



DRCA meeting with FEMA Recovery Directorate at NEMA Conference

3.39.2023

DRCA Participants

- Casey Long, DRCA
- Lisa Miller, DRCA
- Jed Webb, DSW
- Steve Mataro, Grant Works
- Jack Anderson, TFR
- Bob Caudle, United Rentals
- Deborah Selzer, The Selzer Group
- Erin Capps, Atkins
- Scott Tezak, Atkins
- Cathy Carr-Clinch, Atkins Global
- Ann Webb Sesame Solar
- Heather LaGrone, Texas GLO
- Jeff Fennimore, DLR group
- Billy Sullivan, SLS
- Steve Glenn DCMC partners
- Mark Merritt, DCMC
- Jason Pettus, North Highland
- Abby Rollins, Cohn Reznick
- Bill Dorian Crowder Gulf
- Leigh Anne Ryals, Crowder Gulf
- Bart Holmes, Crowder Gulf
- Barrett, Crowder Gulf
- Corey Thomas, Thompson
- Andy Robinson, Hill International
- Lewis Lugo, Hill International
- Stan Ledbetter, SLS
- Danielle Aymond, Baker Donelson
- Ernie Abbott, Baker Donelson
- Bart Farmer, Workforce Group
- Fatima Akhtar, IBM consulting
- Carlos Castillo, Tidal Basin
- Mollie Matthews, Tidal Basin
- Mark Mischak, Tidal Basin
- James Joseph, Tidal Basin
- Mike Byrne, Deloitte
- Christina Crue Deloitte
- Tom Lewis, Consultant to Lisa Miller & Associates



FEMA Attendees:

- Doctor Melissa Forbes, Assistant Administrator FEMA Recovery Directorate
- Colt Hagmaier, Deputy Assistant Administrator, FEMA Recovery Directorate

National Weather Service Attendees:

- Michael Coyne, Director Southern Region, National Weather Service

Casey Long, DRCA: Casey opened by providing background of DRCA and asked Dr. Forbes her priorities.

Dr. Melissa Forbes, FEMA: Discussed the PA Assessment – We will be releasing PA assessment documentation. We are in a change management initiative and we recognize both the administrator and ourselves and we want to assume good intent of COVID early days. We are not going to second guess how much PPE to buy. In addition, regarding Section 422 states have different opinions on these simplified procedures. The last issue is wildfires. The PAPPG has not accounted for wildfire issues. The Stafford doesn't do well with compounded disasters. At some point, we must recognize that the Stafford Act is not adequate and it is tough for FEMA to deliver bad news. In the aftermath of a bad disaster, it's tough and FEMA wrestles with this. The 2023 PAPPG will try to address this.

Dr. Forbes continued: On the IA side. There are some regulatory and legislative changes which she did not divulge but stated "we are trying to improve customer experience with a focus on equity." One size does not fit all. Trying to get the documentation as best we can from the survivor. Connected to IA is our interagency recovery work. We are rethinking the IRC. We have some new leadership in that group and HUD CDBG DR donut hole is huge and after 18 months of temporary housing it's a real issue. Congress is thinking of long term recovery as housing. We are working with our RSF partners to help and they don't have access to the DRF. She believes the election cycle can bring opportunities but she wants the family of federal agencies to help with technical assistance to help communities. Melissa doesn't believe recovery alone creates resilient communities. Recovery doesn't get us where we want a community needs to be.

Carlos Castillo, Tidal Basin: Some states are managing an IA program. FEMA is taking into account that some states can't. Can you address?

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: When someone discusses a 408 program, direct repair, and a state may want FEMA to administer and where it lands is another question.

Mark Mischak, Tidal Basin: The joint approach of the whole of federal government is a good one. There was a book of options during the BP event, the evaluation of those authorities across the board took place and would be a good resource.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: IIJA, IRA a lot of funding and the states and locals don't know how to utilize it. The states and locals may not have the resources to administer.

Mark Mischak Tidal Basin: There may not be the will to implement. Elected officials may not be engaged if a long term project may be completed two election cycles past their term so may not get the elected to engage with this funding.

Andy Robinson, Hill, Int.: Discussion of Housing and asking if there are others who handle housing?

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: No one else but FEMA will do temporary housing. Not meant to be long term.



Mark Merritt, DCMC Partners: DRCA's members have the consequences of the actions that occur in the field. We don't feel like we are consulted by FEMA. There is the barrier of talking to the contractors. If you engage the association more it will help you. If the one thing out of this meeting is that FEMA engages us more, FEMA will gain an understanding of the entire food chain. We are politically neutral.

Casey Long, DRCA: DRCA just wants the opportunity to provide feedback before final policy decisions are made. We know you won't always agree with us, but we would like a bite at the apple. Collectively, we have the experience and knowledge base to provide you with really detailed feedback and recommendations on important policy. DRCA is the largest group of private sector experts and our members work with State and local officials across the country on a daily basis. Our members understand what will work from a policy perspective, and what won't work.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: There's a lot of legislation floating around. Are you tracking that, and it makes a big difference to have DRCA perspective.

