergency operation centers were never activated because that was not part of the protocol for a storm of the magnitude forecasted (3-5 inches of snow).

Because the operation centers were not activated, the central information-sharing tool that allows emergency managers across the region to share information to assist with decision making was not used. An organization that was in the relatively early stages of implementation, the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination Program, was monitoring traffic continuously throughout the storm, but was able to communicate and coordinate only among the region's transportation agencies and not the broader community of emergency response stakeholders across the region. Additionally, once the snowstorm was underway, there was no coordinated message from authorities to the media or the general public to advise area residents. Also, regional officials cited a lack of real-time, situational awareness of all local events occurring within the region and the maintenance of a common operating picture, and found that existing tools for emergency managers to share information were underutilized. Regional officials concluded that coordinated messages and real-time information were needed so the public could make informed decisions. To address the need for better coordination of public alerts and warnings, regional officials recommended the creation of a Virtual Joint Information Center to support media representatives and disseminate press releases, i.e., be the "public face" of an incident. The report also proposed the creation of a Regional Incident Coordination Program to provide situational awareness of the region as a whole to decision makers and appropriate officials.

The UASI grant program is the primary source of federal homeland security funding for the NCR.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the UASI program is to provide grants to assist high-risk urban areas to build and sustain regional preparedness capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. From fiscal years 2003 through 2012, the federal government allocated over \$560 million through the UASI grant program to the NCR to enhance the region's disaster management capabilities.<sup>13</sup> The jurisdictions in the NCR have also received preparedness grant funding through a variety of other federal grant programs during

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<sup>11</sup> See Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, *Report of the Steering Committee on Incident Management and Response: A Proposal for a Regional Incident Coordination Program and Over A Dozen Other Improvements to Enhance Incident Management and Response in the National Capital Region*, (Washington, D.C.: Nov. 9, 2011).

<sup>12</sup>A report in September 2010 by the Local, State, Tribal, and Federal Preparedness Task Force found that state and local funding represents the majority of preparedness-related spending, as federal grant spending represented 2.59 percent of total preparedness-related expenditures in fiscal years 2007, and 2.23 percent in fiscal year 2008. See DHS, Local, State, Tribal, and Federal Preparedness Task Force, *Perspective on Preparedness: Taking Stock Since 9/11* (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2010).

<sup>13</sup>The region received about \$7 million less in UASI grant funds for fiscal year 2012 than it did in fiscal year 2011 because of budget cuts across all DHS preparedness grant programs.

this period.<sup>14</sup> The District of Columbia, through its Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, is the lead agency for managing the region's UASI grants.<sup>15</sup> Regional preparedness leadership is provided by a Senior Policy Group committee of designated state and district officials and the chief administrative officers. The NCR is the only region that has a statutorily created and federally funded office devoted to supporting coordination and cooperation of homeland security activities within the region—NCRC. NCRC is a member of the NCR's Senior Policy Group. Additional information on the NCR's governance structure can be found in enclosure I.

### FEMA's Role in the NCR

NCRC was established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which also created DHS.<sup>16</sup> The office's statutory mission is to oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities in the region, and among its responsibilities are to provide state, local, and regional authorities with regular information, research, and technical support and facilitate access to federal grants and other programs. The act also requires NCRC to submit an annual report to Congress that includes the identification of resources required to fully implement homeland security efforts in the NCR, an assessment of the progress made by the NCR in implementing homeland security efforts, and recommendations to Congress regarding the additional resources needed to fully implement homeland security efforts. See enclosure II for a complete list of NCRC's legislative requirements.

The statutorily defined role of NCRC and its relationship to the preparedness efforts in the NCR reflect the larger role that FEMA now plays in national preparedness efforts as a result of the Post-Katrina Act. Specifically, the Post-Katrina Act moved NCRC from DHS's Preparedness Directorate to FEMA.<sup>17</sup> The Post-Katrina Act also transferred DHS's preparedness grant programs to FEMA, and FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) is responsible for managing all DHS disaster preparedness grant programs, including the UASI grant program.<sup>18</sup> The Post-Katrina Act also requires that FEMA develop a national preparedness system and assess preparedness capabilities—capabilities needed to respond effectively to disasters—to determine the nation's preparedness capability levels and the resources needed

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<sup>14</sup>As we reported in [GAO-04-433](#), NCR jurisdictions used at least 16 funding sources we reviewed to address a variety of emergency preparedness activities.

<sup>15</sup>Under the UASI program, the D.C. government is the "State Administrative Agency" that is responsible for carrying out the administrative requirements of federal homeland security grants, including making sure application requirements are satisfied, ensuring funds are properly allocated, meeting required deliverables, and submitting necessary paperwork. As we reported in [GAO-09-651](#), FEMA requires each UASI region to create its own regional working group that includes representation from the jurisdictions and response disciplines that are collectively responsible for coordinating development and implementation of the projects and programs being conducted with UASI grant funds. Each UASI region is to develop a charter and a strategic plan that outlines the region's common goals. After funds are awarded, grantees are required to report regularly on their progress as part of the grant reporting process. Performance data submitted by grantees as part of required reports are to be reviewed and validated through program monitoring by FEMA.

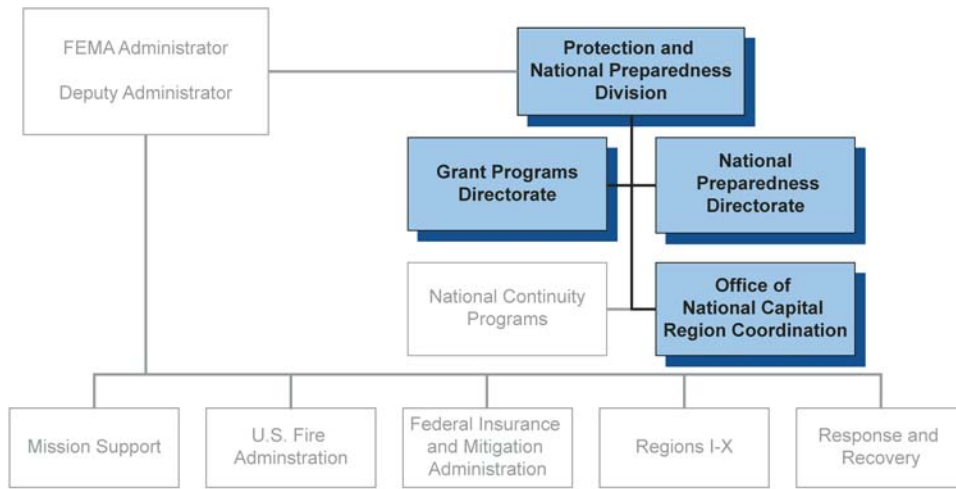
<sup>16</sup>6 U.S.C. § 462. NCRC began operations in March 2003.

<sup>17</sup>6 U.S.C. § 315. After NCRC was established in the Office of the Secretary, it was moved as part of the Second-Stage Review to the Preparedness Directorate.

<sup>18</sup>The Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, also directed DHS and certain other federal agencies to compile a comprehensive list of federal preparedness grant programs, among other things. 6 U.S.C. § 611(c).

to achieve desired levels of capability.<sup>19</sup> To implement these responsibilities for measuring and assessing national preparedness capabilities, FEMA established the National Preparedness Directorate (NPD) in April 2007. All three organizations with responsibilities related for the National Capital Region, national grants management, and national preparedness assessment—NCRC, GPD, and NPD—are component offices within FEMA’s Protection and National Preparedness office, as illustrated in figure 1.<sup>20</sup> (A detailed organization chart of all FEMA components is included in enclosure II.)

Figure 1: FEMA Organization Chart: Offices within the Protection and National Preparedness Division with Responsibilities for the National Capital Region, National Grants Management, and National Preparedness Assessment



Source: FEMA.

NPD’s mission, among other things, is to provide national strategy, programs, and resources to evaluate overall national preparedness and the effectiveness of preparedness programs. The directorate, which— in FEMA’s fiscal year 2012 budget request —had a staff of 23 and a budget of \$14 million, leads FEMA’s evaluation and assessment activities, such as the National Preparedness Report and State Preparedness Reports. It also collaborated with the National Academy of Public Administration in developing performance measures for both the UASI and State Homeland Security Grant programs.<sup>21</sup> Further, in September 2011, FEMA published the *National Preparedness Goal*, which describes the nation’s strategic approach to preparing for the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the nation’s security, and identified 31 capabilities as a basis for assessing national preparedness. One example of a core capability is to provide public information and warnings, which requires responsible officials to deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community through the use of clear, consistent, and accessible methods to effectively relay information. Such information

<sup>19</sup>6 U.S.C. § 749.

<sup>20</sup>FEMA’s Protection and National Preparedness (PNP) is responsible for the coordination of preparedness and protection related activities throughout FEMA, including grants, planning, training, exercises, individual and community preparedness, assessments, lessons learned, continuity of government, and national capital region coordination.

<sup>21</sup>National Academy of Public Administration, *Improving the National Preparedness System: Developing More Meaningful Grant Performance Measures* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 2011).

should include the nature of the threat or hazard, the actions being taken, and the assistance being made available.

### Related GAO Work

As we reported in April 2009, FEMA has made progress in developing a national preparedness system that includes, among other things, planning and allocating resources and identifying any gaps in capabilities.<sup>22</sup> At that time, we found that FEMA had made progress in developing a system for assessing national preparedness capabilities, but faced challenges in completing the system and required reports to assess preparedness. FEMA generally concurred with our recommendations related to establishing national measures and repeatedly reported plans to develop them, but has not yet done so. Similarly, in our July 2009 assessment of FEMA's implementation of the UASI grant program, we found that FEMA lacks measures to assess how regional collaboration efforts build preparedness capabilities.<sup>23</sup> FEMA concurred with our recommendation to develop measures but has not yet done so. In March 2011, the White House issued Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-8 for National Preparedness, which called for "a comprehensive approach to assess national preparedness that uses consistent methodology to measure the operational readiness of national capabilities at the time of assessment, with clear, objective and quantifiable performance measures, against the target capability levels identified in the national preparedness goal."<sup>24</sup> We reported in March 2012 that FEMA officials continued to experience challenges that impeded their progress in managing preparedness grants and assessing capabilities to measure the use of federal assistance at the state and local levels, and assess how federal assistance programs are supporting national preparedness.<sup>25</sup>

More recently, we reported in September 2012 that FEMA has not yet finished developing metrics to assess state preparedness capability and was limited in its ability to comprehensively assess jurisdictions' disaster preparedness and capabilities.<sup>26</sup> We recommended, among other things, that FEMA develop a methodology to more accurately assess a jurisdiction's capability to respond to and recover from a disaster without federal assistance, a recommendation with which FEMA concurred.

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<sup>22</sup>GAO, *National Preparedness: FEMA Has Made Progress, but Needs to Complete and Integrate Planning, Exercise, and Assessment Efforts*, [GAO-09-369](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 30, 2009).

<sup>23</sup>[GAO-09-651](#).

<sup>24</sup>The White House, *Presidential Policy Directive/PPD-8, Subject: National Preparedness* (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 30, 2011).

<sup>25</sup>GAO, *Managing Preparedness Grants and Assessing National Capabilities Continuing Challenges Impede FEMA's Progress*, [GAO-12-526T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 20, 2012).

<sup>26</sup>GAO, *Federal Disaster Assistance: Improved Criteria Needed to Assess a Jurisdiction's Capability to Respond and Recover on Its Own*, [GAO-12-838](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 12, 2012).



## FEMA Officials Could Better Assist the NCR in Establishing Measures and Identifying Available Federal Funding in the NCR

### NCR Officials Have Taken Steps to Develop Measures, but FEMA Could Do More to Assist in These Efforts

Although establishing performance measures for preparedness capabilities is not a requirement for UASI grant recipients like the NCR, regional officials have been working since 2003 to develop measures to assess and approve grant projects through a strategic management review process. NCR officials have identified national standards and have taken steps to help inform their efforts to develop measures. All of the 37 initiatives under the NCR's strategic plan are implemented by committees of subject matter experts, the progress of which is then reviewed on a bimonthly basis by the region's leadership.<sup>27</sup> As we have reported, leading management practices recognize the importance of establishing performance measures in achieving results.<sup>28</sup> When designed effectively, performance measures help managers (1) determine how well a program is performing, (2) identify gaps in performance, and (3) determine where to focus resources to improve results. Further, while performance measures should distinguish between outcomes (i.e., the intended result of carrying out a program or activity) and outputs (i.e., the level of activity that will be provided over a period of time), there must be a reasonable connection between them, with outputs supporting (i.e., leading to) outcomes in a logical fashion.<sup>29</sup> To illustrate in the preparedness realm, for a tornado warning system, outputs could be the number of operating outdoor sirens within a jurisdiction, while outcomes could be the number of lives saved. However, this outcome measure could also be influenced by other variables whose impact may not be readily identifiable or measurable.

Reflecting these challenges, NCR regional preparedness officials said that although they have been working to develop outcome measures since 2003, such measures are difficult to link to a measurable improvement in regional preparedness. Accordingly, for example, NCR regional preparedness officials identified past projects totaling more than \$25 million in UASI grant and local funds to date to build the preparedness capability for providing public alerts and warnings regionwide, and have another \$3.5 million in ongoing projects, but have not established measures to determine the effectiveness of these efforts. As a result, the extent to which these investments have improved the region's public alerts and warnings capabilities or addressed the gaps for this capability identified by the region is unclear. For example, one of these projects encourages jurisdictions to establish and use social media outlets (i.e., Facebook and Twitter). However, regional officials have not developed an associated measure to determine the effectiveness of these outlets in providing public alerts and warnings. We recognize the challenge that these officials

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<sup>27</sup>A full list of the NCR's 2010 Strategic Plan's goals, objectives, and initiatives can be found in enclosure I.

<sup>28</sup>GAO, *Executive Guide: Effectively Implementing the Government Performance and Results Act*, [GAO/GGD-96-118](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 1996). Additionally, other past GAO work identified best practices that agencies have used to better articulate their results through their performance plans, which could be more useful in helping guide decisions and, subsequently, assess actual performance. See GAO, *Agency Performance Plans: Examples of Practices That Can Improve Usefulness to Decisionmakers*, [GAO/GGD/AIMD-99-69](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 26, 1999).

<sup>29</sup>[GAO/GGD/AIMD-99-69](#) and [GAO-09-651](#).

face in trying to develop outcome-oriented measures. For example, determining the number of people who took preparedness actions on the basis of an alert on Facebook might require officials to administer a survey, which could be difficult and costly to develop and implement in a way that provides meaningful and valid data. However, identifying feasible, cost-effective measures is essential for prioritizing preparedness investments in a time of decreasing resources to ensure that the highest-priority capability gaps are effectively addressed. For example, measuring the amount of activity on social media sites could be an initial proxy measure to determine the extent to which the general public has been alerted through the social media outlets.

As a result of the reorganization of DHS's responsibilities as called for in the Post-Karina Act, NCRC is a part of FEMA's Protection and National Preparedness component, which includes the National Preparedness Directorate (NPD). The directorate is responsible for developing the National Preparedness System, which is designed to improve public officials' ability to allocate scarce resources, and incorporates the use of performance measures to allow for a direct and defensible assessment of progress against clearly defined goals.<sup>30</sup> Part of the system includes 31 Core Capabilities that the National Preparedness Directorate uses for developing and analyzing performance measures to assess grants, community preparedness, and the nation's overall preparedness. Now that NCRC is within PNP, with its responsibilities, programs, and resources for developing preparedness metrics and assessments, NCRC is in a better position to assist regional preparedness officials in the NCR in developing measures to assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan. Doing so could help ensure that funds are being spent in the most effective and efficient manner to enhance regional preparedness capabilities. NCRC officials stated that they are not assisting the region in developing performance measures because they view their role as a coordinator for other federal agencies, although they agreed that they could do more to support regional efforts and are positioned to do so.

In addition, the statute that established NCRC requires officials to submit an annual report to Congress that includes an assessment of the progress made by NCR officials in implementing homeland security efforts in the region.<sup>31</sup> Measuring preparedness capabilities is also essential to determining the impact of the more than \$560 million DHS has allocated to the NCR from fiscal years 2003 through 2012. Without this information, decision makers are unable to determine how prepared the region is and how to prioritize investments to close the gap. Because FEMA uses the core capabilities defined in the National Preparedness Goal to assess preparedness and allocate resources, assisting NCR regional officials in developing measures to determine quantifiable preparedness goals, assess the status of current capabilities, and prioritize federal grant funding would also enhance the quality and usefulness of NCRC's annual report to Congress.

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<sup>30</sup>The components of the National Preparedness System include identifying and assessing risk, estimating the level of capabilities needed to address those risks, building or sustaining the required levels of capability, developing and implementing plans to deliver those capabilities, validating and monitoring progress, and reviewing and updating efforts to promote continuous improvement.

<sup>31</sup>6 U.S.C. § 462(c).