Carlos Castillo, Tidal Basin: There were meetings this week. Congress is asking us. We can present a more balanced and informed position. Jason McNamara was presenting the findings of the PA Assessment at NEMA and most of it was not new. Carlos says it has gotten much better. Region 6 is different than Region 4. As a group, we don't always agree with FEMA but we much communicate.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: States are not happy about 422 and if I was an emergency manager I would be lobbying to relax the reporting requirements. She advocates that we push for greater simplification.

Mark Mischak, Tidal Basin: I know FEMA has in the past stood up and pushed back when an IG has an adverse findings. And tell the IG why this or that decision was made and that FEMA will defend when the IG criticizes certain PA opinions when it's in the best interest of the states and communities to get in lock step.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: In terms of actual fraud in PA, it is really small. FEMA was not enamored when there was a recommended claw back!

Mark Merritt, DCMC Partners: Info doesn't make it to the CRC, so they want to be sure it's perfect before going to the CRC.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: FEMA navigation teams may be an answer. You get folks together to solve the problem. EHP, mitigation, IRC and PA. No one knows what the next person will ask. If we get that on the front end and then folks go back then the knowledge is there and there aren't that many RFIs. Folks are afraid their answer is wrong.

Mark Merritt, DCMC Partners: We have encountered a PDMG never met with the field. COVID made remote work ok and now we have become addicted and federal folks won't go to the ground. We must come out of the COVID umbrella. We must get the FEMA liaisons in the field. CRC is a challenge.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: Troubling to know a PDMG isn't in the field. The Administrator wants folks in the field.

Steve Glenn, DCMC Partners: Surprising to know that there is pushback from states if FEMA goes to the field. He cited an example of a community who won't launch infrastructure because they fear de-obligation.



Melissa Forbes, FEMA: Jason McNamara listed PA principles and behaviors that will be needed...

Corey Thomas, Thompson Consulting: We discussed the hazardous trees and limbs and Alabama changed things and FEMA's Simplified Memo #2 came out eliminating certain things. 6 inch diameter for trees and 2 inch for limbs. We are sticking to old criteria because we don't know what the CRC is doing. We wanted the criteria more well defined. The issue is that opinions vary by region.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: We want them to be flexible. We will try to follow up. You guys see the inconsistencies. The Regional Administrators don't know... they don't know what's going on ...

Mark Merritt, DCMC Partners: Don't create regulatory fundamentalists. Because of inexperience, they are not finding their way to a "yes." If the regs don't say no, you can do it once. If you don't want us to do it again, then we can change it in the book. From a training perspective, don't be so narrowminded you can't do it.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: The PAPPG can't be an encyclopedia.

Colonel Barrett Holmes, CrowderGulf: This past September in Ian we were boots on the ground. Barrett and Barton Holmes were in Lee County the past 6 months...running operations. Looking around, there is also 50 years of debris hauling in this room. We saw from being on the ground, some states want to do a large debris hauling contract from a state perspective. One of our concerns is that you operationalize that at the state level and that doesn't streamline it... can make it more difficult. If the state steps in and takes over, then what good does it do to encourage resilient communities.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: what are the state barriers then?

Col. Barrett Holmes, CrowderGulf: If a state steps in over a county administrator, then it is a disincentive.

Steve Glenn, DCMC Partners: Recovery starts in your home. Then on your street and then the town, etc.

Andy Robinson, Hill, Int: Discussion of Equity. These communities don't like being called disadvantaged so we call them priority communities. Make FEMA language community facing. Get it to the lower grade level. Cost sharing is prohibitive. The BCA is daunting. Preventing deferred maintenance. He went through the DRCA Best Practices Paper

Luis Lugo, Hill, Int: Priority communities don't have the capacity and the resources. We need to plan, train, prepare and gain their trust. We are going to get them ready so it will be a lot better post-disaster. An idea is for FEMA and DRCA to hold a pilot that FEMA can fund and let that workshop's outcome dictate how to implement something permanent.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: Initiatives underway to do these pilots. We are doing an intense tribal outreach in external affairs. The tribes say that they are appreciative. Deferred maintenance is near and dear to our hearts. We are also working on the PAPPG to have a defined BCA.

Melissa Forbes, FEMA: In Selma we are seeing the cost share is a big deal. Trying to figure out federal agency opportunities to find grant writers.

Luis Lugo, Hill, Int.: US DOT, FAA, etc. and Hill Int. does grant writing.



Ann Webb, Sesame Solar: Our goal to decarbonize disaster recovery – no fossil fuels etc. We want to help, and we are an innovative company.

The meeting adjourned at 12.14 pm