## FEMA Has Not Yet Established a Process for Collecting Comprehensive Information on Available Federal Preparedness Funding to Assist NCR Officials

While regional preparedness officials are working to identify additional funding sources needed to implement the NCR's strategic plan, FEMA officials have not yet addressed long-standing challenges to establishing a process for collecting comprehensive information on all available federal preparedness funding in the region. Regional preparedness officials collect and maintain a list of historic and current UASI grant funding, but they do not collect information on homeland security and emergency management funding to all the region's jurisdictions, other than that provided by the UASI program.<sup>32</sup> Regional officials' strategic management review process is intended to ensure that the allocation of all available preparedness funds within the region is effective, and officials said that while they focus on the allocation of UASI funds, they attempt to consider other funding sources. For example, during the strategic management review process, regional officials were able to identify 12 proposed projects—totaling \$17.8 million—that are priorities for UASI funding, which could be funded from other sources, if needed to offset potential reductions in future UASI grant funding.<sup>33</sup> Regional officials collect this type of information on a project-by-project basis during their strategic management review process, but they do not have access to comprehensive information on all local, state, and federal funding sources. As a result, regional officials said it was more difficult to coordinate and use multiple sources of funds to achieve specific objectives.

While regional officials have been able to identify other grant-funding sources in some cases, they said that gathering comprehensive data on all funding sources is a complex and resource-intensive task that is complicated by (1) the varying abilities of the different state and local jurisdictional stakeholders to collect and report federal funding information and (2) sensitivities in balancing local and state jurisdictional interests with regional needs. Regional officials further stated that their attempt to develop a spreadsheet of federal grant funding information was hampered by reporting inconsistencies from jurisdictions and resulted in data of limited reliability. They said that a full awareness of all available homeland security and emergency management federal grant funding could improve their management of regional resources by helping them budget for, and prioritize investments in, preparedness capabilities.

As a part of FEMA's PNP division, which also includes FEMA's Grants Programs Directorate, NCRC could have the ability to collect information on DHS grant funding and other federal grants that are relevant to homeland security and emergency management capabilities. However, NCRC officials have not collaborated with GPD to determine how to collect and maintain comprehensive data on such funding sources to assist regional officials. NCRC officials said that maintaining a comprehensive data set of federal homeland security and emergency management

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<sup>32</sup>Officials in the District of Columbia are required to maintain this information for the region because of their grant management responsibilities under the UASI grant program. The District of Columbia also is a grantee under other DHS grant programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, Transit Security Grant Program, Citizen Corps Program, and Emergency Management Performance Grants. Maryland and Virginia also receive separate grants under these DHS programs.

<sup>33</sup>For fiscal year 2012, DHS preparedness grants were reduced by nearly \$1 billion from the fiscal year 2011 enacted levels. For the UASI program, this represented a \$172 million reduction.

funding that could be used to enhance regional preparedness is a complex and resource-intensive task and in providing comments on our draft report, DHS officials commented that the NCRC does not have the legal authority to compel other federal agencies to provide their grant data to NCRC for analysis. However, NCRC officials agreed that they could do more to support regional efforts and they are positioned to do so.

Regarding the complexity of the task, another office in FEMA has already taken steps to gather federal preparedness funding information. Specifically, the Post-Katrina Act transferred DHS's preparedness grant programs to FEMA, and GPD manages all of DHS's preparedness grant programs in an effort to better integrate and coordinate grant management.<sup>34</sup> In providing comments on our draft report, DHS officials commented that its grant management data could be used by state and local officials to assess capabilities strengths and areas for improvements. Further, in response to a mandate in 2009, GPD and other federal agencies issued a report to Congress that included a comprehensive list of federal preparedness grant programs.<sup>35</sup> In preparing this report, GPD documented the process by which it gathered this information across federal departments and agencies. Thus, NCRC officials could collaborate with GPD to better determine how to gather this information and share it with NCR officials.

Regarding the authority to compel other federal agencies to provide grant data, we recognize that FEMA does not have this authority; however, FEMA is in a position, through its preparedness offices and the NCRC, to collaborate with other agencies that have roles in supporting emergency preparedness in the region. Congress established NCRC to oversee and coordinate programs across federal, state, local, and regional authorities, and its responsibilities include facilitating access to federal grants. As we noted, for example, FEMA preparedness offices have collaborated with other federal agencies through efforts such as the report on preparedness programs described above as well as NCRC officials serving as chair of the NCR's Joint Federal Committee.<sup>36</sup> In addition, NCRC officials are required by law to submit an annual report to Congress that includes the identification of the resources required to fully implement homeland security efforts in the region and make recommendations to Congress regarding the additional resources needed.<sup>37</sup> Information on current funding sources for the region could help NCRC better determine areas in which grants are currently supporting efforts and areas for which grant funding may be needed. However, NCRC's 2010-2011 report to Congress—its most recent—only generally referenced the types of other federal funding sources

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<sup>34</sup>GPD is responsible for managing all of DHS's disaster preparedness grant programs, including the UASI grant program. According to FEMA officials, GPD collects detailed information on DHS grant investments made by states and UASIs. It contains investment data at the project level, such as project description, core capability supported by the project, and whether funding sustains or builds new capabilities. Additionally, these data can be filtered and combined to provide detailed reports on specific investment trends, summary reports on total core capability, or regional investments.

<sup>35</sup>Interagency Report on Preparedness Grant Programs Report to Congress May 2009. See 6 U.S.C. § 611(c).

<sup>36</sup>The Joint Federal Committee is composed of representatives from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government with offices in the NCR. The committee meets monthly to coordinate federal homeland security efforts in the region and is designed to serve as a multijurisdictional, multiagency forum for policy discussions and resolution of homeland security-related issues to promote a focused regional effort among federal representatives to improve emergency preparedness and response capabilities in the NCR.

<sup>37</sup>6 U.S.C. § 462(c).

that are available to enhance preparedness in the NCR; the report did not specify amounts of grant dollars used and which projects and capabilities the money was used to fund. Thus, collecting this information could help NCRC more effectively meet its legislative requirement.

In addition, we reported in May 2004 that the fragmented nature of the multiple federal grants available to first responders—some awarded to states, some to localities—may make it more difficult to collect and maintain regionwide data on the grant funds received and the use of those funds in the NCR.<sup>38</sup> Our previous work on federal grants management suggested that fragmentation in federal grants may reinforce state and local fragmentation and can also make it more difficult to coordinate and use those multiple sources of funds to achieve specific objectives.<sup>39</sup> In our May 2004 report, we recommended that DHS monitor the NCR strategic plan's implementation to ensure that funds are used in a way that promotes effective expenditures that are not unnecessarily duplicative. DHS concurred with our recommendation, but officials said they have not implemented this recommendation because they lacked the authority to compel other federal agencies to provide such information, and the resources to collect and maintain it.

Given the inherent difficulties regional officials face in collecting and analyzing comprehensive data on available federal preparedness grant funding, FEMA's NCRC is in a position to assist regional preparedness officials in collecting comprehensive information on federal homeland security and emergency management grant funding in the region, including using the information provided by GPD. This is consistent with NCRC's statutory mission to assess, and advocate for, the resources needed by state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR to implement efforts to secure the homeland. Thus, a process for collecting and maintaining comprehensive information on available federal preparedness funding in the NCR could better position NCRC to help the NCR regional officials better prioritize funding to fill the largest capability gaps. This information would also enhance the quality and usefulness of NCRC's annual report to Congress.

## Conclusions

Over the last decade, the NCR has received over \$560 million through the UASI grant program and millions more through a variety of other federal grant programs. Recent severe weather events in the region have continued to test the preparation of capabilities and the coordinated efforts of the jurisdictions and organizations that make up the NCR. In addition, these events serve as reminders of the potential consequences that a truly catastrophic event could have on the region. Assisting regional officials in establishing performance measures and a reliable, central source of data on the federal funds that are available to enhance preparedness is a responsibility for which NCRC is better positioned as a result of its relocation into FEMA's Protection and National Preparedness component. The Protection and National Preparedness component has the national responsibilities, the programs, and the resources for developing and analyzing performance measures and

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<sup>38</sup>[GAO-04-433](#).

<sup>39</sup>See GAO, *Homeland Security: Reforming Federal Grants to Better Meet Outstanding Needs*, [GAO-03-1146T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 3, 2003).

collecting information on grant funding at the national level that could be leveraged to enhance preparedness at the regional level in the NCR. As noted earlier, measuring preparedness capabilities is essential to determining the impact of current and future funding invested in the NCR. Such measures and a mechanism for collecting and maintaining this information could also improve the quality and value of future submissions of NCRC's annual reports to Congress by providing Congress with more actionable information on the state of preparedness in the region and a measurable estimate of the additional resources needed to achieve specific capability goals.

### **Recommendations for Executive Action**

To address long-standing challenges that continue to hinder regional preparedness efforts in the NCR, we recommend that the FEMA Administrator require that the Director of NCRC take the following two actions:

- assist regional officials in developing measures to better assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan and
- collect and maintain available information for NCR jurisdictions on DHS grant funding, and other federal grant funding that are relevant to homeland security and emergency management capabilities.

### **Agency Comments and Our Evaluation**

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for comment and received written comments from DHS which are summarized below and reproduced in full in enclosure III. DHS concurred with both recommendations.

DHS concurred with the recommendation that FEMA assist regional officials in developing measures to better assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan. DHS stated that the use of performance metrics is necessary for assessing overall preparedness in the region, and noted that FEMA's NCRC office is uniquely positioned to assist in this effort because the office is embedded within the region's preparedness coordinating councils and groups. Additionally, DHS stated that NCRC will continue to work with other offices within FEMA to ensure the region's performance management efforts are consistent with national preparedness guidance and policy. DHS commented that FEMA has established a preparedness baseline and a foundation for assessing future preparedness of states and territories through State Preparedness Reports (SPR) and the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRA), which when combined provide a complete picture of capability needs for the NCR. As DHS noted, however, FEMA does not collect comparable data on NCR jurisdictions as a separate entity through the SPR. We believe that, because FEMA's SPRs are not intended to include UASI-specific data, the state preparedness reports do not provide a meaningful basis for identifying key capability needs and gaps in the NCR or measures to assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan.

DHS also concurred with the recommendation that FEMA collect and maintain available information for NCR jurisdictions on DHS grant funding as well as other

federal funding that is relevant to homeland security and emergency management capabilities.<sup>40</sup> DHS stated that NCRC will work with FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate and National Preparedness Directorate to advise FEMA leadership on how best to collect and analyze all federal grant information relevant to homeland security and emergency management in the region, as well as work with the region to explore options to establish a timely reporting structure for collecting grant data from the jurisdictions. Further, DHS stated that while FEMA agrees in principle, the NCRC does not have the authority to compel other federal agencies responsible for grant allocation to provide their grant data to the NCRC for analysis, and that the task could overwhelm the NCRC's current resource capacity. In addition, DHS stated that enhanced collection of additional federal grant data would not necessarily result in a more informed approach to UASI grant management. However, in our February 2012 review of FEMA grant programs, we identified multiple factors that contributed to the risk of FEMA potentially funding unnecessarily duplicative projects, which included differing levels of information that FEMA had available regarding grant projects and recipients. We also reported that FEMA lacked a process to coordinate application reviews across the four grant programs.<sup>41</sup> We recognize that FEMA's role is often to coordinate, guide, and support, rather than direct, and that collaboration is an essential element of FEMA's efforts. At the same time, we continue to believe that FEMA has opportunities for and a responsibility to further develop its relationships with national preparedness stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels and to instill a shared sense of responsibility and accountability on the part of all stakeholders for the successful development and implementation of the national preparedness system. As noted in this report and in multiple reports issued since May 2004, our assessments have identified long-standing challenges to emergency preparedness in the NCR—including the lack of performance measures to assess preparedness capability gaps as well as the lack of a reliable, central source of data on funds available. Without these basic elements, it is difficult to assess preparedness capabilities, identify funding priorities for the region, and evaluate the use of all federal funds in a way that maximizes their effectiveness in improving the region's homeland security. Given the long-standing nature of these issues and the \$560 million in UASI grants that DHS has allocated to the NCR from fiscal years 2003 through 2012, we believe it is appropriate for FEMA and its preparedness component to focus its resources in addressing them.

DHS also provided technical comments, which we incorporated, as appropriate.

In addition, we provided a draft of this report to the NCR's Senior Policy Group for comment and received written comments which are reproduced in full in enclosure IV. The NCR described current preparedness efforts and capabilities as well as its performance measurement process. The NCR also provided technical comments, which we incorporated, as appropriate.

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<sup>40</sup>After discussions with DHS and FEMA officials, we revised the second draft recommendation from collecting and maintaining information on "all federal grant funding within the NCR" to focus more specifically on grant funding related to homeland security and emergency management.

<sup>41</sup> GAO, *Homeland Security: DHS Needs Better Project Information and Coordination among Four Overlapping Grant Programs*, [GAO-12-303](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012).

As agreed with your office, unless you publicly announce the contents of this report earlier, we plan no further distribution until 6 days from the report date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to the Secretary of Homeland Security, the NCR's Senior Policy Group, and other interested congressional committees. In addition, this report will be available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff members have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-8777 or [caldwells@gao.gov](mailto:caldwells@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in enclosure V.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Caldwell", with a checkmark at the end.

Stephen L. Caldwell  
Director  
Homeland Security and Justice Issues

Enclosures – 5

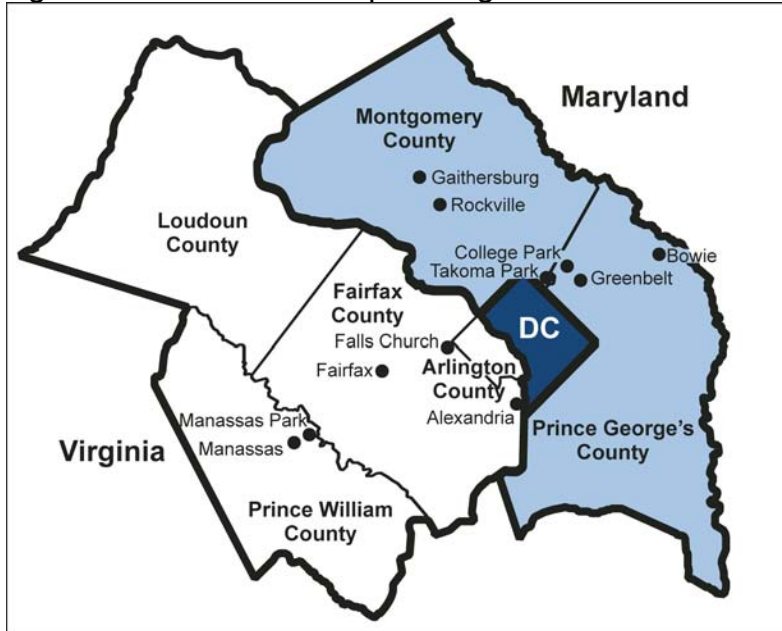


## Enclosure I: Highlights of the National Capital Region (NCR) and Its 2010 Strategic Plan

### The NCR

The NCR includes the District of Columbia and local jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia, as pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1991, as shown in figure 2.<sup>42</sup>

Figure 2: The National Capital Region



Source: National Capital Planning Commission.

The physical, political, and demographic attributes in the NCR both heighten the threat and raise the consequences of natural and man-made incidents for the region. According to the NCR's 2010 strategic plan, the region is the home of the nation's capital and headquarters to all three branches of the federal government, 271 federal departments and agencies, and more than 340,000 federal workers.<sup>43</sup> Further, the NCR is also a hub of international governmental and business activity, as 4,000 diplomats work at more than 170 embassies, and more than 8,000 individuals work at international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization of American States. The plan also states that the NCR receives more than 20 million tourists each year and includes some of the most important symbols of national sovereignty and democratic heritage within its boundaries. Additionally, the region has a population of more than 5 million, and federal departments such as Defense, Health and Human Services, and Energy are housed throughout the jurisdictions surrounding Washington, D.C. Further, the NCR's populace relies on a vast array of critical infrastructure and key

<sup>42</sup>10 U.S.C. § 2674(c). This definition of the NCR encompasses the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland and Virginia, including the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas Park, and the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William in Virginia, and Montgomery and Prince George's in Maryland, which include the municipalities of Bowie, College Park, Gaithersburg, Greenbelt, Rockville, and Takoma Park.

<sup>43</sup> See National Capital Region, Homeland Security Strategic Plan (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 2010).

resources including transportation, energy, and water. Lastly, the region's transportation system illustrates the complexity of protecting the critical infrastructure from attack and disruption, as the NCR hosts two major airports, its transportation system is an intricate network of major highways and bridges, and it contains the nation's second-largest rail transit and fifth-largest bus systems.

The ongoing risk assessment process conducted by regional officials identified key threats and vulnerabilities and the impact that various incidents could have on the region. These assessments underscore the need to be prepared for natural events such as ice, snowstorms, and flooding; special events such as international summits, inaugurations, and parades; and man-made threats such as terrorist attacks.

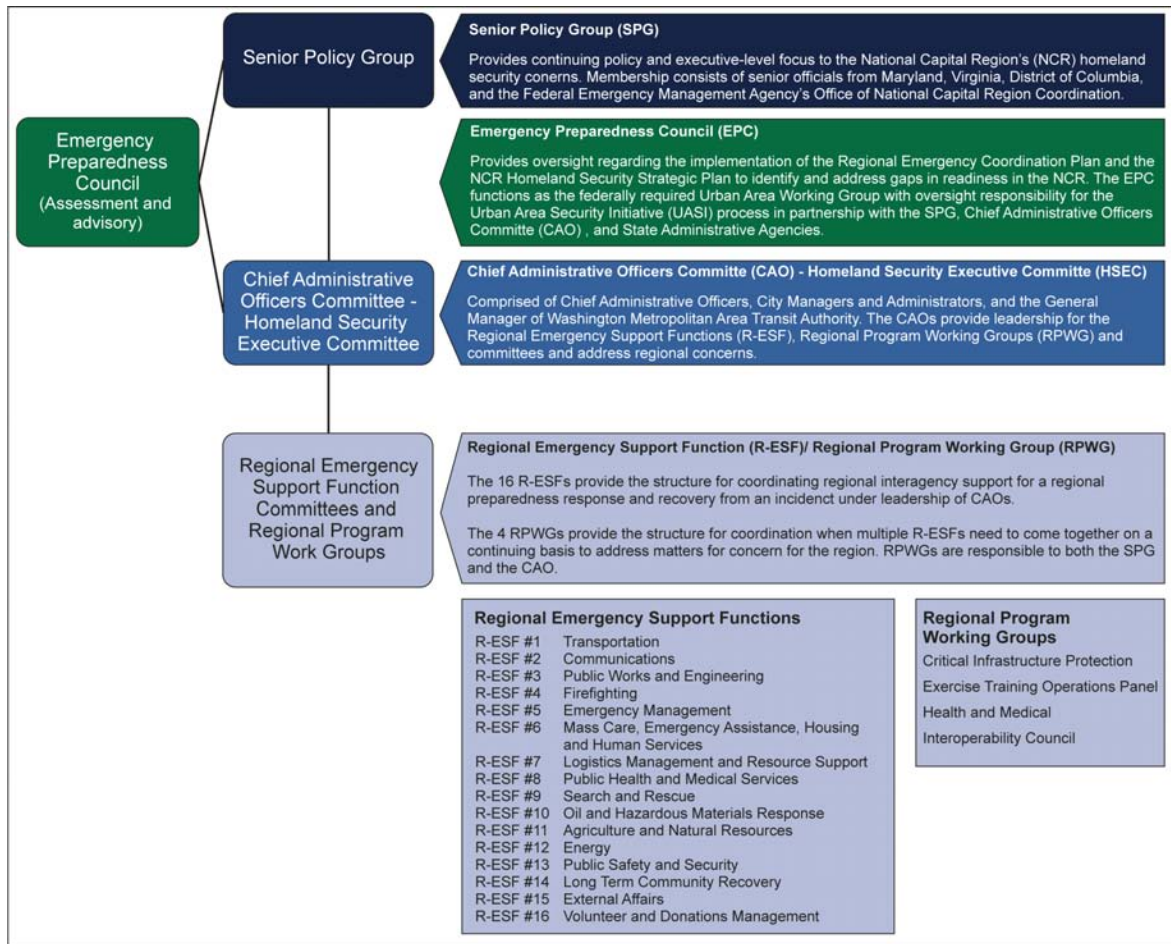
### NCR Governance Structure for Preparedness

The NCR is a collaborative network of state and local jurisdictions and planning organizations with no single operational authority for emergency response; the responsibility for this resides instead with state and local jurisdictions. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent anthrax attacks in the Washington area highlighted the need for a regional coordination plan containing new policies, protocols, and procedures to improve coordination and communication in anticipation of potential future regional emergencies. The region's jurisdictions created a governance structure to coordinate regional homeland security planning and emergency management operations and funding, which is supported by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG).<sup>44</sup> See figure 3 for more details on the NCR's governance structure.

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<sup>44</sup>Founded in 1957, MWCOCG is an independent, nonprofit association composed of elected officials from 22 local governments, members of the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and members of Congress. MWCOCG is supported by financial contributions from its participating local governments, federal and state grants and contracts, and donations from foundations and the private sector.

Figure 3: NCR Governance Structure



Source: National Capital Region Homeland Security Program.

As of fiscal year 2012, the NCR was also one of the 31 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant regions. The UASI grant program is the primary single source of federal homeland security funding for the NCR. The purpose of the UASI program is to support regional collaboration among local jurisdictions and emergency response organizations to build and sustain regional preparedness capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism.<sup>45</sup> From fiscal years 2003 through 2012, the federal government allocated over \$560 million through the UASI grant program to the NCR to enhance the region's disaster management capabilities. The NCR has also received preparedness grant funding through a variety of other federal grant programs during this period.<sup>46</sup> The District of Columbia, through its Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, is the lead agency—also known as the State Administrative Agency (SAA)—for managing the region's UASI grants. The SAA is responsible for carrying out the

<sup>45</sup>As we reported in [GAO-09-651](#), FEMA requires each UASI region to create its own regional working group that includes representation from the jurisdictions and response disciplines that are collectively responsible for coordinating development and implementation of the projects and programs being conducted with UASI grant funds. Each UASI region is to develop a charter and a strategic plan that outlines the region's common goals. After funds are awarded, grantees are directed to report regularly on progress as part of the grant reporting process. Performance data submitted through grant reporting are to be reviewed and validated through program monitoring by FEMA.

<sup>46</sup>As we reported in [GAO-04-433](#), NCR jurisdictions used at least 16 funding sources we reviewed to address a wide variety of emergency preparedness activities.

administrative requirements of federal homeland security grants. Additional roles include the following:

- applying for grants on behalf of the District of Columbia and the NCR urban area,
- providing oversight of local grant recipients—subgrantees,
- coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on grant-related issues,
- determining how grant funds can be used,
- serving as the initial point of contact for federal audits, and
- conducting record keeping of current and historical data.

Below, in table 1, is NCR’s Strategic Plan from September 2010, which represents the NCR’s strategy for improving regional preparedness to address critical risks in the region.

**Table 1: 2010 NCR Strategic Plan**

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
<p><b>Ensure interoperable communications capabilities</b></p> <p><i>Ensure response partners have the ability to transmit and receive voice, data, and video communications</i></p>	<p>Ensure response partners can communicate by voice in all environments on a day-to-day basis</p>	<p>Increase access to voice systems capable of transmitting and receiving voice information to and from NCR response partners.</p>
	<p>Ensure response partners can communicate and share necessary, appropriate data in all environments and on a day-to-day basis</p>	<p>Develop and maintain secure data communications governed by common standards and operating procedures.</p> <p>Share Computer Aided Dispatch data between jurisdictions and other related data systems to streamline the process of capturing 911 information and responding to incidents.</p> <p>Share Geographic Information System data between jurisdictions and other related data systems.</p>
	<p>Ensure response partners can communicate and share necessary, appropriate video information in all environments on a day-to-day basis</p>	<p>Increase access to video systems capable of transmitting and receiving video information to and from NCR response partners.</p>
<p><b>Enhance information sharing and situational awareness</b></p> <p><i>Ensure NCR partners share the information needed to make informed and timely decisions; take appropriate actions; and communicate accurate, timely information with the public.</i></p>	<p>Ensure the public has all information necessary to make appropriate decisions and take protective actions</p>	<p>Improve the dissemination of accurate, timely information to the public using multiple venues, including social media outlets, to ensure that the content of emergency messages and alerts is easily accessible and available to the public.</p>
	<p>Define, obtain, and share appropriate situational information with NCR partners so that they have the necessary information to make informed decisions</p>	<p>Define essential elements of data and information for situational awareness for each discipline and all partners in the NCR. Then develop, maintain, and utilize business practices and common technical standards for situational awareness in order to make informed decisions.<sup>a</sup></p>
	<p>Improve the NCR’s ability to collect, analyze, share, and integrate intelligence and law enforcement information so that NCR partners receive appropriate information</p>	<p>Ensure all NCR fusion centers share information through secure and open systems, produce relevant and standardized analytical products, and share information in a timely manner with appropriate NCR partners.<sup>b</sup></p>

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
<p><b>Enhance critical infrastructure protection</b></p> <p><i>Enhance the protection and resilience of critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR) in the NCR to reduce their vulnerability to disruption from all-hazards events</i></p>		<p>Ensure NCR partners have the systems, processes, security clearances, tools, and procedures to access, gather, and share appropriate intelligence, law enforcement, and classified data.</p>
	<p>Understand and prioritize risks to CI/KR</p>	<p>Catalog all CI/KR in the NCR and conduct a consequence-of-loss analysis.</p> <p>Conduct a comprehensive risk analysis of the NCR CI/KR, including a review of the critical systems upon which they depend and the interdependencies of those systems.</p> <p>Develop and implement a plan for sharing CI/KR information among public and private entities throughout the NCR.</p>
	<p>Reduce vulnerabilities and enhance resiliency of CI/KR</p>	<p>Develop and implement sector vulnerability reduction plans.</p> <p>Conduct a technology feasibility assessment and develop a plan for technology investments for CI/KR.</p> <p>Develop and implement a cybersecurity plan for NCR critical systems.</p>
	<p>Ensure continuity of critical services required during emergencies and disaster recovery<sup>c</sup></p>	<p>Identify key facilities throughout the NCR that require backup critical services.</p> <p>Assess facilities' plans for loss of critical services.</p>
	<p>Promote broad participation in CI/KR community outreach and protection programs</p>	<p>Develop a community awareness training and education program.</p> <p>Develop a strategy for using CI/KR data to inform law enforcement.</p> <p>Establish a regional business information-sharing committee.</p>
	<p>Monitor critical infrastructure to provide situational awareness and to promote rapid response</p>	<p>Develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive CI/KR monitoring program</p> <p>Develop and implement a plan that integrates CI/KR monitoring information into response operations.</p>

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
<p><b>Ensure development and maintenance of regional core capabilities</b></p> <p><i>Develop and maintain the basic building blocks of preparedness and response by ensuring the NCR develops a baseline of capabilities including mass casualty, health care system surge, and mass prophylaxis; mass care and evacuation; citizen participation, alert, and public information; chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive detection and response; and planning, training, and exercises</i></p>	<p>Increase the region's capacity for medical surge preparedness and response to an all-hazards event to reduce deaths and injuries</p>	<p>Ensure that private health care, federal, state, and local public health, and emergency medical services programs and providers in the NCR can increase surge capacity to respond to mass casualty incidents and events requiring mass prophylaxis.<sup>d</sup></p> <p>Establish a regional monitoring and response system that allows for health and medical response partners to track patients, hospital bed availability, alerts, and EMS/hospital activity in a shared, secure environment.</p> <p>Ensure the ability to track patients from the start of pre-hospital care to discharge from the health care system during both daily operations and mass casualty incidents.</p>
	<p>Improve the region's capacity to evacuate and provide mass care for the public, including special needs individuals, when affected by an all-hazards event</p>	<p>Develop, coordinate, and integrate local and state evacuation plans so that evacuation polices and routes complement one another to ensure the NCR's ability to coordinate evacuation across the region.</p> <p>Ensure the NCR's ability to provide sheltering and feeding for the first 72 hours following an incident for individuals in the general population, persons with special needs, persons with special medical needs, and pets.</p>
	<p>Strengthen individual, community, and workplace preparedness for emergency events through public engagement and citizen participation designed to reach the general population and special needs citizens in response to and recovery from all-hazards events</p>	<p>Sustain the NCR's ability to alert and warn residents, businesses, and visitors using multiple methods including social media.</p>

Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
		<p>Bolster recruitment, management, and retention of volunteers through Community Emergency Response Team, other citizen corps programs, Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster member agencies, the Medical Reserve Corps, and registration in Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals programs.</p> <p>Ensure post-incident human services and recovery assistance throughout the NCR, including case management, emergency housing, behavioral health, spiritual care, and family reunification.</p>
	<p>Ensure the NCR has regionwide capacity to detect, respond to, and recover in a timely manner from Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) events and other attacks requiring tactical response and technical rescue</p>	<p>Enhance the NCR's ability to detect chemical, biological, radiological, and other types of contamination.</p> <p>Ensure regionwide access to Type 1 hazardous material (HazMat), bomb response/explosive ordnance device units, and tactical teams and ensure each unit/team is able to respond in a reasonable amount of time.</p> <p>Ensure all responders in the NCR have access to personal protective equipment and apparatus that match the identified capability needs.</p> <p>Establish a regional monitoring and response system that provides health and medical response partners with central access to biosurveillance.</p>
	<p>Improve capacity to develop and coordinate plans among all NCR partners and ensure the availability of regionwide training and exercise programs to strengthen preparedness, response, and recovery efforts from all-hazards events</p>	<p>Develop and exercise key regional emergency response and recovery plans</p> <p>Ensure regional procedures, memorandums of understanding, and mutual aid agreements are in place to allow for rapid coordination of resources, including health assets, across jurisdictional boundaries.</p> <p>Develop and update a matrix of training and exercises that meet Homeland Security Exercise and</p>



Goal	Objectives	Initiatives
		Evaluation Program standards needed to maintain core regional capabilities. This matrix should address new and emerging threats and concerns raised in gap analyses and after-action reports from events and exercises.

Source: 2010 National Capital Region Homeland Security Plan.

<sup>a</sup> Although the specific elements needed for situational awareness vary according to the field and area of expertise, the term “situational awareness” here refers to the ability to identify, monitor, and process important information, understand the interrelatedness of that information and its implications, and apply that understanding to make critical decisions in the present and near future. For example, if the region is threatened by a hurricane, awareness of the status of roads, shelters, traffic, available medical resources, power outages, and the like is important in making decisions about what type of assistance is needed and where it is needed. To coordinate an effective response, NCR partners need to share their information and have access to the information of others.

<sup>b</sup> The NCR fusion centers include the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center, the Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center, the NCR Intelligence Center, and the Virginia Fusion Center. A fusion center is a physical location where data can be collected from a variety of sources, including but not limited to police departments, fire departments, health departments, and the private sector. Experts analyze the incoming information and create intelligence products, which can be used to maximize resources, streamline operations, and improve the ability to address all-hazards incidents and threats. Fusion centers help to prevent terrorism and criminal activities as well as support preparedness for man-made and natural hazards to trigger quick and effective response to all-hazards events.

<sup>c</sup> Critical services are defined as life sustainment services during an emergency and include energy (electric power and gas), water supply, transportation, food, and communications. These are all supplied routinely by the CI/KR sectors. During a disaster, providing critical life-sustaining services ensures that government and private health, safety, and emergency services continue, and that plans are in place to compensate for losses among interdependent systems.

<sup>d</sup> Mass prophylaxis is defined as the capability to protect the health of the population through the administration of critical interventions in response to a public health emergency in order to prevent the development of disease among those who are exposed or are potentially exposed to public health threats. This capability includes the provision of appropriate follow-up and monitoring of adverse events, as well as risk communication messages to address the concerns of the public.

## Enclosure II: NCRC’s Statutory Requirements and Placement in FEMA

FEMA’s Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC) was established under the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).<sup>47</sup> The purpose of NCRC is to oversee and coordinate federal programs for and relationships with state, local, and regional authorities in the region. The Department of Homeland Security appropriations act for fiscal year 2007 expanded NCRC’s scope,<sup>48</sup> and the Post-Katrina Act moved the office from DHS’s Preparedness Directorate to FEMA, where the office reports directly to the FEMA Administrator.<sup>49</sup> See table 2.

Table 2: NCRC’s Statutory Responsibilities

1) Coordinate the activities of the department relating to the NCR, including cooperation with the Office for State and Local Government Coordination
2) assess, and advocate for, the resources needed by state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR to implement efforts to secure the homeland
3) provide the state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR with regular information, research, and technical support to assist the efforts of state, local, and regional authorities in the NCR in securing the homeland
4) develop a process for receiving meaningful input from state, local, and regional authorities and the private sector in the NCR to assist in the development of the homeland security plans and activities of the federal government
5) coordinate with federal agencies in the NCR on terrorism preparedness, to ensure adequate planning, information sharing, training, and execution of the federal role in domestic preparedness activities
6) coordinate with federal, state, local, and regional agencies, and the private sector in the NCR on terrorism preparedness to ensure adequate planning, information sharing, training, and execution of domestic preparedness activities among these agencies and entities, and
7) serve as a liaison between the federal government and state, local, and regional authorities, and private sector entities in the NCR to facilitate access to federal grants and other programs.

Source: 6 U.S.C. § 462.

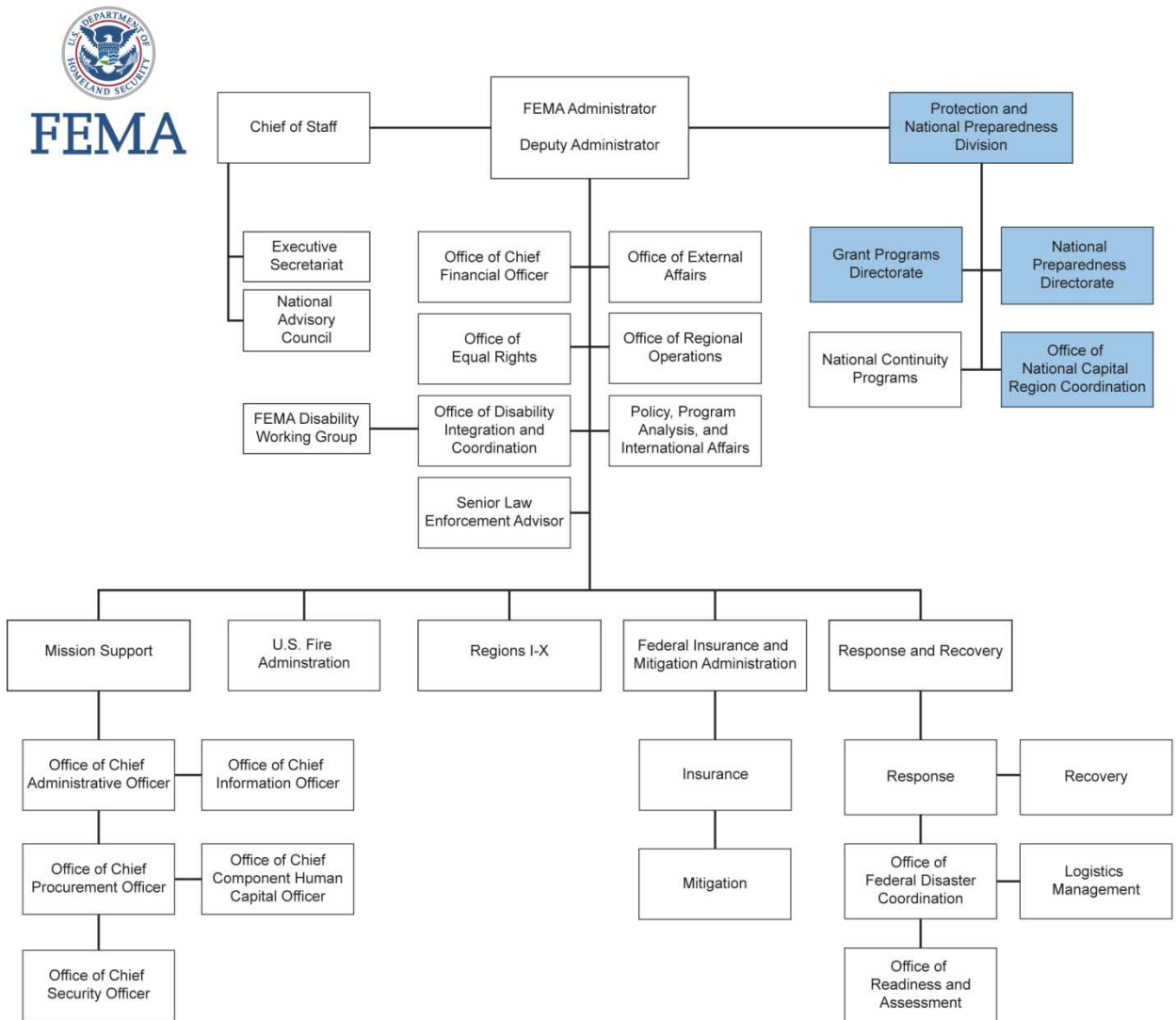
<sup>47</sup>6 U.S.C. § 462.

<sup>48</sup>The appropriations act and accompanying conference report affirmed that the State of West Virginia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shall be involved in the office’s efforts to integrate mass evacuation activities in the NCR. Pub. L. No. 109-295, 120 Stat. 1355, 1368 (2006).

<sup>49</sup>6 U.S.C. § 315.

Below, in figure 4, is FEMA's organization chart as of September 2012. The offices shaded in blue denote specific FEMA offices, including NCRC, discussed in this report.

Figure 4: FEMA Organization Chart



Source: FEMA.

## Enclosure III: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

January 3, 2013

William O. Jenkins, Jr.  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Re: Draft Report GAO-13-116R, "Performance Measures and Comprehensive Funding Data Could Enhance Management of National Capital Region Preparedness Resources"

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

DHS values GAO's reporting on challenges to emergency preparedness in the National Capital Region (NCR) and its recommendations, which have helped shape the Region's homeland security strategic plan. DHS and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are committed to working with our many partners in the NCR, including the federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations, and the American public, to better mitigate and defend against dynamic threats, minimize risks, and maximize the ability to respond to and recover from attacks and disasters of all kinds.

The report contained two recommendations with which the Department concurs. Specifically, GAO recommended that the FEMA Administrator require that the Director of The Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC):

**Recommendation 1:** Assist regional officials in developing measures to better assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan.

**Response:** Concur. FEMA agrees that the use of performance metrics is necessary for assessing overall preparedness for the NCR. However, it is important to note that efforts by the NCRC to develop performance metrics are not entirely separate from regional efforts to do the same. The NCRC is unique in that it is essentially embedded within regional preparedness coordinating councils and groups. The NCRC already works in tandem with the NCR to identify activities that will enhance the preparedness of the NCR, including the establishment of performance metrics to assess these efforts. For example, the NCRC coordinates consequence management planning and preparedness efforts primarily through its roles as the co-chair of the Consequence

Management Subcommittee and a member of the regional Senior Policy Group (SPG). In these roles, the NCRC supports regional governance structures by participating in, and coordinating with, multiple intergovernmental coordinating bodies, including the SPG, Emergency Preparedness Council, Regional Emergency Support Function Committees, and the All Hazards Consortium. Continued NCRC participation in these groups enables coordination for, among other things, a regional approach to address overall preparedness and performance management.

The NCRC will continue to coordinate with the other offices within FEMA to ensure NCR performance management efforts are consistent with national preparedness guidance and policy. Specifically, the NCRC, as a member of the SPG, will continue to work with the Region through the established NCR governance process to develop measures to better assess the implementation of the NCR's strategic plan. These efforts include participation in the NCR Management Reviews, the forum established in the Region to update and refine metrics that are rationally related to outcomes of improving the NCR's abilities to prevent terrorism and to respond and recover from events, whether terrorism or natural hazards. The NCRC will likewise continue to consult and confer with the FEMA offices responsible for national policy and guidance to ensure that pertinent information is brought to bear in regional discussions related to performance measures and preparedness assessments.

FEMA has taken critical steps to establish a preparedness baseline and the accompanying foundation for assessing future preparedness, including determining the effectiveness of grants in improving preparedness. This baseline and the accompanying foundation for assessing preparedness are developed through *State Preparedness Report (SPR)* methodology. In the SPR, states and territories assess how well prepared they are in each of the 31 core capabilities from the National Preparedness Goal. States and territories assess current capabilities against the targets they established in their respective Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRAs). The SPR assesses current capability against these targets and documents any gaps that exist. Currently, FEMA does not collect SPR data on Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) jurisdictions, though it does collect SPR data on the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia – the three state-level jurisdictions that comprise the NCR.

Additionally, FEMA uses the THIRA process to help jurisdictions identify their preparedness needs. Diverging from past efforts to establish standard measures and metrics for a capability that would be applied uniformly, this approach allows a jurisdiction to establish its own capability targets on the basis of the risks it faces. Further, the jurisdiction determines its current level of capability for those risks and then identifies the goals for improvement, including the resultant gaps. Preparedness grants are then used to bridge those gaps. FEMA will measure and report annually on the percentage of states and territories that have a THIRA consistent with DHS guidance. The initial THIRA submissions are due December 31, 2012. By establishing a baseline for each state and UASI grantee, FEMA will have the ability to measure changes in preparedness level by jurisdiction.

Taken together, the THIRA and SPR results will identify capability needs. These products will allow the Nation to look holistically across all capabilities and whole community partners to

gauge areas of strength and areas for improvement. FEMA reports the results of the capability assessments annually in the National Preparedness Report.

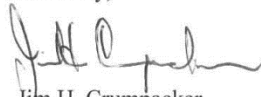
**Recommendation 2:** Collect and maintain available information for NCR jurisdictions on DHS grant funding, and of other federal grant funding that are relevant to homeland security and emergency management capabilities.

**Response:** Concur. FEMA agrees in principle that a holistic approach for aggregating and analyzing all federal grant information pertaining to the NCR might be useful in identifying gaps in preparedness and prioritizing investments throughout the NCR. The NCRC will work with the FEMA Grant Programs Directorate and National Preparedness Directorate in order to advise FEMA leadership on how best to collect and analyze all federal grant information pertaining to the NCR. The NCRC will work within the NCR to explore options to establish a timely reporting structure that involves state and local jurisdictions and federal partners in order to support a “ground-up” approach toward collecting grant data for analysis by FEMA, as appropriate.

While FEMA agrees in principal, the NCRC does not have the authority to compel other federal agencies responsible for grant allocation to provide their grant data to the NCRC for analysis, as GAO acknowledges. Furthermore, the magnitude of the task could overwhelm the NCRC’s current resource capacity. In addition, it is important to note enhanced collection of additional federal grant data would not necessarily result in a more informed approach toward UASI grant management. Informed analysis would require additional detailed state and local reporting from the ground up on the use of federal grant funding.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Technical comments were previously provided under separate cover. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,



Jim H. Crumpacker  
Director  
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

## Enclosure IV: Comments from the National Capital Region

December 28, 2012

William O. Jenkins, Jr.  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice Issues  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
Washington, DC 20548



*Re: Performance Measures and Comprehensive Funding Data Could Enhance Management of National Capital Region Preparedness Resources*

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report titled *Performance Measures and Comprehensive Funding Data Could Enhance Management of National Capital Region Preparedness Resources*. The National Capital Region (NCR) Senior Policy Group (SPG) appreciates the attention you have paid both to key preparedness capabilities and the importance of assessing the implementation of the NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan. The NCR has benefited from investments in a range of capabilities especially those related to situational awareness and operational coordination and information and warnings. We have also made strides in managing our investments against the 2010 NCR Homeland Security Strategic Plan. Additionally, it should be noted that the Office of National Capital Region Coordination (NCRC) has been an important partner within the region and continues to represent the federal government within the preparedness planning governance.

#### **NCR Preparedness Efforts and Capabilities**

The NCR has pursued a comprehensive program to improve situational awareness and communication in the NCR. Following the January 26, 2011 snowstorm in the greater Washington area, the NCR built or expanded the tools listed in the GAO report. The GAO specifically references three tools that support the areas of public information, situational awareness, and operational coordination. These tools are: the Regional Incident Coordination (RIC) Program, the Metropolitan Area Transportation Operations Coordination (MATOC) program, and the Virtual Joint Information Center (VJIC). These are merely a small sample of the tools and capabilities in the areas of public information, situational awareness, and operational coordination that the jurisdictions of the NCR have built and enhanced on a regional level. The following discussion provides additional context with respect to these tools and the areas of emergency management and response that they support. It is not an exhaustive discussion of all the ways in which the jurisdictions of the NCR protect the public.

#### Situational Awareness and Operational Coordination

Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia including all local jurisdictions use a system called WebEOC as a common tool to share key information and establish situational awareness at the local and state level and across the region including some regional and federal partners. MATOC collects and disseminates information from the Regional Integrated Transportation System (RITIS), a fully automatic and seamless integration of each State's traffic management systems. These tools allow emergency management officials, transportation officials, and executives to have the information they need to respond to any type of event and to provide decision-makers with the information they need to coordinate with each other, keep the public informed, and make proper decisions in the face of a regional emergency and response event.

Comment on GAO-13-116R

Since 2011, the NCR has improved the information available through these systems. Examples of these upgrades include a common Situational Awareness Dashboard, a GIS Data Exchange, connecting traffic management tools –RITIS and MATOC—to emergency managers, and piloting a Regional Incident Coordination information management effort.

We have created a Situational Awareness Dashboard that will be used for the 2013 Presidential Inauguration. The Situational Awareness Dashboard is a desktop management and video wall display that will enhance operators’ abilities to view data, identify events requiring immediate attention, prioritize information, and report to decision-makers and the public.

The new GIS Data Exchange (GDX) tool will allow agencies within the NCR to find and share common information or data on a map, such as traffic, police incidents, and critical infrastructure sites. The GDX provides access to geographic information system (GIS) data layers from all jurisdictions and agencies within the NCR, and the ability to share those GIS data layers in either the Situational Awareness Dashboard, or any other common operating picture tool currently used by individual jurisdictions. These layers can include information on conditions such as traffic, weather and accidents, as well as the status of assets such as fire and police assets, evacuation routes, rail lines, critical infrastructure, and many others.

We are committed to strengthening our capabilities through several tools and initiatives to continue to enhance the ability to provide decision-makers from all jurisdictions with up-to-date situational awareness and the means to quickly and collectively make decisions in a robust, well-coordinated multi-jurisdictional approach. These tools assist in effectively using the nationally-accepted Incident Command System to respond to any incident that occurs in the NCR.

Public Information

At the time of the snow storm, the NCR communicated with the public through regionally funded alerts systems and traditional media such as television and radio, all supplemented by new social media. Nearly all jurisdictions have implemented text alert and Reverse 911 systems, and most NCR local governments are using social media – specifically Facebook and Twitter—to provide information to the public and the media. We share information with each other to resolve conflicting information and provide a common message tailored to a specific part of the region.

Recognizing the Region’s need for a better hub for information, Fairfax County set up a Virtual Joint Information Center or VJIC. The VJIC provides the public and the media a central website for emergency information from NCR jurisdictions. VJIC posts regional messages, and it also delivers local news and alert feeds from several jurisdictions and regional transportation agencies.

In addition to launching the VJIC, the NCR’s Public Information Officers are developing a regional mobile application for multiple mobile devices to offer emergency alerts and information from all the NCR jurisdictions.

Some NCR jurisdictions have created locally-funded mobile (smart phone) applications for emergency information and preparedness and have shared the underlying computer code with other jurisdictions to facilitate the creation of their own mobile applications. The NCR’s PIO committee also improves



Comment on GAO-13-116R

regional communication by sharing best practices, coordinating with emergency managers on ways to more effectively share information during an event, and through training not only county and city public information officials but also those PIOs working within police, fire, public health, transportation, and emergency management.

**Performance Measurement**

We are pleased that the GAO has described the NCR's Strategic Plan and the management review process by which the NCR examines its progress in achieving the Plan and performance measures. The NCR has utilized performance measures to measure progress since the development of the 2006 version of the Strategic Plan. The 2010 Strategic Plan prioritized capabilities so that the public is prepared for and protected against man-made and natural hazards. The focus on capabilities led to a series of outcomes that are more measurable. We have used a management review process to update and refine metrics that are rationally related to the outcomes of improving the ability of the region to prevent terrorism and to respond and recover from events, whether terrorism or natural hazards.

We have assessed progress in implementing both the 2006 and 2010 NCR Strategic Plans through a variety of means. Most recently, the SPG and Chief Administrative Officers-Homeland Security Executive Committee have worked with local first responders and regional stakeholders in the management review process to refine metrics that are more carefully aligned with, and provide a better measure of progress in achieving, the initiatives within the NCR Strategic Plan. These measures and metrics are tailored to assessing the progress the NCR is making in preparedness within the region. As the Department of Homeland Security completes its work in these areas, we will work to align our efforts with national standards.

Comment on GAO-13-116R

**Conclusion**

We appreciate the GAO's continued work to review the progress made in the NCR to improve its regional emergency preparedness and homeland security capabilities to ensure a safer community in the NCR. We work closely with our local counterparts to ensure that the investments using UASI and other federal funds are improving the safety and security of the public. Finally, we look forward to our continued partnership with NCRC and any assistance they can provide to improve preparedness in the region.

Sincerely,

Barbara Donnellan  
*Chair, Homeland Security Executive Committee,  
Metropolitan Washington Council of  
Governments*

Andrew Lauland  
*Homeland Security Advisor to the Governor,  
Maryland Governor's Office of Homeland  
Security*

Kenneth Mallette  
*Director, Maryland Emergency Management  
Agency*

Terrie Suit  
*Virginia Secretary of Veterans Affairs and  
Homeland Security*

Brett Burdick  
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Christopher Geldart  
*Director, D.C. Homeland Security and  
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Yi-Ru Chen  
*Deputy Director, D.C. Homeland Security and  
Emergency Management Agency*

Steward Beckham  
*Director, Office of National Capital Region  
Coordination, Federal Emergency Management  
Agency*

## **Enclosure V: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments**

### **GAO Contact**

Stephen L. Caldwell, (202) 512-8777 or [caldwells@gao.gov](mailto:caldwells@gao.gov)

### **Acknowledgments**

In addition to the contact named above, Christopher Keisling, Assistant Director; Michelle R. Su; and John Vocino made significant contributions to the work under the direction of William O. Jenkins, Jr. Thomas Beall, Laura M. Craig, Eric Hauswirth, Tracey King, Lara Miklozek, and Linda Miller also contributed to this report.

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